

TAKING ACTION

Tips and techniques to take the first step toward your goal

BY BRIAN TRACY



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-Brian Tracy

The Impact of Action

The world seems to belong to those who reach out and grab it with both hands. It belongs to those who do something rather than just wish and hope and plan and pray, and intend to do something someday, when everything is just right.

Successful people are not necessarily those who make the right decisions all the time. No one can do that, no matter how smart he is. But once successful people have made a decision, they begin moving toward their objectives step-by-step, and they begin to get feedback or signals to tell them where they're off course and when course corrections are necessary. As they take action and move toward their goals, they continually get new information that enables them to adjust their plans in large and small ways.

It's important to understand that life is a series of approximations and course adjustments. Let me explain. When an airplane leaves Chicago for Los Angeles, it is off course 99 percent of the time. This is normal and natural and to be expected. The pilot makes continual course corrections, a little to the north, a little to the south. The pilot continually adjusts altitude and throttle. And sure enough, several hours later, the plane touches down at exactly the time predicted when it first became airborne upon leaving Chicago. The entire journey has been a process of approximations and course adjustments.

What's the big problem? The big problem is that there are no guarantees in life. Everything you do—even crossing the street—is filled with uncertainty. You can never be completely sure that any action or behavior is going to bring about the desired result. There is always a risk. And where there is risk, there is fear. And whatever you think about grows in your mind and heart. People who think continually about the risks involved in any undertaking soon become preoccupied with fears and doubts and anxieties that conspire to hold them back from trying in the first place.

Take Chances

If you want to be more successful faster, just do or try more things. Take more action; get busier. Start a little earlier; work a little harder; stay a little later. Put the odds in your favor. According to the Law of Probability, the more things you try, the more likely it is that you will try the one thing that will make all the difference.

I've found that luck is quite predictable. If you want more luck, take more chances. Be more active. Show up more often.

Tom Peters, the best-selling author of *In Search of Excellence* and other business books, found that a key quality of the top executives in his study was a "bias for action." Their motto seemed to be, "Ready, aim, fire." Their attitude toward business was summarized in the words, "Do it, fix it, try it." They realized that the future belongs to the action-oriented, to the risk taker.

Top people know, as General Douglas MacArthur once said, "There is no security in life, only opportunity." And the interesting thing is this: If you seek for opportunity, you'll end up with all the security you need. However, if you seek for security, you'll end up with neither opportunity nor security. The proof of this is all around us, in the downsizing and reconstructing of corporations, where thousands of men and women who sought security are finding themselves unemployed for long periods of time.

There is a "momentum principle of success," which is very important to you it's derived from two physical laws, the Law of Momentum and the Law of Inertia, and it applies equally well to everything that you accomplish and fail to accomplish.

In physics, the Law of Momentum says that a body in motion tends to remain in motion unless acted upon by an outside force. The Law of Inertia, on the other hand, says that a body at rest tends to remain at rest unless acted upon by an outside force.

In their simplest terms, as they apply to you and your life, those laws say that if you stay in motion toward something that is important to you, it's much easier to continue making progress than it is if you stop somewhere along the way and have to start again. When you look at successful people, you find that they are very much like the plate spinners in the circus. They get things started; they get the plates spinning. They continually keep them spinning, knowing that if a plate falls off, or something comes to a halt, it's much harder to get it restarted than it is to keep it going in the first place.

Evaluate Yourself

Look at your work. Be honest and objective about your strengths and weaknesses. What are you good at? What are you poor at? What is your major area of weakness? What must you absolutely, positively be excellent at in order to move to the top of your field? What one skill do you have that, because of its weakness, may be holding you back from using all your other skills?

Norman Augustine, CEO of Martin Marietta Corporation, recently said that the most important thing he learned in the last 10 years of business was that your weakest important skill determines the extent to which you can use all of your other talents and abilities. In looking at the hundreds of people who worked below him in his corporation, he had found that people's careers were largely determined not only by their strengths but also by their weaknesses. The very act of overcoming a particular weakness, through preparation and practice, was enough to propel a person into the front ranks in his or her career.

In preparing for success, one of the very best questions that you can ask yourself, continually, is: "What can I—and only I—do that, if done well, will make a real difference in my career?" Usually, there is only one or perhaps two answers to that question. Your ability to honestly appraise yourself and to identify the particular skill area that may be holding you back is critical.

Remember when I said that preparation requires both self-discipline and faith. It requires self-discipline because your natural tendency is to do more and

more of those things that come most easily to you, and to avoid those areas that you don't enjoy because you're not particularly good at them yet. It requires faith and character for you to admit your weaknesses in a particular area and then resolve to go to work to develop yourself so those weaknesses don't hold you back.

The greatest change that has taken place in our society in the last 20 years is that it's become an information-based society. More than 50 percent of the working population is in the business of processing information in some way. This means that we now have a knowledge-based society and that you're a knowledge worker. You work with your mind, your brain, your mental talents and abilities. You no longer "load that bale and tote that hay." You work by thinking and the more effectively you think and the better prepared you are mentally, the more productive and positive you'll be.

The Golden Hour

One thing that has helped me enormously over the years is the habit of getting up early in the morning and spending the first 30 to 60 minutes reading something uplifting. You can read material that is educational or motivational or even inspirational. Many people read spiritual literature. Henry Ward Beecher once said, "The first hour is the rudder of the day." This is often called the "golden hour." It's the hour during which you program your mind and set your emotional tone for the rest of the day. If you get up in the morning at least two hours before you have to be at work, or before your first appointment, and spend the first hour investing in your mind, taking in "mental protein" rather than "mental candy," reading good books rather than the newspaper or magazines, your whole day will flow more smoothly. You'll be more positive and optimistic. You'll be calmer, more confident and relaxed. You'll have a greater sense of control and well-being by the very act of reading healthy material for the first hour of each day.

After just three days of reading for 30 to 60 minutes in the morning, you'll notice a profound difference. You'll begin to develop what Dr. William Glasser

called a “positive addiction.” As a result of your early-morning reading, you’ll feel so good about yourself and your life that you’ll develop a desire and motivation to get up earlier, even though your tendency in the past was to sleep in later. Try it and see. It’s a wonderful experience, and it can have a profound impact on the rest of your life.

Be Prepared

In everything you do, preparation is the key. If you want to be ready for success, you have to plant the seeds well in advance of the harvest that you expect. Do what the winners do: Think on paper. Memorize the winner’s creed: “Everything counts.” Everything you do is either moving you toward your goals or moving you away. Everything is either helping you or hurting you. Nothing is neutral. Everything counts.

A successful businessman was once asked for advice by a young person on how he could be more successful faster. The businessman told him that the key to his success had been to “get good” at his job.

The young man said, “I’m already good at what I do.”

The businessman then said, “Well, get better!”

The young man, somewhat self-satisfied, said, “Well, I’m already better than most people.”

To that, the businessman replied, “Then be the best.”

Those are three of the best pieces of advice I’ve ever heard: Get good. Get better. Be the best!

Remember, we live in a knowledge-based society, and knowledge in every field is doubling approximately every seven years. This means that you must double your knowledge in your field every seven years just to stay even. You’re already “maxxed out” at your current level of knowledge and skill. You’ve

reached the ceiling in your career with your current talents and abilities. If you want to go faster and farther, you must get back to work and begin to prepare yourself for greater heights. You must put aside the newspaper, turn off the television, politely excuse yourself from aimless socializing and get back to working on yourself.

A quotation by Abraham Lincoln had a great influence on my life when I was 15. It was a statement he made when he was a young lawyer in Springfield, Illinois. He said, "I will study and prepare myself, and someday my chance will come."

If you study and prepare yourself, your chance will come as well. There is nothing that you cannot accomplish if you'll invest the effort to get yourself ready for the success that you desire. And there is nothing that can stop you but your own lack of preparation.

Let me end with this beautiful poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:

*"Those heights by great men won and kept;
Were not achieved by sudden flight;
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night"*

Your possibilities are endless, your potential is unlimited, and your future opens up before you when you prepare yourself for the success that must inevitably be yours.

About the Author

Brian Tracy is Chairman and CEO of Brian Tracy International, a company specializing in the training and development of individuals and organizations.

Brian's goal is to help you achieve your personal and business goals faster and easier than you ever imagined.

Brian Tracy has consulted for more than 1,000 companies and addressed more than 5,000,000 people in 5,000 talks and seminars throughout the US, Canada and 80 other countries worldwide. As a Keynote speaker and seminar leader, he addresses more than 250,000 people each year.

He has studied, researched, written and spoken for 30 years in the fields of economics, history, business, philosophy and psychology. He is the top selling author of over 50 books that have been translated into dozens of languages.

He has written and produced more than 500 audio and video learning programs, including the worldwide, best-selling *Psychology of Achievement*, which has been translated into more than 20 languages.

He speaks to corporate and public audiences on the subjects of Personal and Professional Development, including the executives and staff of many of America's largest corporations. His exciting talks and seminars on Leadership, Selling, Self-Esteem, Goals, Strategy, Creativity and Success Psychology bring about immediate changes and long-term results.

Prior to founding his company, Brian Tracy International, Brian was the Chief Operating Officer of a \$265 million dollar development company. He has had successful careers in sales and marketing, investments, real estate development and syndication, importation, distribution and management consulting. He has conducted high level consulting

assignments with several billion-dollar plus corporations in strategic planning and organizational development.

He has traveled and worked in over 90 countries on six continents, and speaks four languages. Brian is happily married and has four children. He is active in community and national affairs, and is the President of three companies headquartered in Solana Beach, California.

Brian is the president of Brian Tracy International, a company that helps individuals and businesses of all sizes achieve personal and professional goals.

To learn more about Brian Tracy, please visit www.briantracy.com.

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