

HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITHOUT WORKING SO DAMN HARD

Rethinking the Rules,
Reinventing the Game

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MAIN IDEA

Working harder than everyone else is one way to succeed – but it’s not necessarily the only way or even the best way to become a great success. Instead, try and change the way you play the game of business so you tilt the playing field to your advantage. In other words, instead of trying to work harder, work better.

There are two basic strategies you can follow to work better:

Work better, not harder.



Don't conform, rethink the rules of the way you do business.

- 1 The more you try to hurry, the worse it gets.
- 2 Slow down – you'll be more productive that way.
- 3 Exploit your strengths rather than fix weaknesses.
- 4 Schedule some "thinking time" every day.
- 5 Use e-mail to save time, not to generate a flood.
- 6 Make a serious effort to halve your meetings.
- 7 If you must meet with someone, be creative.
- 8 Never generate anything that is longer than a page.
- 9 Practice thinking like a novice – question everything.
- 10 Never use yesterday's assumptions on today's ideas.
- 11 Do the complete opposite of what everyone else does.
- 12 Try creating some real oddball combinations.
- 13 Don't try and sell products. Sell new solutions.

Don't compete against others, reinvent the game your way.

- 14 Get new ideas from outside your industry.
- 15 Get out from behind your desk and plunge in.
- 16 Realize the greatest resource for the future is the past.
- 17 Listen to new ideas, especially those from the young.
- 18 Create odd partnerships to stimulate genuine creativity.
- 19 Look for ways to partner, merge and consolidate.
- 20 Lead your customer and deliver what is impossible.
- 21 Act big but think small and be nimble.
- 22 Take some risks. It's the only way to get ahead.
- 23 Whenever you get into a habit, break it.
- 24 Keep a running log of your successes.
- 25 Use passion to maintain motivation.
- 26 Live your entire life as a breakthrough thinker.

In other words, instead of working 100-hours a week, try working less hours but only on projects you feel intensely passionate about. Or rethink your approach to customers to come up with new ideas your competitors have never tried. Do a little pioneering into undiscovered territories. Find paths nobody else has ever thought to tread, and reach new customers that way. It may not work out exactly as planned, but at least you won't be enrolling in an endurance test to see whether or not you can work longer hours than the next guy.

The key to avoid having to work so damn hard is creative or breakthrough thinking. Instead of trying to climb the corporate ladder, challenge the old ways of doing everything. Look carefully at your mind-set, industry perceptions and personal biases. Ask whether you're doing things with passion, or whether you've just got into a predictable rut. Then revamp your entire business philosophy. Replace it with something you can get truly passionate about. The people who rise to the top aren't those who simply put in the most hours. Instead, the people at the top are thinkers, visionaries and innovators. Aspire to join their ranks.

"I often overhear people boasting about the meeting the previous night that lasted until two A.M. For these folks, success is directly related to the number of hours they spend at the office. As if the longer and harder they work, the more they will be looked at as superheroes. What isn't admitted – or possibly even realized – is that when you work late, your brain is too fried to be productive. Quality and creativity rarely emanate out of an exhausted mind. More mistakes are made when you're retired or pumped on caffeine, which means having to redo by the light of day what you did at night. Working hard does work. It's the American ethic. And it definitely can lead to success. But it's not the only way. The American ethic is also one of a pioneering spirit, of exploring new territory, and of taking the path less trod. It is one of creating change, rather than responding to market shifts and new opportunities, and of being out in front of the wave, rather than trying to keep up with it. To succeed in these rapidly changing times, it is necessary to challenge the old modes, myths and mind-sets, and rethink, redefine and reinvent your business philosophy. That will help you develop dramatic new solutions to old problems, create exciting new opportunities and succeed beyond what you ever thought possible, all without having to work so damn hard."

– Robert Kriegel

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