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REACH YOUR GOALS BY Habit Stacking

Got goals? Sure you do, and no doubt, as a top performer, meeting and exceeding your goals is a priority each day. Experts tell us to write down our goals, make our goals SMART, read our goals daily, and visualize the achievement of our goals. Our goals serve a purpose as they focus on a desired outcome and help clarify our direction. Yet, in studies of people who succeed, the most successful follow *systems* and not goals. Personal development guru James Clear suggests this even further, stating, “Goals are overrated, and therein lies a danger in being so goal-focused that we often miss the bigger picture.” *It is our daily processes and systems — what we do on a daily basis — that determines our success.* And, you guessed it, those daily processes and systems are our small daily habits that determine our very success.

Sure, you possess grit, will power, passion, talent, wisdom, and perseverance. Yet, these qualities do not determine reaching your goals. Motivation waxes and wanes. We may begin an endeavor

with fervor ... only soon to not “feel like it” or experience a setback and then avoidance, negativity, and doubt set in. More often than not, most end up quickly giving up trying to implement a new habit and, ultimately, the desired goal is never met.

So goals and passion don’t cut it and, as the Dilbert guy, Scott Adams, confirms, “Passion is overrated, and goals are for losers.” Adams suggests that it is “our systems, something we do every day that moves us in the right direction to achieve our goals.” Therein lies the very secret: our small daily habits, our daily systems and processes, ultimately determine our goals. When we build a better system that promotes the system and not just the goal, we are more likely to be successful. The system is the process that actually drives the results. Committing to the system and showing up every day is what makes the difference, and “habit stacking” can set us up for success.

Habit stacking is just what it sounds like — it’s creating a new habit by stacking it onto an existing one. Habit stacking harnesses the momentum and energy of an already-existing habit in order to ingrain a new habit to produce a desired outcome. For example, think of a habit you’ve been trying to incorporate into your day. Maybe you intend to time block one hour every morning dedicated to working out of your CRM, but have found your mornings are hijacked by email, social media, meetings, and calls, all while entering listings, negotiating contracts, and connecting with clients and colleagues. So, although a well-intentioned goal and, presumably, a vital one, your CRM time blocking either falls further down your to-do list or falls off. Despite your specific goal, it’s just not happening.

Enter habit stacking. By calling on your existing morning routine, all the things you normally do, you can tie your CRM time blocking to one thing that happens without fail, one habit that occurs like clockwork. If, every day, you sit, clear your space, and drink your morning coffee at your desk, once seated, while enjoying your coffee, begin time blocking your CRM. Use the old behavior of clearing your desk space while enjoying your coffee as the trigger to create the new behavior. When you stack CRM time blocking to your morning coffee and space clearing, an already solid habit in your morning routine, you are more likely to follow through and create the new habit. Habit stacking may not feel like much on any given day, but it pays dividends in the future.

The concept of habit stacking is also useful neurologically. James Clear, author of “Atomic Habits,” states, “You are basically creating an on ramp to this neuropathway in your brain. You already have a habit built: making/drinking coffee in the morning is something you can count on. And because it is an established daily habit, by tying a new behavior to that same neural pathway and building it into your brain, you’re creating a stronger likelihood for the new habit to stick.”

The concept may seem simple — and it is — with consistency. As long as your new habit is attached to a rock-solid one, you will successfully start building a new one. Here are a few additional tips to help you begin habit stacking:

- 1. Know it.** Know your ‘why.’ Write out your “MoFa.” This is what I call, in my coaching, your “Motivating Factor.” Your new habit will only be sustainable because you ultimately want to do it to achieve a specific result. If you’re doing something because you think you should and not actually because you want to, your motivation will fall flat. Commit to the system and the process.
- 2. Size it.** Start small. Instead of one-hour time blocking, shoot for 15 minutes and, over time, increase the time in increments.
- 3. Connect it.** Connect your new habit with your goal. For example, by time blocking working in CRM, my goal is to increase my sales by a specific amount, by a specific date, and ultimately, build my business mostly of referral-based relationships.

4. Write it. Write your new habit in your daily calendar/planner. When it is written and visible, it’s front and center and a reminder of the system and process to reach your goal.

5. Master it. Master stacking one habit at a time before adding another new habit to the stack.

Finally, remember that the greatest returns are often delayed. “Habits are like that too,” author James Clear states. “The cost of your good habits is in the present and the cost of your bad habits is in the future. The fact that we prioritize the present over the future makes habit change difficult for that reason.” Yet, when we incorporate habit stacking into our endeavors, we can make the art of forming a new habit all the easier in order to commit to the daily systems and processes required to ultimately achieve our goals.



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