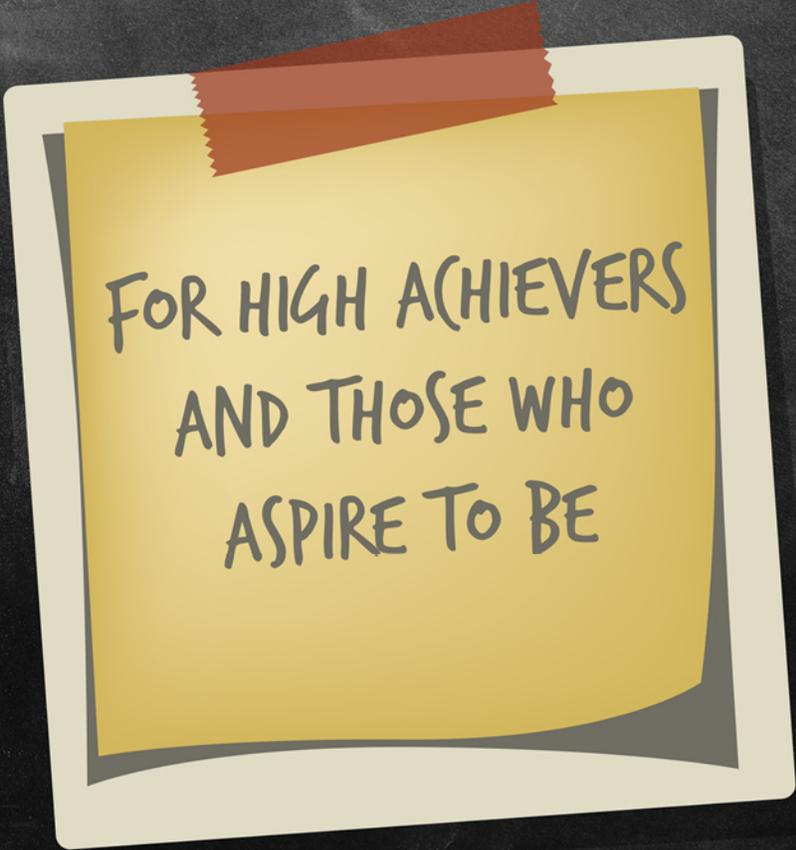




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**RICK HOUCEK**  
SOAR WITH EAGLES

# 8 WINNING LIFE SKILLS:

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FOR HIGH ACHIEVERS  
AND THOSE WHO  
ASPIRE TO BE

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## INTRO

Have you ever wondered what makes winners tick? You know, some people just seem to win more often than others... to enjoy life's fruits... to hoist the trophy higher than everyone else.

Well, you have two choices:

You can watch from the sidelines and be envious – maybe even jealous – always wondering what they know that you don't... what their secrets are that you're not aware of... seldom tasting the sweetness of success with the frequency they do.

Or...

You can strap on your seat belt for a wild ride, get in the game, and live life to the fullest.

I suspect you'll opt for Choice 2 – or you wouldn't be listening to this in the first place.

Well, to that end, let me share with you 8 winning life skills and behaviors for high achievers and those who aspire to be. Whether you're already a person of high achievement... or just starting out... these 8 skills and behaviors will help you get into the winner's circle more times, more often... and be the envy of friends, family, and co-workers.

I'll present all 8... one at a time... to let each one sink in.

When we're done, I suggest you waste no time putting all 8 into play... to become the winner you were meant to be.

**Let's dive in...**

WHAT YOU DO  
IN YOUR 'OFF SEASON'  
CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE.

CHAPTER 1

In a hurried post-game interview immediately after winning his third NCAA national championship football title in 4 years, Alabama coach Nick Saban was asked by a sideline reporter if he would finally take some much-deserved time off to enjoy the big win.

I distinctly remember his answer: "Yes," he said. "48 hours. Then it's back to planning for next year."

**SHOCKED? DON'T BE. WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF THE ULTRA-ELITE WINNER.**

Did Saban 'coast' after the first national title? After the second? The third?

No, no, and no... each time. If he had, there would likely have been no 'next one'.

Every sport has a lengthy off season. Most athletes and coaches relish their 'time away' to rest and rejuvenate... to clear their heads and goof off... to get away from the rigors of daily training... before the next season kicks in.

But then, most teams do not enjoy repeated winning seasons. Nor do most athletes play a Hall of Fame-level career.

Only the 'prime cut' do. And they continue to train. Yes, through the off season.

GE CEO Jack Welch never stopped recruiting and developing top talent. He was legendary for building an ongoing leadership engine, so he always had a stable of promotable superstars in-house to run the companies he acquired.

## THERE WAS NO OFF SEASON IN WELCH'S WORLD.

Top Hollywood film stars never know when their next big role will come. Do they sit by the phone between movies? Some do, but the best don't. They do Broadway plays... guest shots on TV series... or community theater. Some even teach acting classes. All in an effort to hone their acting chops and never go stale.

For them, no off season.

The U.S. Special Forces – the world's upper echelon fighting force – constantly train, train, train – even in periods of prolonged peacetime. They never know when trouble will erupt somewhere. And they must be ready.

Never an off season.

Pro boxer Bernard Hopkins, still fighting at 49, stays razor-sharp and keeps up his physique by never stopping his training, even when there's no next fight scheduled. He told USA Today "I never get out of shape. When you work your way up to peak condition, after a fight, why shut it down if you're not hurt?"

For Hopkins, no off season.

Many smart parents, during summer's no-school months, create reading curriculums for their kids, to keep their minds active and engaged in the learning habit.

No off season.

For me, I lead strategic planning retreats... and my busiest, most exhausting period is August through January. Do I coast the rest of the year? Not a chance. From February to July, I book 25 to 40 speaking engagements, goal workshops, and leadership training events. These, by the way, often feed my strategic planning client calendar.

I won't allow an off season.

And I play competitive baseball from March to September. So do I slack off from October to February? Nope. I'm in the batting cages working on swing mechanics with my hitting coach, Howie McCann (Yankee catcher Brian McCann's dad), who runs a baseball academy in Atlanta.

No off season.

## ACTIONS FOR YOU:

In your business, do you have an off season? A time when things slow to a crawl and it's easy to kick back? How about with your hobbies? In your family?

Well, if being mediocre or just okay – or even 'above average' – is fine with you, then don't change a thing. And I'll render no judgment.

But if you yearn to be the very best you can be at something you're passionate about – in the top, say, 5% – then maybe you should re-think how you spend those off-season hours.

Here's a closing Power Thought from Tom Daley, Great Britain's second-youngest Olympian ever; competed I the dove in the 2008 Beijing Games at age 14; won individual platform gold in the 2008 European Championships, 2009 World Championships, and 2010 Commonwealth Games. He said: "I think the real reason for my improvement is because I had such a long period in the off season just working as hard as I could on all my new dives, making sure I did lots of repetitions to get them consistent."



IN ANYTHING YOU WISH TO EXCEL AT, TO BE THE VERY BEST YOU CAN BE AT... LET THERE BE NO OFFSEASON. STAY ACTIVE, PRACTICING, LEARNING, AND AT THE TOP OF YOUR GAME... ALL YEAR LONG.



# DO YOU BELIEVE LIFE IS AN 'EITHER-OR' DEAL?

## CHAPTER 2

Many years ago, a business colleague and friend told me he couldn't seem to balance his three greatest priorities – his family, his work, his hobbies: "I can be strong in two at any given time, but the third always suffers."

He went on to say that, despite his best efforts, it was unfixable.

This hit me between the eyes, and cemented my resolve to never let it happen to me. No, I don't mean I was only willing to have two priorities. But rather, however many I chose to have, I would work my tail off to blend them all and not let ANY of them diminish, suffer, or get minimal attention.

My friend, I felt, was a prisoner of his own flawed beliefs. 'Can't' became his norm.

In their book "Built To Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies", authors Jim Collins and Jerry Porras talk about this very notion in profound terms.

They call it the Tyranny of the 'Or' versus the Genius of the 'And'.

In other words, while many believe business requires exclusionary choices (i.e., you can be either conservative OR bold, but not both... either low-cost OR high quality, but not both), truly visionary companies believe you CAN have both... then endeavor to make it happen.

This is a blaring wake-up call that goes beyond business, and applies equally well to anything in life...

If you insist you must sacrifice A to get B (the tyranny of the 'or'), then you surrender the enjoyment of both A and B (the genius of the 'and').

Fact is, there are many people, companies, and institutions that live joyfully in 'and' land. For proof, turn on the news, read trade journals, watch the Biography channel... and study how the best do it.

## ACTIONS FOR YOU:

What are you giving up you'd rather not? Are you forfeiting something desperately important to you?

No, I'm not suggesting you can have it all, nor that you should try. 'All' is overwhelming, likely impossible, and a prescription for mediocrity.

But I am definitely saying you can have a short list of committed passions, be excellent at each, and not give up on any.

First, identify those things you passionately want. Then ask yourself: Why can't I have both? (...or all three? ...or six?) What's stopping me? Who is stopping me? How can I make room for all of them? What changes must I be willing to make? What else – of lesser importance that is consuming my time, energy and money – can I give up to make room for those of passionate importance? What action must I take – difficult or unpleasant though it may be – to have them?

I have four main life passions that consume all my time: my family, my health/fitness, my business, and playing baseball. I am more than willing to sacrifice everything outside those four, in order to have those four. But I am completely unwilling to sacrifice any of the four, even for the other three.

See the difference?

Anyone can do this. Just re-prioritize, re-plan, and jealously guard your time, focus, and money.

Look around you. Those who complain about what they want but don't have... are being left in the dust by those who figure out how to make it happen and settle for nothing less.

**Here's a closing Power Thought from Beverly Sills, Grammy winning singer, recipient of numerous awards and accolades for performing arts, achievement, philanthropy... and called 'America's Queen of Opera' by Time Magazine:** "I always wanted to look back on my life and say 'I shouldn't have done that'... instead of... 'I wish I'd done that'. I'd rather have tried too much than not enough."



**STOP SEEING LIFE AND AN 'EITHER X OR Y' PROPOSITION THAT LIMITS YOU FROM WHAT YOU DESIRE. SEE LIFE INSTEAD AS A 'BOTH X AND Y' ENDEAVOR THAT LETS YOU ENJOY ALL YOUR PASSIONS.**

AN ODDBALL WAY TO  
LEARN. MORE. FASTER.

CHAPTER 3

Thought I'd share something peculiar I've been doing most of my life. It's been amazingly useful to me, and could be to you.

It's a strange way to learn. If you have a constant thirst for new knowledge like me, always searching out new ideas to improve your life, your relationships, your business, your hobbies... this might appeal to you. If not, disengage now.

I CALL IT 'SOUND BITE LEARNING'. OR 'SNIPPET LEARNING'. IT'S THIS:

I open any non-fiction book to any page, read just one paragraph, or maybe a full page, grab one idea, close the book, and run with it.

I ignore that I don't know what precedes it... that doesn't matter. I always find at least one idea, grab, go, and usually implement the same day. Sometimes the next.

My personal library of non-fiction books (biographies, memoirs, histories, self-help, how-to, business books, and others) rivals Barnes & Noble. Been buying and collecting them and reading quick snippets since college. About 95% of them... I've never fully read. Just a few pages each, here and there.

Until age 40 or so, I was embarrassed to admit this... thought I had some clinical phobia or a 'completion' dysfunction. I'd see people engrossed in books, reading for long periods, in airports, at restaurants, on park benches, and I'd wonder what was wrong with me. I had a bazillion – and kept buying more. I picked here and there at all of them – just never finished any.

Then one day I had a lightning bolt epiphany and realized: Wait. This is just the way I learn best, in short sound bites, not long volumes. Nothing to hide or be ashamed of.

Realizing this was incredibly liberating. Instantly, I gave myself permission to NOT finish any books, but to get out of them only what I want and move on. I stopped hiding it and started telling anyone like-minded.

Granted, this won't work for fictional novels in which a full storyline is developed and must be read from beginning to end. (And if you're a fiction reader, this isn't a knock. Enjoy your full-length books. They're just not for me.) Oh, I do love stories... but prefer them in movies or on TV... start to finish in 1 to 2 hours. Quick in, quick out.

I'm an agonizingly slow reader... have been my whole life. Reading long, to me, is drudgery and cumbersome. But reading short, is invigorating and energizing. I don't see a book as one long, single-theme story to be read front to back. I see it instead as 250 independent, one-page newsletters with usable ideas in each that can be read partially, if I wish, and out-of-sequence.

If you ask most people what they're reading, they'll tell you the name of one book. If you ask me, I'll easily give you 15+ titles, and the one I'm reading at the moment depends on where I'm sitting. I've got 3 in-progress on my nightstand, 2 in my brief case, 4 I thumb through in the car, 3 beside my computer, a couple in the kitchen, a few in the family room, and more.

Wherever I am, I pick one up, read a page or two in the middle, see a great idea, and I'm off.

Weird, yes, no argument. But it works for me. No apologies.

## ACTIONS FOR YOU:

What the heck, why not give it a try? If you fear disclosure of

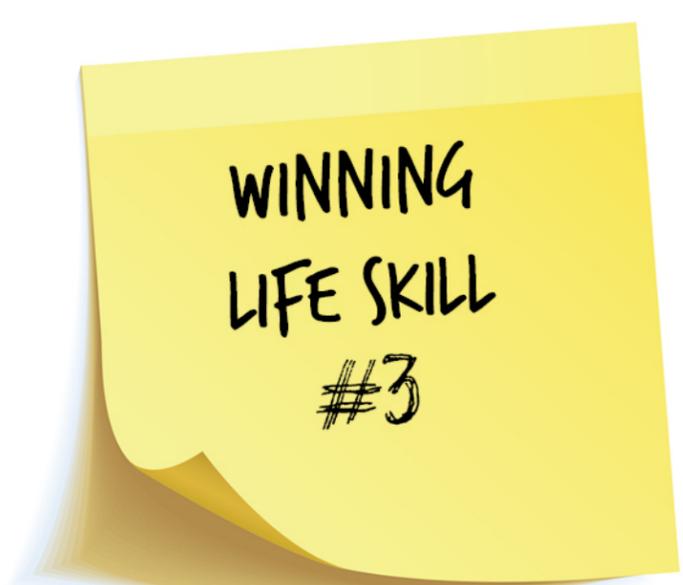
this bizarre behavior will get you straitjacketed and bussed to the asylum, just don't tell anyone. And if you do get trucked away, I'll welcome you at the gate.

By the way, it works for audios and videos too. Just listen to, or watch, a sound bite or two, grab an idea, and go.

Enjoy the stimulating treasure trove of short snippet new ideas you'll discover to make your life more enjoyable.

**Here's a closing Power Thought from Helen Huxley, author of 247 books for children and young adults, founder of Helen Huxley Giftbooks:** "Books can be dangerous. The best ones should be labeled 'This could change your life'."

Personally, I've found that to be true, one paragraph at a time.



WINNING  
LIFE SKILL  
#3

TO LEARN MORE... FASTER... AND IMPLEMENT QUICKER...  
TRY 'SOUNDBITE LEARNING'.  
OPEN ANY NON-FICTION BOOK TO ANY PAGE, READ ONE  
PARAGRAPH OR THE FULL PAGE AND NO MORE, GRAB ONE  
IDEA, AND PUT IT INTO ACTION THAT DAY.

WHAT TO DO WHEN  
THE WORLD SEEMS TO  
CONSPIRE AGAINST YOU.

CHAPTER 4

Yes, the world can be a frightening place. Jobs tight. Prices rising. Competition tough. Purchasing power falling. Colleagues and teammates less committed. Playing field not level. Future uncertain. Many people unprepared and uncertain of their next move.

But wait. Dig through history and you'll find this is NOT new. It's the way life has been every day since the beginning of time. Welcome to Planet Earth.

So how do you cope? Ask yourself this: Who before me has handled this same adversity, misfortune, calamity – this same conspiracy of negative events – better than anyone – who I can learn from, whose lead I can follow?

The answer may shock you. Turns out, the 'ultimate champion' of surviving and thriving in a hardship environment can be found... not in the human world... but in the animal kingdom. And you may never guess which critter wins the trophy... and why.

Surprisingly, it's not about being the biggest, baddest, or strongest. Not about having the fiercest growl, longest fangs, quickest chase, or most vicious ability to fight. Not even the clearest vision, highest leaping ability, or largest pack of angry, fearsome buddies.

Nope. It's about something else.

### THE ABILITY TO ADAPT.

To adapt to whatever his changing environment throws at him. So he doesn't just survive and barely get by ... but rather grows and flourishes!

I call your attention to the role model you might consider patterning your own life, behavior, and habits after. The furry creature most adaptable to whatever mankind, the environment, and the world hurls at him.

I call your attention to... the coyote.

Because coyotes, you see, outperform all the rest. Through the centuries, while many animal species have dwindled in number, become endangered, and eventually extinct... the coyote lumbers on... healthier, stronger, more grizzled, and in greater numbers than ever before.

How is this possible? Adaptability.

Want proof? Listen to this...

All living creatures have been forced to deal with the encroachment of mankind and the constant sprawl of civilization. But while other species have suffered as their natural habitats shrink, the coyote has learned to adapt – and can live in cities as big as Los Angeles, Dallas, and Atlanta. In areas where wolves have been exterminated, coyotes usually flourish. Coyotes – unlike many other animals – are better able to live among people.

How? Adaptability.

While most animals respond best to only one or a couple geographical locales, coyotes inhabit all life zones – deserts, grasslands, low valley floors, open plains, foothills, high mesas, tall mountains, as well as populated neighborhoods.

How? Adaptability.

While many animal species are limited in their means of foraging for food, the coyote hunts multiple ways – alone, in pairs, or in packs.

How? Adaptability.

While many animal species live on only a limited number of foods, the coyote is an omnivore – eating just about anything – cactus fruit, mesquite beans, flowers, insects, rodents, lizards, rabbits, birds, snakes, fish, frogs. It even eats larger animals like lamb, calves and other livestock. Also domestic pets like dogs and cats. And unlike many, it will eat meat both fresh and rotten.

How? Adaptability.

While many in the animal kingdom are awake either in daytime or night – but not both – the coyote, though mostly nocturnal, has become a 24-hour animal.

How, you ask? Adaptability.

**SUMMATION: THE COYOTE FLOURISHES TODAY, DESPITE EVERY OUNCE OF ADVERSITY UNCARINGLY HEAPED UPON IT FROM AN INDIFFERENT WORLD. COYOTES BRUSH IT OFF... THEY MAKE LEMONADE OUT OF LEMONS.**

The U.S. Marine Corps has an unofficial mantra: Adapt, Improvise, Overcome. Without question, doubt, or peer, coyotes are the Marines of the animal kingdom.

Reminds me of the old German proverb: "There is no such thing as bad weather. Only inappropriate clothing."

## ACTIONS FOR YOU:

Charles Darwin, famed evolutionary biologist, said it best: "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent. It is the one most adaptable to change." That is true for all living things – animals, plants, humans.

### SO, LET'S ZERO IN ON YOU, AND YOUR IMPORTANT ROLE AS A LEADER.

Have you forged a "coyote culture" in your organization? With your team? In your family? This is not an option – it's an obligation of leadership. It must show up not just in what you expect of others, but in how you carry yourself. You must model the very behavior you want in others. As Gandhi said: "Be the change you seek."

Throughout your office, plant, or workspace, why not post all 5 of the powerful maxims noted here: the Marine mantra, the German proverb, the Darwin philosophy, the Gandhi quote, and the term Coyote Culture. Drill them into your team. Chisel them in stone. Live them daily.

In life, no one is guaranteed success, promised prosperity, or ensured safety. You earn them by how well you learn, grow, improve, and apply.

And just as important... by how well you adapt to what life throws at you.

Here's a closing Power Thought from Max McKeon, behavioral strategist, scientist, author: "All failure is failure to adapt. All success is successful adaptation."



THE TRUE WINNERS IN LIFE ARE THOSE WHO HAVE LEARNED TO ADAPT... TO A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT, TO A TRANSFORMING CULTURE, TO A RAPIDLY MOVING BUSINESS CLIMATE, TO A PROGRESSIVE WORLD. NOT THOSE WHO STAY STUCK IN YESTERDAY.

ARE YOUR BEHAVIORS  
HELPING OR HURTING  
THE OUTCOMES YOU WANT?

CHAPTER 5

Some time ago, a young gent I didn't know, maybe early 20s, sat next to me on a plane.

CONVERSATION ENSUED AND BEFORE LONG, THE INEVITABLE QUESTION AROSE... "WHAT DO YOU DO?"

He explained his job rather matter-of-factly, no enthusiasm or excitement to speak of... then suddenly lit up like a Christmas tree saying, "But that's not what I really want. I really want to be a rock star" ... face beaming, voice crescendoing, pulse rate likely quickening.

Always curious, especially when someone is that jazzed up, I asked...

"Aha, so you must play in a band?" His answer: No.

"Oh, okay... do you play an instrument?" No.

"Learning to play one?" No.

"Do you sing?" No.

"Dance?" No.

Well, you get the gist. I stopped there, thinking further questioning would embarrass him... not my intention.

My point is, he claimed to have an uber-passionate mission, but had taken no steps – I doubt he even owned a piece of sheet music – to get there.

I tell this story in my self-motivation workshops when explaining the five assassins we let kill our goals.

It illustrates one of them: Polar Behaviors.

Meaning, we say we have a dream or ambition or passionate pursuit... and probably do mean it... but our actions tell a different story.

Our everyday behaviors are incongruent with the dream. We're either stagnant, taking no action toward achievement... or worse, moving in the opposite direction. Either way, it's not helping accomplish the dream.

I find this to be a key differentiator between those who only speak of a thing they want... and those who actually achieve or acquire it.

Both profess commitment. But one is all talk. The other, focused action.

Guess which one wins every time?

## ACTIONS FOR YOU:

A good predictor of your own success in any endeavor is your willingness... no, make that your relentless zeal... to take deliberate, undistracted action that moves you in the direction of the outcomes you want.

One of my personal rules-of-thumb is...

On the day I decide to be, do, or have something new, something of significance... I take the first concrete action step that same day before I go to bed that night.

Not next week, not tomorrow. That day.

This instantly engages the powerful Law of Inertia ('a body in motion tends to stay in motion unless acted upon by an outside force')... a physics principle important to the achievement of anything.

The action I take can be something as small and simple as Googling information or calling a friend who's done what I want to do, just to pick his brain. Or something big, like spending \$500 to buy something I'll need for the journey.

Any first action gets me in the game, physically AND emotionally, and stokes my fire of enthusiasm.

The problem with waiting 'til tomorrow is... well... it's tomorrow.

This is important because the Law of Inertia also has an opposite angle that says: a body at rest tends to stay at rest until acted upon by an outside force.

So unless you get moving, inertia works against you.

Make certain your behaviors are congruent with – not fighting – the outcomes you want.

How? Get moving quickly. Today. Right now. And keep moving.

Here's a closing Power Thought from Paul J. Meyer, founder of Success Motivation Institute, author, trainer, and speaker on self-improvement themes. He was famous for saying 3 words: "Obey the impulse." This quote illustrates his energetic urgency in taking quick action on important matters, not waiting, not delaying... an urge he credited as a major reason for his lifelong success.

WINNING  
LIFE SKILL  
#5

ANY TIME YOU SET A GOAL... GET IN THE HABIT OF TAKING  
THE FIRST ACTION STEP TODAY...  
NOT TOMORROW OR NEXT WEEK... TO QUICKLY GET YOURSELF  
ENGAGED AND ONTO THE PLAYING FIELD OF ACTION.



YOU'RE SMART  
IF YOU USE THIS.  
COULD INVITE TROUBLE  
IF YOU DON'T.

CHAPTER 6

One of the most brilliant things ever said... a noteworthy piece of advice I've tried to live by since first hearing... is...

"Believe nothing, no matter where you read it, or who said it, no matter if I have said it, unless it agrees with your own reason and your own common sense."

Sterling guidance spoken by Buddha, "the Enlightened One".

The precise wording is debated. I've also seen...

"Believe nothing until you have experienced it and found it to be true. Accept my words only after you have examined them for yourselves; do not accept them because of the reverence you have for me."

Same message either way.

Some folks are so hungry for someone else to lead the way, so anxious to fit in, to go along, so loathe to make decisions for themselves, they'll fall for anything – spoken by anybody – that sounds half-way okay. Fooled by titles, power, celebrity, talent, uniforms, good looks, articulate speech, just about everything.

LIKE TRUSTING A FRIEND WHO'S LIED BEFORE, JUST BECAUSE YOU WANT TO BELIEVE HE'S CHANGED.

Or supporting a politician who proclaims a position you like, but whose past actions tell a conflicting story.

Doing what an advisor says without asking for clear, supporting evidence of prior success.

Assuming the uniformed man at your front door really is the pest control guy.

Believing your team leader, coach, or parents because... well, just because.

Common sense isn't always common practice.

## ACTIONS FOR YOU:

Heeding Buddha's advice offers a two-fold warning.

First, be wary of charlatans, pretenders, and those with partial or limited information. Some are suspicious at first glance, but others are cleverly deceptive... wolves in sheep's clothing. They look, act, and sound perfectly normal. They're in all walks of life – business, government, academia, sports, medicine, clergy, you name it. Some famous, some highly respected. Some even well-intended.

Check their advice against your 'inner conscience'. Learn to trust your gut... listen to it! If it doesn't resonate... back off, think twice. Don't just walk off the cliff, eyes closed, never questioning facts or intent. Cults and cons feed off this weakness. Question everything.

As President Ronald Reagan said: "Trust, but verify."

Second, be wary of following people who blindly follow others. Did they really do all their homework? Doesn't matter if they're your best friend, co-worker, or family member. Question why they believe. Ask what facts are compelling them to accept another person's position or advice.

Make up your own mind – dig for tangible evidence, empirical facts, visible truths. As they say on the forensic investigation TV shows: Theories are just opinions, but the science doesn't lie.

A smart life skill and behavior is this: Make people earn your trust. Don't just grant it indiscriminately or haphazardly.

Here's a closing Power Thought from Steve Chabot, university political science teacher, Boy Scout leader, U.S. Congressman. "If people use common sense and their own guiding moral compass, I think they'll generally stay out of trouble."

I think he's right. Trouble is, too many don't.



QUESTION EVERYTHING... BELIEVE NOTHING... REGARDLESS OF THE SOURCE. MAKE SURE IT RESONATES FOR YOU. LEARN TO TRUST YOUR GUT, YOUR INSTINCTS, YOUR SIXTH

A SUCCESS TRAIT  
OFTEN OVERLOOKED:  
HOW YOU ORGANIZE.

CHAPTER 7

Okay, let's face it, walk into most people's homes or offices, glance around at the disjointed clutter, and you quickly surmise they're anything but organized.

Ask them to find something important and you get a glazed stare.

Our memories fail us, so self-disciplining to organize systematically creates speed and efficiency.

Fight this if you want, but 'organizing where it counts' is a key trait separating the most successful achievers from wannabes.

### HERE ARE SOME IDEAS...

Business consultant Dan Kennedy organizes his day by 'time blocking', designating chunks of time for pre-determined activities or projects, then religiously sticking to it, ignoring distractions. He gets more done in a day than any 10 people I know combined.

I have colleagues who never look at email until 12 noon.  
Brilliant.

Is your office or desk organized for total efficiency? Are your most-frequently used 'things' close at hand... or must you get up and walk to another room? Think 'cockpit of an airplane'... everything efficiently within eyeshot and arm's reach. I love my U-shaped desk, surrounded on 3 sides by my 'stuff'.

"Getting Things Done" author David Allen says anyone can organize with only 2 tools: files and lists. (I agree.)

There are computer files... and color-coded file folders in cabinet drawers... even piles on the floor with a brick on top.

Each can work.

Do you make lists? Research shows high achievers are relentless list makers.

Personally, I have separate lists for my strategic planning engagements, my keynotes/workshops, leadership training, new products to be created and sold, calls to make, newsletters to write, marketing projects, weekend errands, fitness/sports activities, financial planning, family fun, and more. Is that too many lists? Hardly. By compartmentalizing, I can see at a glance what my highest priorities are in each area.

My wife organizes her grocery list by sections of the store, so she can move efficiently from left to right and not double back, not waste time.

For 'visual clarity', I have a giant display board in my office with my entire business structure diagrammed on sticky notes – all products, marketing pieces, major projects, the works. I can easily add new elements, move things around, delete them too. (White boards work too.)

Heck, you can even hire someone to help keep you organized. There are literally thousands of ideas.

Oh, and it's fair to point out, not everything in your life needs to be organized. Even the most productive people I know have their sloppy areas (of lower importance). Including me.

## ACTIONS FOR YOU:

1. Buy 3 books on organizing, read them all, and act on the advice that most resonates for you.

2. Study the behavior of the 5 most successful/productive people you know to see how they organize. Ask them... they'll be flattered and glad to share.
3. Have your team members write down, individually, the 20 most effective organizational things they each do. Then copy and share the lists. Bet you'll get a treasure trove of great ideas.

You don't have to employ every one. Just 3 to 5 big organizational ideas can change your life.

Get serious and get started... you're wasting daylight.

**Here's a closing Power Thought from Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th president of the United States, 5-star general in U.S. Army.** "Organizations cannot make a genius out of an incompetent. On the other hand, disorganization can scarcely fail to result in efficiency."



**ORGANIZE, ORGANIZE, ORGANIZE – USING COMPUTER FILES, PAPER FILES IN CABINETS, NOTEBOOKS, OR JOURNALS. TIME BLOCK YOUR DAY INTO PRE-PLANNED SEGMENTS FOR SPECIFIC TASKS. A DISJOINTED LIFE LEADS TO FRUSTRATION. ORGANIZE FOR SUCCESS.**

WANT MORE WINS &  
GREATER SUCCESS?  
WHOSE EXAMPLE  
SHOULD YOU FOLLOW?

CHAPTER 8

Author and speaker Earl Nightingale said (paraphrasing):

If you want to be successful at any endeavor, but have no way to learn how – no coaches, no mentors, no books or audio, no classroom, no workshops, no seminars, no nothing – it doesn't matter. All you have to do is pay attention to what the majority of people do in that endeavor... and do the opposite... because the majority is always wrong.

Sounds bizarre and backward, right? Though I doubted the wisdom of this when I first heard it in my 20s... every day since, I've seen the searing truth of his words.

#### EXAMPLE:

The masses follow the crowd making themselves fully accessible to the world via Facebook, Twitter, taking every call, answering every knock, accepting every interruption... thus allowing 24/7 distraction away from productive activity.

**WHY? IT MAKES THEM FEEL LIKED, ACCEPTED, ONE OF THE GANG.**

By contrast, the ultra-successful minority gives only restricted access... vigilantly protects productive hours... and blocks out distraction.

Some of the wealthiest people don't even own a cell phone or have an email address. Wait... huh? They're disconnected? And became wealthy?

Yup, imagine that.

Unlike most, they often ignore the ringing phone and knock at the door. They're focused and riveted on pre-planned, uninterrupted activities.

In the words of Mark Twain: "Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it's time to pause and reflect."

Elite peak-performing athletes resist temptations to live like the rest. World champion tennis player Rafael Nadal, after every match, practices 45 minutes hitting 135 mph serves. In the rain, if he must.

You heard it right ... after the match... when he's exhausted. Most others go home.

In his playing days, NFL Hall of Famer Jerry Rice resisted off-season laziness, the choice of most other players. His rigorous off-season workout regimen was legendary, allowing him to play Game 1 each year in mid-season shape and set a host of unbroken league records.

**AUTHOR JIM ROHN SAID: "SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE DO WHAT UNSUCCESSFUL PEOPLE ARE NOT WILLING TO DO."**

High achievers often rise early, launch into a focused checklist, and accomplish more before leaving home for the office than most do all day, says Laura Vanderkam in her book "What The Most Successful People Do Before Breakfast".

In "Great By Choice", author Jim Collins talks about "10x" companies... category leaders that outperform their industry by a factor of 10. One of their behaviors of excellence is a

penchant for decision-making based on proven, empirical fact... not untested emotional want. Absent proof of success, they seldom take action.

By contract, comparison companies – a.k.a. the majority – more frequently act on impulse, without calibration, without supporting facts, make more mistakes, and pay a costly price.

## ACTIONS FOR YOU:

If you find yourself easily seduced by 'majority thinking and behavior'... doing what most everybody else does... time to re-think your choices.

The top 1 to 5% of performers in virtually any life category – business, sports, military, academia, arts, families, communities, you name it – live by a different behavioral code.

And because they're the minority, they seem odd to most.

But hey, they're the consistent winners. Not the majority.

So who's odd now? And more importantly, whose example will YOU follow?

**Here's a closing Power Thought from Eric Thomas, motivational speaker, author, minister, former NFL football star.** "To win the lotto, you need a miracle. To be successful, you need hard work. More people are playing the lotto than working hard."

He's right. The majority is playing the lotto or taking some other equivalent short-cut. The minority is working their tails off, employing productivity habits very foreign to the rest.



TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN ANY ENDEAVOR IMPORTANT TO YOU,  
LEARN THE BEHAVIORS OF THE ELITE MINORITY OF HIGHLY  
SUCCESSFUL WINNERS IN THAT SAME ENDEAVOR...  
THE TOP 1 TO 5 ... AND MIMIC THEM. DISREGARD THE  
MAJORITY.



# CLOSE

## WELL, THERE THEY ARE. 8 WINNING LIFE SKILLS FOR HIGH ACHIEVERS AND THOSE WHO ASPIRE TO BE.

As a quick closing review – so they stay fresh in your mind – let's scamper through a quick review of all 8 winning life skills one more time.

Here they are...

### WINNING LIFE SKILL #1

In anything you wish to excel at, to be the very best you can be at... let there be no offseason. Stay active, practicing, learning, and at the top of your game... all year long.

### WINNING LIFE SKILL #2

Stop seeing life and an 'either X or Y' proposition that limits you from what you desire. See life instead as a 'both X and Y' endeavor that lets you enjoy all your passions.

### WINNING LIFE SKILL #3

To learn more... faster... and implement quicker... try 'soundbite learning'. Open any non-fiction book to any page, read one paragraph or the full page and no more, grab one idea, and put it into action that day.

### WINNING LIFE SKILL #4

The true winners in life are those who have learned to adapt... to a changing environment, to a transforming culture, to a rapidly moving business climate, to a progressive world. Not those who stay stuck in yesterday.

### WINNING LIFE SKILL #5

Any time you set a goal... get in the habit of taking the first action step TODAY... not tomorrow or next week... to quickly get yourself engaged and onto the playing field of action.

### WINNING LIFE SKILL #6

Question everything... believe nothing... regardless of the source. Make sure it resonates for you. Learn to trust your gut, your instincts, your sixth sense... before granting acceptance willy-nilly.

### WINNING LIFE SKILL #7

Organize, organize, organize – using computer files, paper files in cabinets, notebooks, or journals. Time block your day into pre-planned segments for specific tasks. A disjointed life leads to frustration. Organize for success.

## WINNING LIFE SKILL #8

To be successful in any endeavor important to you, learn the behaviors of the elite minority of highly successful winners in that same endeavor... the top 1 to 5 %... and mimic them. Disregard the majority.

Well, there they are again... all 8.

Hearing these once... or twice... or even three times... is not enough to ingrain them in your brain – so they're there unconsciously whenever you need them.

No, to keep them top of mind, it's a good idea to review all 8 of these every morning, before you start your day. Sort of your own personal self-motivational pep talk.

They'll help you make every day... a high-energy day of great accomplishment.

**NOW... GO OUT AND BE THE WINNER YOU WERE MEANT TO BE!**



# WHAT IN THE WORLD IS AUTHOR RICK HOUCEK UP TO?

## HERE'S SOME OF WHAT HE'S DONE... AND IS STILL DOING...

- Has led nearly 300 high-stakes strategic planning retreats for small and mid-size companies with his proprietary Power Planning™ Strategic Retreat process
- Delivered more than 600 live keynote and workshop presentations to audiences of all sizes in the U.S., Canada, England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland on high achievement and peak performance themes
- Led/participated in more than 610 CEO and senior executive peer group meetings over 25 years
- Runs his Leadership Excellence Academy for people in charge
- Served more than 460 advertising clients in an 18-year ad agency career
- Authored 11 audio/ebooks
- Co-authored 7 print books
- Writes an ongoing e-newsletter for growth-driven leaders, change agents, and high achievers
- Was president of Ross Roy Advertising, an Atlanta ad agency and division of the \$700 million Ross Roy Group
- Is member of National Speakers Association
- Recognized in Who's Who Among U.S. Executives
- Recognized in Who's Who in Georgia
- Recognized in Who's Who Among American Student Leaders

## ATTENTION (EOs):

### Are You Operating Without A Strategic Plan?

You're playing blind archery if you are. Worse, there's debilitating confusion among your staff and it's doubtful anyone's telling you. How can they perform in a fog? How can your desired results be achieved when your leadership team isn't bought into a common vision? Here's how to fix it: Rick Houcek leads strategy retreats for small & mid-size businesses using his dynamic Power Planning™ process. His Escape-Proof Accountability™ system overcomes the crippling effects of lousy execution – the single biggest cause of plan failure. Everyone leaves on the same page. For details, visit [www.SoarWithEagles.com](http://www.SoarWithEagles.com). Be sure to read the priceless praise from prestigious CEO clients about value they gained.

## ATTENTION MANAGERS:

### Looking For An Innovative Way To Grow Your People?

Consider bringing in Rick Houcek's dynamic "Self-Motivation For Winners" personal goal workshop for your employees. This is 'life planning' at its best – not business goal setting – and it assures staff members you care about them, their families, their lives. Invite spouses too. For details, go to [www.SoarWithEagles.com](http://www.SoarWithEagles.com).

## ATTENTION MEETING PLANNERS:

### Need a High-Energy Speaker For Your Next Conference?

Could your team use a jolt of inspiration? How about content-rich, battle-tested ideas on leadership excellence, self-motivation, winner behavior, or personal goal setting? Why not bring in Rick Houcek to speak at your annual meeting, team offsite, or industry conference? For topics and information, go to [www.SoarWithEagles.com](http://www.SoarWithEagles.com). Read what clients have said about value they gained – their words are gold!

# A WEE BIT MORE ABOUT RICK...

Rick Houcek's singular company purpose is: To provide high-octane, world-class strategic planning systems for business and life, helping top gun leaders, teams and individuals to succeed 'on purpose, most of the time,' rather than 'by accident, some of the time.'



A University of Missouri graduate, Rick has 4 fanatical life passions: family, health/fitness, helping others prosper through his business and friendships, and playing competitive baseball.

*Rick Houcek*

CONNECT WITH RICK



770-391-9122