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Achieving excellence: Four tips for success

Centuries ago, Aristotle wrote, “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.” Have you developed that habit? Perhaps you need a jumpstart to get on the “excellence” bandwagon.

“Excellence” is a concept that is consistently battered around, yet it is a concept that should be highly valued. Whatever your professional/personal situation, here are four tips that can help renew your focus to achieve excellence.

Be change-oriented

Change-oriented professionals are curious, innovative, and constantly seeking ways to improve. When you think about it, change is inevitable. In the 90s, change accelerated faster than ever before, and it is continuing to gather speed as we move further into the second decade of the 21st century.

Change helps us to refocus and gives us new opportunities. Rather than being too resistive, too reactive and too closely tied to old habits — like you know we can be — get out of your comfort zone and stretch. View change as an exciting challenge, the beginning of taking new and bold steps to meeting greater challenges and achieving excellence.

Set goals

I recognize this technique is as old as time, but it works! Goals give us a much needed sense of purpose, a vision that keep us pressing on.

More than 65 years ago, Florence

Chadwick decided she would become the first woman ever to swim the English Channel. For years, she trained and disciplined herself to keep going long after her body cried out for relief. Finally, in 1952, the big day came. She set out full of hope, surrounded by well-wishers in small boats. Of course, there were also the skeptics who doubted she would make it.

As she neared the coast of England, a heavy fog settled in and the waters became increasingly cold and choppy. Her mother encouraged her, “Come on, Florence, you can make it. It’s only a few more miles.”

Finally, exhausted, she asked to be pulled aboard the boat just a few hundred yards from her goal. She was defeated and heartbroken, especially when she discovered how close she had been to reaching her goal. Later, she told news reporters, “I’m not offering excuses, but I think I could have made it if I had been able to see my goal.”

Chadwick decided to try again. This time, she concentrated on developing a mental image of the coasts of England. On the appointed day, she encountered all the choppy waters and fog she had met before. But this time, she made it.

Goals give you a vision that keep you pressing on. I encourage you to set goals that are realistic and attainable, specific and measurable. Write down your goals — it helps to crystallize them. Then, develop an action plan that

will help launch your goals, and as the Nike commercial says, “Just do it.”

Be committed

Commitment gives you new power. No matter what comes your way, never turn your eye from the goal. Commitment guarantees victory. It’s hard to keep committed people from success. If you were to place stumbling blocks in their way, they would take them for stepping stones. If difficulties are thrust in front of achievers, they go around, under or through them.

To reach your goals, you must be totally committed and do what it takes to accomplish them. Keep in mind the adage, “If it’s to be, it’s up to me.”

Think positively

Charles Swindoll wrote, “The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day.” And so it is with you. You are in charge of your attitude. Make it work for you as you strive for excellence.

The bottom line: The road to excellence is always under construction — you can always do better and you can always grow. Continually pursue excellence by doing the best you can with your talents, skills and abilities.

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