

Habits, Peer Pressure and Dopamine

— How to overdeliver
on your goals

XISY

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It's far too easy these days to fill every minute of your day doing something. Activities like responding to emails, attending meetings, writing monthly reports, reading your LinkedIn feed, checking for new COVID-19 infections, or manually updating spreadsheets can fill your day without you even getting to think about your goals, let alone complete one.

Achieving a single goal can be a long journey that may seem daunting. However, by creating some new habits you'll quickly see yourself getting closer to your goals and maybe even over deliver on them.

Habits for Success

01

Focus on one goal
at a time

02

Set weekly
goal-based tasks

03

Reserve focus time
each day

04

Pay attention to
operational metrics

05

Track progress with
someone you respect

Focus on One Goal at a Time

Starting is often the hardest. Make it easier by selecting a single goal to focus on. Whatever goal you select needs to be backed up by a metric that is measurable—something that has a percentage or value increase by a certain date. So for a goal of “We want to increase retention without losing revenue”, we could set a metric of “Increase our strategic customer retention to 85% within the next 3 months without decreasing ARPU.”

If you have a list of goals, order your goals from highest to lowest reward noting how complex they might be to achieve. Select the goal which has the least amount of complexity for greatest reward.

TIP — Start with a small goal that is easy to achieve, because with every completed goal, you’ll receive a small dopamine push towards getting started on the next goal.

The Proof

<https://jamesclear.com/master-one-thing>

<https://www.asianefficiency.com/mindsets/work-life-balance-part-2>

<https://www.healthline.com/health/dopamine-effects>

Set Weekly Goal Based Tasks

Due to their size and complexity, goals can appear to be insurmountable at first glance. A useful approach is to break the goal up into a number of smaller tasks, which ever so slightly move you closer to your target metric. Each task should be achievable in the amount of time you can allocate to yourself each day or week. So if you can spare one hour a day, your task/s should be completable in one hour.

Don't worry about defining all of the tasks that need to be done to achieve your larger goal, just start with the first few. Set one to three tasks each week and you'll be surprised at how quickly you complete that bigger goal.

Reserve Focus Time Each Day

Create a weekly reminder to reserve time over the coming week to focus on your tasks. Blocking out time by creating personal meetings in your calendar will prevent other people from stealing your focus.

During your focus time, turn off your phone's notifications, close your email client and change your availability status so colleagues know that you're not to be interrupted.

TIP — Use headphones, or display a 'do not disturb' sign, either physically or virtually using Slack, Teams, etc. to let people know you're busy.

The Research to Back it up

Each block of focus time must be uninterrupted and at the time of day your brain is able to perform at its best. According to Dr Michael Breus (author of *The Power of When*), chronobiology is hard wired, with your most productive time between 10am–2pm, and then again from 4pm–10pm.

<https://thepowerofwhen.com/>

Did you know

The more tasks you try to tackle at once, the less overall time you can dedicate to each one — and the longer it'll take to get them done right. That concept in itself is pretty simple. But on top of that, you're also losing out on overall productive time because of context switching. Why?

Because it can take more than 25 minutes to resume a task after being interrupted. Sometimes that's because distractions pile on top of each other. Other times that's just the amount of time you need in order to get back into whatever you were doing.

Pay Attention to Operational Metrics

There's no point succeeding in achieving your goals if you are going to let your routine tasks fall by the wayside. Make a note of the mission critical metrics you've got to keep your company/team/house running and monitor how well you are still doing them whilst working towards your goals.

If you notice your operational metrics are trending down, you'll need to change something. You might need to dial back the time you are spending on your bigger goals or find more people to help.

TIP — A weekly check in of your operational metrics should be sufficient to get a gauge on where you are at.

Track Progress with Someone you Respect

It would be nice if we all had the willpower to do exactly as we promised... but we don't. Find someone who shares your passion to improve and hold each other accountable in a weekly meeting to:

- 1 Assess how well your previous week's tasks went. It's okay if you didn't get them done, just move them across to this week after discussing what stopped you from doing them.
- 2 Increase / decrease the likelihood you'll achieve your goal by the stated deadline.
TIP — Use a percentage likelihood of completing your goal on time.
- 3 State the tasks you plan to do this week to move closer to your goal.
- 4 Discuss / demonstrate how your operational metrics are in an acceptable range.

So, What's Next?

Achieving or maintaining self-actualisation is something we should all be doing so we can help ourselves and each other in whatever purpose we have. But much like paying down a mortgage, obtaining mastery, autonomy and purpose is a lifelong pursuit that you chip away at each week.

Find someone you respect, a mentor, colleague or friend, and book in 30 minutes to set your first tasks — one of which should be 'decide our operational metrics'.

X is Y is a Management Consultancy for the digital age.

We specialise in helping our clients identify their goals and align their business to move towards them meaningfully and efficiently – backed up by demonstrable data. Whether its monitoring performance and identifying drivers to increase impact, improving data quality to support business needs, or optimising a process, we've got you covered.

We use contemporary ways of working (such as Design Thinking and Agile) and modern technologies (such as automation and cloud) to accelerate your journey.

Get in Touch

If creating new habits for over-delivering on your goals sounds like you, let's have a chat.

<https://calendly.com/x-is-y-directors>