

5 tips to start becoming a self-starter

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There is no question that for many people these are challenging times to remain motivated. Global economics, a worldwide pandemic, wide-scale job losses, and socio-political volatility leave many people feeling over-whelmed.



Source: pixabay.com

With ongoing disruptions to the way we've always worked, and uncertainty about what this fabled "new normal" will look like is having a severe effect on people's ability to self-motivate. However, there are ways in which you are able to jump start your self-starter abilities.

Being a self-starter is ever-more critical in your career, however - whether you're a salaried employee, a freelancer or an entrepreneur. With so many people working remotely as well, it's down to each individual to get their personal mindset right. The reasons to cultivate self-motivational habits are many: you will be more productive, your workload stress will be reduced, and you will also come across as a competent, reliable person to work with.

1. Prioritise

One of the biggest killers of motivation is distraction. If you are working on a task, being interrupted for any reason can completely derail you and make it difficult to complete the task well. Distractions, of course, can include other responsibilities, whether they are personal or work-related.

For instance, if you have to attend a video meeting today, but also have a task under deadline, and also have to take your dog to the vet, concern about getting everything done can cause you to be distracted. When you reach the end of the day, flustered and stressed, you can feel very demotivated.

If, however, you take a few moments early in the day, or even the night before, to prioritise your responsibilities for the day, it is much easier to motivate yourself to begin. A clear set of goals with defined outcomes can be a great psychological motivator.

2. Plan your goals

There's a world of psychological difference between, for example, wanting to run the Comrades and setting out a series of manageable steps to achieve this. Simply stating the end outcome isn't enough to motivate you to do it. You need to break down the bigger, overall goal into manageable tasks and mini-goals. Achieving these small goals along the way can be a powerful psychological motivator, and make getting started considerably easier.

Once you've prioritised your responsibilities for the day, take each one in turn and plan the steps required to complete it. Consciously thinking through the steps, even if it's something as simple as "get Fido's lead, fetch wallet and keys, get Fido in the car, drive to the vet" can make sure you don't forget any crucial steps along the way. It also helps your brain understand the complexity and scope of the task, which, again, can help make getting started easier.

3. Look for the silver lining

Failure happens. Deadlines are missed. Emergencies crop up. Pandemics disrupt literally everything. There are hundreds of stresses that we go through as individuals, families, company teams, friends, and all of them impact our ability to self-motivate. If, however, you practice always looking for the positive in any negative situation, you can help yourself be motivated to keep pushing, even when things seem too hard.

Start small to teach your brain how to do it. The banana you wanted to eat is over-ripe? Great! Banana bread! Yes, that's a simplistic example, but it's just an example of a way of thinking. When you consciously decide to seek out at least one positive benefit of any situation, you learn to accept challenges as motivators. This is a difficult habit to cultivate, but, like all good habits, it's worth the effort.

4. Cultivate good habits

There are infinite articles online about the "five top habits of super successful people". However, when you pay close attention, they are all really iterations and variations on a few, quite sensible, habits. There is no denying, for example, the correlation between good physical health and mental wellbeing. While a healthy diet can't cure all mental health issues, it certainly can, alongside exercise and good sleep, help reduce stress, anxiety and many related chronic health problems. Most of the super successful CEOs agree that you should try to keep your physical health in good condition.

Keeping your mind active and healthy also feature heavily. Some may listen to audiobooks, others devour news feeds, others again read anything and everything, and yet another play Sudoku and crossword puzzles. A common denominator, however, is developing habits that keep your mental muscles flexing and stretching, alongside your physical ones.

5. Ask for help

Being overwhelmed is an absolute self-motivation killer. Nothing will make you want to throw in the towel as fast as being swamped by demands, without the time or capacity to manage all of them. This is where it's important to remember, you are allowed to ask for help. Whether it's a colleague, your manager, your partner, a friend, whoever, if you need help, ask them. If you approach co-workers and find that they, too, are in the same boat, then ask collectively for help. Being there for one another, asking for help where necessary, and returning that help when you are needed can be a great way to build confidence and keep motivated.

Being a self-starter isn't something you can get 100% right overnight, but the trick is to always keep working at it. Start with the first step - it's always the hardest one, but you'll find, once you get going, it's not difficult to maintain it.

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