

A 42-day shift at



The **Discipline** Factory

A collection of the daily sales and leadership emails
from Troy Forrest

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A client value-adding service from



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Where you build disciplines

Every morning

"Discipline is the refining fire by which talent becomes ability."

Roy Smith

Every morning at 4:30am, Geoff Huegill and thousands of other Olympic hopefuls jump in a pool and swim for 2 & 1/2 hours. Training isn't the goal. It's the necessary discipline to achieve success.

Every morning before 6am, a newspaper delivery man lobs a shrink-wrapped *Advertiser* into the Agapanthas near my front door. I rely on him to be disciplined enough to do it like clockwork.

Every morning at 11:30am, the Guard at Buckingham Palace changes. It's ceremonial, it's functional, it's refreshing and it's a non-negotiable discipline.

Every morning in the Apple store, the team hold a daily huddle to talk about what happened yesterday and what needs to happen today. It's a reset button and a discipline focal point.

Every morning before he does anything else, Sir Richard Branson opens all mail he's received from his staff the previous day. It's the discipline that shows how he prioritises his VIP's.

Every morning in hospitals around the world, nurses and surgeons check charts and do rounds. **Every morning**, former Aussie PM John Howard dons a tracksuit and takes a long walk. **Every morning**, the Bondi Icebergs jump in freezing water. **Every morning**, Oprah reads her bible. **Every morning**, you pour yourself an orange juice, take your Ginko Biloba and brush your teeth.

'Every morning' is a discipline. A non-negotiable, even-when-I-don't-feel-like-it routine that, were it done as a one-off act, would achieve little. But done every morning, rain, hail or shine, motivation up or down, over-and-over-and-over? Bite size review, planning, training, communication or activity practices that we know make sense and are proven to work? That continuum will generate remarkable sustainable long-term success.

Disciplines that make exponential differences are simple but not easy. They need support and galvanising and a running start.

Welcome to the discipline factory. Clock on for a 42-day shift?

For a discipline to sink its talons in, it needs to be underpinned by a very clear, personally important reason for persisting. A goal. **Take a minute** to (re)define your #1 2011 professional goal. Give yourself a slap-in-the-face reason to be disciplined - what do you *most* want to achieve by Christmas? Write it down. It'll help you remember why you're putting yourself through the paces.

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5 Pillars

"It was character that got us out of bed, commitment that moved us into action, and discipline that enabled us to follow through."

Zig

Steve Pavlina has coined what he calls the "5 pillars of self-discipline". They are;

1. **Acceptance** - getting to grips that what you're trying to achieve is difficult and will require regular bite-size bits of your effort over a long period. Deciding that what you want is important enough to pay the price.
2. **Willpower** - the ability to put the longer term gain in front of the short term pain. A fire in the belly, a stubbornness, an ability to say no to distractions, a belief that you've got what it takes to get to the meaningful endpoint.
3. **Hard work** - emphasis on the *hard* bit. Not easy stuff. Challenging, difficult tasks. Things that mere mortals shy away from every day. Jobs that make you shake, cringe, sweat, think, ache, breathe deeply. Non-doddles - hard work is found on bumpy tracks and steep hills.
4. **Industry** - means 'working hard'. Grinding into and through the hard work, staying active, continually moving, not pausing, deliberately sequestering and putting in the time needed to get the hard work done. Constant cadence.
5. **Persistence** - not being a sooky la la and dropping your discipline bundle at the first sign of pain or sidetrack instant gratification opportunities. Keeping your eye on the longer-term prize and silencing the quitter voices that get ever louder (until they don't).

The 5 pillars acronym? A WHIP (cheesy, but memorable).

Unlike Rhianna, whips'n'chains mightn't excite you.

But they force you to pay attention.

One daily self-discipline challenge - look at your 2011 goal every workday morning. Print it out and post somewhere (lots of places) that you'll see it without thinking. Then accept just one thing - "**This will be hard**". Every day, remind yourself of that. Test how badly you want it, every day.

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No

"People fail because of what they will not give up."

Peter Drucker

To lose weight, it's not enough to start eating broccoli. You have to stop eating donuts.

To win the Phillip Island MotoGP, it's not enough to start riding faster. You have to stop taking corners too wide.

To get front yard grass that looks like a lawn bowls rink, it's not enough to fertilise and mow. You have to stop using your pitching wedge on it.

The discipline factory will produce a conveyer-belt of ideas on things you can add to your workday that are proven by folks cleverer and more successful than you or I to help you be more efficient and productive and ultimately have more fun. But there's no use asking already busy people to take on more tasks without creating a gap for them to wriggle into.

Saying no to the useless polyfiller activities is a discipline.

To fit in your morning checklist challenge, you have to say no to the Facebook surfing you'd've otherwise done.

To get your diligent pre-call planning humming along, you have to say no to anything that makes you to turn up to appointments on the fly with only seconds to spare.

To keep the daily appointment with yourself (that allows you to send your congratulations & thank-you notes and review your BHAG), you have to say no to the overwhelming desire to open that slot up for time with other people.

Saying no means being clear about your priorities - about what's most likely to help you achieve your longer-term goals. (And that, of course, requires you to *have* them...)

One daily self-discipline challenge - Pick one thing you'd have otherwise done today that doesn't add any appreciable value to what you offer clients or to your progress towards your goals. Now say **no** to it. In writing. (Want to take it to the next level? Write the word 'no' as a recurring daily appointment with yourself at 8am each day).

We don't like the word 'no'. To say it to yourself needs discipline. Say 'no' to closing this email before taking the self-discipline challenge.

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Ingraining

"Don't wait around for inspiration. Inspiration is for amateurs. The rest of us just show up and get to work. If you wait around for the clouds to part and the lightning to strike, you're not going to make an awful lot of work. The great ideas come out of the process - the work itself."

Chuck Close, Artist

I just finished reading a Steven King book, *"Under the Dome"* (not all business books in my Kindle...). At the end in the Author's note, King points to the discipline he's developed in contributing to his craft.

"Surendra Patel, to who this book is dedicated, was a friend and source of comfort for 30 years. In June 2008 I got news he died of a heart attack. I sat on the steps of my office and cried. When that part was over, I went back to work. It was what he would have expected."

From another scribe, Bryce Courtenay;

"I get up every day at 4:30am and take the dogs for a walk in the hills, and I'll think about what I'm going to write about. After breakfast, 6:30am, I'll sit down to write, and I write for 12 hours and I won't get up, not even for a cup of tea. A period of total concentration. Then, bang, after 12 hours, I'll close the curtains on writing, and I'll have a glass of wine and start my other day with my wife. That's the writing routine."

Chuck Close, photorealism pioneer and globally acclaimed artist, paints 365 days a year. *"I work Christmas Eve, Christmas day, New Years Eve - doesn't make any difference. Any day that you just do a little something, all those little pieces of something add up and it continues the momentum."*

High quality, high quantity producers of art with daily disciplined non-negotiables. 12 hours without so much as a loo stop might freak you out, but the daily bite-size little bits that add up...?

One daily self-discipline challenge - Sequester 10 minutes for yourself, every work day. A non-negotiable, won't-give-up-for-anyone, slot. A time to apply a discipline you know will help you progress. Trace your finger over the written goal. Review the plan. Do a smidge of research. Create an initiative. Walk and think. Phone a soon-to-be-praised recipient. But make the time in the diary, and keep it.

Quality starts with quantity, and quantity comes through daily steps.

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Pumping iron

"The last 3 or 4 reps is what makes the muscle grow. This area of pain divides the champion from the rest. That's what most people lack - having the guts to say they'll go on through the pain no matter what happens."

Arnold Schwarzenegger

Jean Lam runs a website called "*Body Building Life*". In a blog about the discipline it takes to succeed in this sport (scratch that, *lifestyle*), Lam identifies 4 areas that need an iron-pumper's constant focus;

1. **Nutrition** - feeding yourself the right diet. High on things that boost energy & grow muscle and low on morsels that add flab or sap you.
2. **Training** - developing the right exercises at the right frequency and carrying the right load to get the result you want. Continually evaluating and refining the routine based on your goals and timeframes. Pushing past the desire to stop working.
3. **Sleep** - taking concentrated regular rest periods to let the body heal and the disciplines work quietly while you snooze.
4. **Maintenance** - even when you're not in competition or gunning for a specific target, keeping a basal level of discipline and exercise going so the momentum isn't completely lost and you don't have to start from ground zero when the date of the next meet is announced.

Feeding yourself positive, goal-focused activities and sources of motivation each day. Practicing, exercising, reviewing and upping the load a little each day to build results. Having a spell every night, giving yourself the benefit of complete rest. Doing bite-size snippets, even on days others are playing, to stay toned.

Lam - "*It's a disciplined way of living, so you better love it.*"

One daily self-discipline challenge - Review those 4 activities and ask yourself "*have I incorporated them (as they relate to my professional goals) into my plan for the next 4 weeks?*" Take 10 minutes to diarise the diet supplements you'll invest time taking, the training you'll need to commit to, the switching-off you'll be disciplined about and one small daily maintenance act to prevent your professional wagon from stalling.

One other Arnie-ism - "*It's simple. If it jiggles, it's fat.*" If there's a habit you've got that's flapping about in the breeze, not adding any value, just slowing you down and making the lean mean professional machine look second rate... choose to burn it.

(Ah'll be back... tomorrow.)

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Progress mirrors

"Discipline is remembering what you want."

David Campbell

There's a reason those body-builders we discussed yesterday have big mirrors in their flex factories, and it's got nothing to do with hairstyles. It's the same reason ballerina teachers insist on no baggy clothes in rehearsals and why swimmers track their times that they continually benchmark against their PB's.

It's to check they're making progress.

Building muscles. Creating ever-cleaner lines. Shaving poofteeth's of seconds off what they achieved yesterday.

A disciplined approach to candidly - nakedly - assessing where you're at has both carrot and stick benefits.

You get to congratulate yourself, create little mental fist-pump moments and remember that bit by bit, the disciplines are paying off.

You also get to see the remainder between you and the goal - not quite there yet, and the things that got you this far need repeating, even when it hurts.

Discipline is routinely looking in the mirror for the wins and the not-quite-yet's.

One daily self-discipline challenge - Book a 5 minute moment with yourself before the week is out. Use it to reflect on and write down three fantastic things you've achieved this month that take you closer to the ultimate goal. Then write down the remaining gap - the bit that requires more work. Then diarise this same appointment with yourself once a week. Then get back to it.

What do you ultimately want to see in the professional mirror? Look closely and bravely enough - the glass doesn't lie.

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Circadian Rhythms

"Discipline and concentration are a matter of being interested."

Tom Kite

Circadian rhythms are self-sustained 24-hour cycles. Sleep patterns, the ocean tides, early morning hormonal and blood pressure surges, the opening of a flower bud, your post-breakfast constitutional. Magic daily stuff.

Left to their own devices, activities that follow circadian rhythms will happen naturally over 24 hours, but they can be influenced by stimulus called *zeitgebers* (the German word for 'time givers'). For example, your normal sleep cycles get altered if you keep leaving your bedroom blinds open and the sun streams in every morning at 5, zapping your eyeballs and progressively helping you to wake up earlier. Shift workers use light and cold air and coffee and loud music as *zeitgebers* to shift their natural sleep cycles and stay awake while we punch Z's and dream of the perfect sales call.

Consider the type of *zeitgebers* you might use to positively influence your professional circadian rhythms;

- A pinging 8am Outlook appointment with yourself to review and prioritise your daily task list (when you might otherwise think about it at morning tea)
- A regular early morning 5 minute pow-wow with an equally disciplined colleague or boss to review the best learnings and win-reasons from yesterday (that might've organically happened in the tea room)
- A note or checklist stuck on your monitor or in the inside cover of your compendium that spells out the 5 most important things you know you need to remember each day (that would otherwise pepper themselves over your memory across the afternoon)

One daily self-discipline challenge - Pick one discipline-building *zeitgeber* you've not been exposing yourself to, and apply it for the next week. A tool, a friend, a technological support system - something that helps you pull important tasks to the front of the day where they can have maximum daily impact. Circadian rhythms take a while to shift, but this is a disciplined start.

Using *zeitgebers* to galvanise daily circadian events at new times is called *entrainment*. The most powerful entrainment stimulus we know of is light. Have the courage to shine a torch on any undisciplined habits you know are costing you greater success, and (metaphorically) light a candle each morning to entrain new and proven disciplines.

(Chronobiology just doesn't get discussed enough in business circles...)

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Recognising the caterpillars

"Respect your efforts, respect yourself. Self respect leads to self discipline.
When you have both firmly under your belt, then you have real power."

Clint Eastwood

My daughters are growing cabbages in the backyard vege patch. They're growing, bit by bit, day by day. But the leaves are getting holes in them, more and more, bigger and bigger. The pretty white butterflies hovering over the patch point to the cause - fat green caterpillars munching away, bite by bite, hour by hour.

Consider the caterpillars eating away at your efforts to grow important self-disciplines.

Lack of clear, meaningful goals that the disciplines are there to help you achieve.
Phone calls, emails, entrenched a.m. coffee pot chats that are fun but fruitless.
Choosing to push your long-term aims to one side to address urgent agendas of others.

Peer pressure, well-meaning friends and family, cultural stereotypes, wanting to fit in.
A lack of practice at saying no.

A lack of simple ingrained discipline reminder systems.

Wrong fits - between you and the goal, you and the job, you and the team.

What Godin calls your 'lizard brain' - the bit of you that runs from change and pain.

Overwhelming choice about where, what & who you could spend your finite time with.

Caterpillars come in different colours, but they all do the same thing. They eat away what you're trying to grow. The first step - spot them. The second step - kill them.

One daily self-discipline challenge - pick out one caterpillar that deep down you know has for years eaten away at your efforts to build self-disciplines you know to be important. Write it down. Tell someone about it (me, if that's what it takes). Then decide how you'll squash it. And start now.

We so often choose to ignore caterpillars because they're well camouflaged, or because they only take little bites, or they turn into something pretty (but useless). They are eating away your chance of success. Are you sure you want to ignore them?

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The line

"There's a fine line between intense discipline and psycho OCD behaviours."

Laurie Apple

In an online review of *Black Swan*, a film about a mentally disturbed ballerina, *Jezebel* blog author Laurie Apple questions the wisdom of the preparation that leading actress Natalie Portman undertook. *"8 hours of exercise every day. Cardio workouts. Morning swims. Even when filming finished at 11pm, she'd get up super-early, work out for 2 hours before getting back on set, just to tone her arms and get herself going for the day. Portman had to do so much to her body to create her performance - it gave her an understanding of the self-flagellation of professional ballerinas."*

Portman achieved her goal.

All work, no play, going too far? Maybe.

Portman achieved her goal.

If you're spending 8+ hours each day refining your business plan, reviewing and perfecting your checklists, maybe it's an all-work-no-play chillax a moment pill you need. Tempting to tell you to stop and have an éclair.

But then, I don't know what your goal is. Or what price you're prepared to pay to get it.

Portman chose to pay a price to achieve her goal, and she did.

It's up to you whereabouts in the pack you want to sit, what level of personal satisfaction you want to take from achieving lofty measures you set for yourself, and more than anything, what you're willing to give up or do daily to get it.

One daily self-discipline challenge - Take a moment to benchmark yourself against the very best in your business / market / the team you admire. Contemplate what it is they're doing rigorously or giving up to get #1 position. Then reconcile your wants with your future efforts - will you be prepared to copy elements, match or better the habits of the best?

I'm not sure great success is ever achieved without continued effort along a line that borders OCD. I think maybe it's a marker of the passion you have for what you're doing, the amount of 'want' in your duodenum... and the discipline you'll apply to realise it.

(But please, be disciplined enough to find something to enjoy and laugh about each day too - you're a long time dead...)

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Discipline budgets

"We have exercised savage discipline (to deliver modest spending growth)."

Treasurer Wayne Swan

(Maybe he read yesterday's email about mental health...) The Federal Treasurer has just delivered a budget that professes to save over \$22 Billion in 4 years, and that he says incentivises people to get off their backsides and chip in to leverage an economy "*poised to boom*".

Budgets are for finite elements. Consider the discipline budgets you've got to balance;

- **Cash budgets** - who you'll invest your woo-ing promotional coin with to maximise your ROI, setting limits and rules to help you make hard 'no' calls; putting the dollars only into that which will ultimately help you produce more.
- **Time budgets** - Prioritising your finite person-hours each day, week, month, year to align your efforts with what will most likely help you achieve your goals; corralling distinct time homes for priority tasks and patrolling them with vigilance (knowing that the time-eating foxes lurk at the gate).
- **Effort budgets** - choosing to put your back only into that which helps - giving your glycogen stores only to the most important goal-seeking efforts; pushing forward when it hurts, using early pains as a positive mental trigger that something's happening, changing, and that if you've picked the right act, the change is almost certainly for the better.
- **Mental real-estate budgets** - being selective about what you let mull around in your head; proactively filling grey-matter voids with reading and planning and conversations with those in sync with (and supportive of) your trajectory.
- **Affect budgets** - being selective about with whom and when you'll smile, be nice, exude enthusiasm and keep a level disposition when things get bumpy. Everyone reserves the right to be grumpy and deliver a spray. The funny thing about positivity... it's not as finite as these other budget elements. Put a ring fence around the sourness - plan to put it where it'll have minimal impact or be quickly squashed by more disciplined positivarians than you... you'll feel ridiculous doing it, and you won't need to budget for it as much.

One daily self-discipline challenge - Spend 5 minutes reviewing what you've budgeted for each of these 5 elements today. Are the budgets aligned with your goals? What needs tweaking? Make the changes - write them down.

Swan says his budget "*has an eye on both the present and the future*". This split focus - short term pain for long term gain - takes a disciplined mind to reconcile. It easily overbalances one way or another. Review the budgets daily - correct quickly - and watch the deficit shrink.

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The natural and the jingle

"Bring it on."

Cyclist Anna Meares

I had the fortune to hear Olympian and World Champion cyclist Anna Meares speak on Wednesday. She discussed her road to recovery after a horror ride that left her with serious injuries, including a fractured cervical vertebrae, just 7 months out from the Beijing Olympics.

Meares said that when the doctor told her of the extent of her injuries, and that it would be at least 10 weeks before she could get on a bike again, her mental cogs clicked into place immediately. *"Most people might've thought "Ah, there goes my Olympic Dream". I thought "7 months minus 10 weeks equals 4 1/2 months to get to Gold Medal standard... that's doable!" And I went about getting my coach to believe me, and to believe in me."* Meares went on to describe the pressure that her rival for the London Olympics Victoria Pendleton is facing from the British media, and how her team are trying to deflect the pressure onto Meares. Meares' smiling assassin response - *"bring it on!"*

After hearing Meares, I was with a group discussing the "Sun Sound" that they use on Bondi Beach - a distinctive catchy little jingle that gets played intermittently, that serves as a reminder to people to put some more sunscreen on. www.sunsound.com.au .

Most of us don't have the Olympian's level of clarity, the white-hot desire to sacrifice so much to achieve a single goal, or the iron-willed discipline to stay the course. We need 'Sun Sounds' to remind us of important repetitive movements we need to take to keep pedalling and hit our targets (or avoid melanoma).

One daily self-discipline challenge - Build yourself a 'sun sound' - something that, on a daily basis, will pang you to remember a disciplined act you'd easily let slide. An alarm clock. A diary appointment. A meeting request. A training calendar. A note on the whiteboard above your desk.

Sun sounds alone aren't enough to win a gold medal (it won't touch internal longing). But they'll help you harden up - turn sporadic sprints into longer course events... and if you've chosen the right road, you're going to get to the right endpoint.

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Post-op

"Pain is inevitable. Suffering is optional."

M. Kathleen Casey

A friend has just had shoulder surgery. In a sling for 6 weeks. Doctors will tell you the greatest risk of post-op failure of this surgery comes in weeks 4-6 when, with your shoulder feeling much better, you choose to ignore their clear instructions (Be disciplined! Stay in the sling for the full 6-weeks!). You reach to pick something up and POP! Back to square 1.

After hip replacement surgery, they get you out of bed within a day and make you use the (what must be extremely sore) leg. You have to wear hot itchy compression stockings to prevent blood clots, and the physio will cause you pain with constant exercise prods. They know healing is helped by activity.

A relative diagnosed with Alzheimer's has been given mental exercises that (should she remember to do them) are designed to slow progression of the disease (Sudoku, crosswords, jewellery-making). They've got to be done over and over if they're to have any benefit.

Discipline applied to recovery, healing, slowing the slide. Sit around feeling sorry for yourself and the crappiness of your situation, or choosing to be diligently active in being as well as you can.

One daily self-discipline challenge - Pick a crappy situation you've been lumped with - a client that chose the competitor, a team member you're not in synch with, a product that's on the back end of its lifespan curve. Decide you'll actively participate in making it good, better, eking the most from it you can. Book 1 thing in the diary today to make a dent. Then again tomorrow.

There's another discipline element in managing medical maladies.... patience. It *will* take 6 weeks for a shoulder to heal. It *will* take time to get your head right after a trauma. And it *will* take time to line the ducks up to make 2012's number... no reason you can't plan for and start down the road to greater professional health now.

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Tiger Mum

"In Korea, they have this culture that focuses on always becoming better. Students are ranked one to 40 in their class, everyone knows where they stand. The adults are honest with kids about what they're not good at, and how far they have to go until they are number one."

Michelle Rhee

Story on *Sixty Minutes* on Sunday night about "Tiger Mums" - predominantly Asian parents who set strict rules and 'encourage' their kids to work hard to be an academic mile ahead of everyone else.

Amy Chua, the author of the book that opened the box on this parenting philosophy, wouldn't let her kids watch TV, go to sleep over's or do anything that would distract them from their 'job' - to be the best in the classes and music pursuits they undertook. Her belief is that many Western parents set their kids up for a life of mediocrity and underachievement through lax, unfocused, even selfish parenting practices.

The howls of derision fly from all corners. Over the top. Unbalanced. They're kids, for crying out loud, let them have fun and be kids!

The Tiger Mums point to the results. The best marks. The top schools. First dibs on the best jobs. The success-generating mindset that each generation carries on to the next. Why the American economy is in the toilet.

The child psychologist and educator interviewed on *SM* said that perhaps the best parenting approach was halfway between the hard-nose tiger style and the overly relaxed and permissive hands-off approach of many western families.

Irrespective of your viewpoint on Tiger Mum parenting, here's the thing...

... it gets the result it sets out to get.

One daily self-discipline challenge - courageously cast a Tiger Mum eye over your sales / leadership / professional practices. Are they diligent, disciplined, putting 'fun-to-do's to one side and staying focused on the things you know will generate long term success? Is there a 'Tiger Mum' in your business you can recruit to help you define and stick to the proven hard-work practices?

This might all seem a bit too much for 6 year-olds to have to cope with.

You're not 6, and it is your job.

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Draw it

"If we do not discipline ourselves, the world will do it for us."

William Feather

From Tiger Mums to car-selling cooks...

The phenomenon that is *Masterchef* has returned to the box, and on Sunday night, a young go-gettem car salesman called Jay won 'the mystery box' challenge (ah, mighty sales professionals, is there nothing they can't do...).

When the contestants opened their box to find a raw rabbit awaiting their culinary touch, many of them dived straight in and began cutting away, planning as they went. The clock was ticking, time was short, and they wanted to go go go. Most ended up changing their dish halfway through when they realised they'd bitten off more than they could chew.

What separated Jay was a simple pre-cooking routine. He took a piece of paper, got a pencil, and carefully (but quickly) sketched out what he wanted the dish to look like - the goal. Then he went about his business ("Frenching" a rack of bunny in the process).

He won by realising the vision he had the discipline to scratch down.

One daily self-discipline challenge - Take 1 minute to "sketch" what you want to achieve by the end of today. The top 2 or 3 outcomes, for clients, for your numbers, for your output, for your professional development. Draw the oasis before beginning the sandy trek.

Clearly drawn vision without technique, precision and care is little more than a dream - as Jay's competitor Alex demonstrated. But it's a disciplined pause moment to think things through and an ocular reminder to keep referring back to. Put it on paper.

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Wielding the stick

"Something in human nature causes us to start slacking off at our moment of greatest accomplishment. As you become successful, you'll need a great deal of self-discipline not to lose your sense of balance, humility and commitment."

H Ross Perot

We talk about the prizes, the shiny outcomes you can achieve through building and exercising the right disciplines each and every day. But for these disciplines to become ingrained and powerful long-term success-generating acts, there has to be a dark side. The 'discipline' that's needed when you choose to be undisciplined.

What's the pain you need to feel - to let sting you - when you let the discipline slide?

- ... the hollow feeling that you let yourself down.
- ... standing and bitterly watching others leapfrog you to the gold because they chose to go harder, longer.
- ... denying yourself a pleasurable reward that belongs only to the disciplined achievers.
- ... public humiliation when people see that you dropped the ball on the out-there commitments you made.
- ... the looks of disappointment from people whose opinions you value.
- ... the painful knowledge that the answers are there, right in front of you, and you chose not to apply them today.

If it's a proven discipline that you know will help you achieve a meaningful goal, and you chose to not apply it today, you do yourself and the discipline a massive service by wielding the stick.

One daily self-discipline challenge - Pick a punishment - something you know will sting a little - that, should you decide to not implement the disciplines you know you should today, you'll actively mete out to yourself. Make it specific. Tell the boss or a colleague. Write it down. Use the potential pain as a spur to stay on-discipline today... or to inspire you to get you back on the horse tomorrow.

I'm not suggesting self-flagellation with knotted ropes or soul-depleting beratings by a panel of elders. But by doubling the motivation for the discipline (pleasure seeking and pain avoiding), you give yourself the best chance of galvanising it... and the person that benefits from that? You.

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SDP

"Half of life is luck, the other half is discipline. And that's the important half, because without the discipline, you wouldn't know what to do with the luck."

Karl Zuckmeyer

When a new member joins the 325th MXG at Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida, Maintenance Group Commander Colonel Craig Hall gets them to write the acronym SDP in their logs.

SDP is **Safety, Discipline** and **Professional**.

Captain Seanna Less - *"SDP is not just another acronym or catch phrase that is prominently displayed around the group; it is our culture and is incorporated into everything we do, from maintaining our aircraft and equipment to how we conduct our lives outside of our profession. Everyone from the Wing Commander to the lowest ranking Airman must be safe, disciplined and professional. It is a mindset that helps enforce standards."*

One daily self-discipline challenge - consider the 3 words that you live and breathe to get the results you want... for yourself, your team, your clients, your family. What are they? What 3 principles are so important to you that they permeates beyond your professional endeavours into the rest of your life? If you're clear on that, the disciplines to implement and leverage them will ingrain so much easier.

I came across this creed when I googled the words 'Disciplined Professional'. It was search result #1. It wasn't exactly what I was looking for. I wanted a story of someone that personified a disciplined approach to their craft, and what it had got them. There's just not enough stories about them. Imagine if the miracle of Google spat out your name. Imagine what you'd be achieving.

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Where you build disciplines

Discipline maths

"Either **once only**, or **every day**. If you do something once, it's exciting, and if you do something every day, it's exciting. But do it twice, or *almost* every day, it's no good anymore."

Andy Warhol

28 working days to the midyear point. Imagine what could be done by then.

If you exercised discipline and called or wrote 2 people each morning to thank them for their support and offered your helping hand / ear / eyes in return, that's **56 people** you've locked in your supporter camp for the back end of 2011.

If you applied discipline and took 10 minutes each morning to review your goals, prioritise and time-home your to-do list and reaffirm to yourself why you're doing what you do, that's just under **5 hours of intense dedicated focus time** aligned with the things most important to you.

If you're seeing or calling 5 people a day and you spend 60 seconds before each meeting jotting down a simple aim, 2 or 3 questions to ask and key points to raise, you've gifted yourself **2 & 1/2 hours of pre-call planning** that will up your efficiency and effectiveness exponentially.

If you write yourself one simple checklist each day - enunciating the complex elements of your role in 5 easy steps - that's **28 checklists** by midyear. 28 'how to' guides that will steer you through the days when motivation stays in bed and your memory flickers.

Disciplines are cumulative, built bit-by-bit, every day. You can't take breaks. It's too easy to not start again. Disciplines build linearly, but they pay off compoundedly.

One daily self-discipline challenge - put a 28-day challenge on your plate. Pick 'one new discipline' you'll run with - something simple and proven but easy to let slide. Write it in a time home in your diary each day for the next 28 days (if that means writing it 28 times, then write it 28 times). Consider the payoff maths - is the tiny bit extra worth the potential payoff? (You know the answer...)

28 working days to entrench something that won't end after 28 days... imagine what could be done by December 31st?

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e-discipline

"Etiquette means behaving yourself a little better than is absolutely essential."

Will Cuppy

Your discipline is reflected in how you communicate, and there's no longer-lasting (and easy-to-stuff-up) way for people to judge it than by reading your emails.

Troy's top 10 undisciplined email-isms;

1. No spillcheck.
2. No pleasantry at the front end (Hi...! Good morning...! Dear...! Hotcakes...!)
3. No grateful tone-setting opening line (It was great to see you.... Thank you for making time yesterday.... I hope you're well and over sales target...)
4. No clear 3-part structure (here's what we agreed on, here's the information, here's my proposed next step; or, here's my thanks, here's something useful for you in return, here's what I'll do next)
5. No grateful tone-galvanising ending (Thanks again and best regards... Great stuff and Cheers... Look forward to seeing you soon, Ciao...)
6. Waffly sentences where punchy bullet points or numbered lists would do
7. No grammatical double-checking where it's obvious the text wasn't read aloud (no spell checker will fix badly constructed sentences)
8. Scant regard for tone and context (will it come across the right way? Do I sound like a whingey child or negative fun-vacuum? Do I need to sit on it while my anger dissipates? What frame of mind might the recipient be in when they read this (and who might they forward it to?)
9. CC-ing those that shouldn't be; BCC-ing *anyone* (BCC's have a funny way of being exposed - if you need to copy someone in secretly, is an email the right communication vehicle?)
10. Not replying on time... within 24 hours... at all. The most undisciplined of all.

One daily self-discipline challenge - For the next 5 emails you send, run them through this checklist filter. Be honest about which point you don't give enough attention to, and decide to change it today. Then try it again tomorrow.

Email recipient self-talk - *"I know you're busy, but I don't care. If you can't follow these simple email disciplines that school students are taught... how disciplined will you be with the important stuff?"* e-harden up.

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3 things about muesli

"An apple a day...."

...works for Steve Jobs

Developed by Swiss Physician Maximilian Bircher, muesli is to your GI tract what prioritised daily to-do lists are to your professional success - colonically cleansing, clockwork setting and cancer protecting.

Muesli true-isms;

1. **It's better for you raw.** Take it in its most natural state, without bells and whistles, and you get maximum roughage benefits. Mightn't taste as flash, but does the job more effectively.
2. **The combo's can vary to suit your taste.** Like paw-paw and coconut in yours? Apple and pistachio? It's still good for you - don't be afraid to tweak.
3. **Package it with sugar or cream and you offset the benefits.** Eat 5-star-hotel Bircher muesli each morning or hoe down on choc-chip muesli bars each lunch... hello, fat boy.

Putta bitta professional muesli into your morning discipline routine...

One daily self-discipline challenge - Go for maximum roughage in today's planning. 10 minutes, blank sheet, list the tasks on today's plate, put the most important at top and cull the non-goal-progressing. Then start at #1 immediately. By all means tweak your pre-call planning checklists or the CRM system you're using to suit your unique tastes - make it more palatable. But don't slap on extraneous fat tasks - overly floral notes, unnecessary detail - that just slow your discipline galvanising down.

One bowl of decent raw muesli fulfils your complete daily fibre requirement. Imagine a regular 10 minute morning discipline process that fulfils your full day's planning and prioritising needs. It's truly that simple (doesn't it give you the sh....)

Have a mighty disciplined day!

The Discipline Factory

Where you build disciplines

Smoothing foundations

"The individual that wants to reach the top in business must appreciate the might and force of habit. They must be quick to break the habits that can break them, and hasten to adopt practices that become habits that will help them achieve success."

J Paul Getty

From breakfast cereal to the blokes that just poured a concrete slab for my new shed - a discipline lesson with a plumber's cleavage.

Three guys spent two hours shovelling sloppy concrete mix over reo mesh, skimming it with a flat edge until it looked just so. Two then packed up and went home. Looked like a job finished. But one stayed. The concrete artist. He stayed another 5 hours.

Why?

Because before the concrete sets, lots can go wrong.

Because the almost smooth floor needs another skim.

Because what if a cat comes along and dips their paws in the wet cement?

Because it needs another skim.

Because the edges need work, need finessing, need making just right.

Because it needs another skim.

Because you've got to get this right - when it goes off, there's no changing it.

Because it needs just one more skim.

Because that's what they know will give you the finish you want 10 years from now.

He could've left earlier, I'm sure. Said "*It'll probably be OK*". But when it's set, it's set. And his reputation is on the line. So he skims one more time...

One daily self-discipline challenge - the foundation disciplines you've been building that are starting to look the business... go over them with a trowel once more. Review the time of day you're working on your checklist. Re-tweak the checklist itself. Ask another bod to help you refine your 2011-12 business plan. Reconsider your professional development plan for the next 2 years. Take a hard honest look at your 12 months goals - are they right - do they get your adrenalin coursing?

The foundation takes a while to harden, and it needs your vigilance a while longer before you're ready to build on it. Before tackling mighty growth challenges in 2012, make sure you're rock-solid and smooth in the habits you've been laying down. (And make sure you've hiked your trousers up...)

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Where you build disciplines

Morning, CEO's.

"Hold yourself responsible for a higher standard than anyone else expects of you. Never excuse yourself. Never pity yourself. Be a hard master to yourself...
... and be lenient to everyone else."

Henry Ward Beecher

Executive recruitment expert and renowned HR author, Jim Citrin spends his days working with top US CEO's.

Citrin interviewed 17 CEO's* he admired to understand the daily routines they went through, particularly what they did before they got to the office. He discovered;

- **All start early.** The latest any of them awoke is 6am. 80% awake before 5:30. The big kahuna at Motorola gets up at 4:30am, does email for an hour, reads online, then exercises for an hour, before packing her son's lunch and taking him to school at 8.
- **They start with email.** Before the phone starts ringing and while the rest of the world sleeps, the majority of the chiefs hook into the inbox (some within 1 minute of getting out of bed). The CEO of Avaya communications does 1 hours worth before breakfast - *"It allows me to create a clear mind when I set priorities for the day"*.
- **They exercise** - 75% of these CEO's exercise in the morning. The busiest, most successful, fit it into their diaries before breakfast.
- **They read the news** - all have switched to multiple online news sources, but the bulk also continue to read the major printed newspapers before leaving for work.
- **They take out a note pad** - more than half use the quiet of morning to jot down the solutions gifted to them by the committee of sleep. One publishing company CEO - *"A poem I once read influences my activity - "Think in the morning, act in the noon, read in the evening, sleep at night"*.
- **They make family time** - the majority either have breakfast with their families or take the kids to school.
- **They get creative with the routine** - once a week, many shake it up. The CEO of Oxygen Media takes a walk one morning per week with a young person seeking her advice - *"I can't take time at the office to do this, but this way, I exercise and stay connected with young people at the same time"*.

One daily self-discipline challenge - pick one on the list you know would work wonders for your energy levels, efficiency or professional well-being. Book it in the diary to start tomorrow. Tell others (me!) what you're going to do, let them nag you about it. A recurring diary appointment, an alarm clock ring-a-ding-ding to wake you up. Then hook in.

* Citrin actually emailed his questions to 20 top US CEO's. 6 of them replied within 10 minutes. 17 replied within 3 hours. And *you're* too busy to respond to emails...?

Have a mighty disciplined day!

The Discipline Factory

Where you build disciplines

Cleaner air

"It's easy to quit smoking. I've done it hundreds of times."

Mark Twain

Happy World No Tobacco Day. The people at QuitSA have developed the *Kick It* website for young smokers. They offer the following steps to muster and support the self-discipline needed;

1. **Know why you do it** - Something keeps pulling you back to a useless (harmful) old friend habit. Addiction? Habit? Peer pressure? Pleasure? Take a moment to really think about why you haven't given up yet.
2. **Pay to kill the early cravings** - invest in patches (a coach / an alarm) to help demagnetise the 'pleasure pull'. Short term cost for long term saving.
3. **Get team support** - tell eeevvverrrryoonne you're making a change. Recruit the willing army of supporters, train re-railers and self-sabotage spotters.
4. **Put the plan together** - how you'll avoid bad habit triggers, what you'll say when presented with the opportunity to lapse, and if you do, what you'll do to dust yourself off and start anew.
5. **Implement the plan** - start right now.

The Quit team offer the '4 D's' to remember when the urge becomes strong. **D**elay - hold your nerve a few minutes. **D**eep breathe. **D**rink water. And **d**o something else.

One daily self-discipline challenge - maybe your vice isn't the gaspers. Maybe it's forgetting to pre-call plan. Avoiding the morning phone calls to the crew. Procrastinating on the e-newsletter. Why not run through the list above to decide to 'kick the unhealthy habit'?

Step 6 - **Reward yourself** - you're saving / making yourself a big pile of cash by holding your self-disciplined nerve. Skim a little to treat yourself.

Have a mighty disciplined day!

The Discipline Factory

Where you build disciplines

The one I always wanted to write

"Great is our admiration for the orator who speaks with fluency and discretion."

Cicero

Right, here it is. The raw double-barrelled version of the ultimate daily prod that gets right to the guts of what you need to do to obliterate targets, build legend status in your space and change the game forever....

.....

I'm sorry, I can't.

For a start, I don't know what you want or need to hear, nor do I know that what I'm suggesting is right for you.

And another thing - if my passion for my opinion comes across too forcefully, I'll inspire you to mentally pigeon-hole me as an overgeneralising, proselytising, nothing-left-up-the-sleeve self-proclaimed 'expert'. And I'm not, and I don't want that.

Overbaking the cake - delivering the full-length version of your perspective - leaves little room for people's imaginations, personal experiences and unique situations to weave themselves into your provokes.

It's not that I don't want to or try to share my beliefs and thoughts and observations daily - those on this morning bus for the past 800+ days know that. But if I'm not being disciplined in trying to exercise just a modicum of discretion - biting my tongue when deep down I want to scream an opinion - well, I shoot myself in the foot.

So for the unfiltered Director's cut... we'll both have to wait.

One daily self-discipline challenge - consider an opinion you're passionate about and preparing to share in strong terms today. Reflect for a moment on the worst way your delivery could be received. Preaching? Above your station? Opinionated and even wrong? Consider the more discrete way you might get your opposite to consider your take. Be disciplined in checking your tone and message vehemence.

I got thinking about this after watching the great new TV show *Downton Abbey*, a period drama in an English manor. The lady of the house gave the butler a lollypop chance to share his negative feelings about a co-servant. Despite every fibre of his being wanting to blurt it out, he considered the longer term impact on his reputation, and held his tongue. Consider the impact of churlish retorts... hold... hold...

Have a mighty disciplined day!

The Discipline Factory

Where you build disciplines

Choosing mental fodder

"First principles, Clarice. Simplicity. What does he do, this man you seek? He covets. And how do we begin to covet, Clarice - do we seek out things to covet? No. We begin by coveting what we see every day."

Hannibal Lecter

(Channeling the good Doctor...) Simple lumps of clay that we are, the greatest influences on our thoughts, desires and actions come from what we see, hear, taste, smell and touch each day. We most actively want - or don't want - what's right in front of us.

So if you're on board with the idea that ingraining simple proven disciplines will help you achieve your goals faster;

1. Why wouldn't you put things in front of you that remind you of the goals each day, and
2. Why wouldn't you surround yourself with stellar examples of the most disciplined (or at least discipline support systems you'd like to incorporate into your world?)

If we covet what we see, why not actively choose to see things each day that'll help you?

One daily self-discipline challenge - take the idea of written goals one step further and list 3 disciplines or discipline supports that you'll diarise time each day to actively expose yourself to. Walk past the *Big Issue* seller that gets himself to the same cold street corner every morning at 7am. Make a point of popping in and saying hi to the CEO that's in their office early sending out thank-you notes. Take the route to work that goes past the gym and watch the bods that stream out as the sun comes up. Invest 10 minutes each day Goggling or YouTube-ing "Time management". See the disciplines and discipline supports in action each day - expose yourself to inspire yourself to covet them for yourself (and consider all they can deliver to you).

This approach is best supported by the anti-coveting strategy of removing distractions. If you're on a diet, don't leave an éclair on the bench. If you want a more disciplined approach to your work, don't hang out with the moochers and consider blocking your 8-6 access to Zuckerberg's time-waster-book.

Have a mighty disciplined day!

The Discipline Factory

Where you build disciplines

Here comes the wane

"A woodpecker can tap twenty times on a thousand trees and get nowhere, but stay busy. Or it can tap twenty thousand times on one tree and get dinner."

Seth Godin

We're entering Godin's "Dip" season. In our little southern corner, winter's awoken and the motivation bubble that springs you out of bed to don the professional cape on a sun-shiney-warm morning has just popped (stop hogging the doona). The full-year business goal that you laughed at in January and took a running start towards in Q1 now seems further away than ever. The shareholder expectations you thought would soften, the boss you thought might change or the team member you hoped would progress, hasn't. The fun can get a little thin.

It's an at-risk period where you're tempted to change boats or start tapping on a new tree or make short-sighted changes to the well-conceived longer-term plan. Now's the chance to realise the benefits of being a hard nut. To get ahead of the down curve that's about to come into full view.

Three ideas;

1. **Regalvanise the long-term goal** - invest 10 minutes to test that you do *really* still want the big prize in 1, 3, 5 years from now - then **shift your focus to day-by-day process goals**. Bite size daily wins - see X people, write Y proposals by 5pm - that you can set your jaw towards and grind away at over 3 cold months to get you to the next tram stop.
2. **Set an anti-goal**. If you're aiming to lose weight, set the goal as "*I will be hungry every day*". If you're in need of a religious daily planning ritual, consider "*I will face a blank computer screen at 6am every morning*." You don't really want these things, but with minimal effort they'll come, and if you can achieve them, you know the outcome will follow.
3. **Consider the worst dip you could find yourself in** (you'll know what it looks like, you've been there before), and get yourself OK with the fact you'll spend some time there in the next couple of months. Then, knowing productivity's going to take a whack for that period, plan for it. Small extra bits here, longer hours there (what more can be done *today*?) so that the ugliness is quarantined and won't impact the longer-term outcome.

One daily self-discipline challenge - Try one today.

Some are blessed with the stick-to-it-ness gene, others of us need support. The temptation to fall out the backside of the peloton is about to get overwhelming. Add the reo and pour the concrete now so the habit's set before Heartbreak Hill appears.

Have a mighty disciplined day!

The Discipline Factory

Where you build disciplines

The physiology of willpower

"Sugar (boo be doo beee doo booo), ohhh, honey, honey...."

The Archies

(I invested an important chunk of my life majoring in Physiology, so it's a beautiful thing when I can bring it into *The Discipline Factory*.)

In 2007, self-control boffin Professor Baumeister (who you've met here before) and his co-researcher Matthew Gailliot wrote a paper called "*The physiology of willpower: linking blood glucose to self control*". Without deep diving into their experimental design, let's just say it involved uni students, choc chip cookies, radishes, problem solving and a stopwatch.

The crux of their findings - keeping your blood sugar levels up (not supercharged, but not depleted) has a marked impact on your ability to exercise self-control.

One daily self-discipline challenge - Eat your breakfast and lunch, and take on tasks that need your greatest self-control soon thereafter. If you've got something you've been struggling to galvanise as a discipline, have a healthy bite and book it in for half-an-hour later.

Ever done the grocery shopping when you're hungry? The impulse buys you make are ridiculous. So why try doing your business planning or CRM records or yesterday's follow-ups or other tasks requiring your best professional self-discipline just before lunch when your stomach is growling? Plan your daily disciplines around your diet, and eat before you tackle the BHAT's (Big Hairy Audacious Tasks).

Have a mighty disciplined day!

The Discipline Factory

Where you build disciplines

The Deming Cycle

"The industrial miracle in Japan was a prime example of what can happen when a nation commits itself to quality and long-range vision instead of the latest illness, turn-a-fast-buck-itis."

Mary Watson

Statistician W. Edwards Deming was the man that visited Japan after World War 2 and taught his management and production principles to companies like Toyota. His Total Quality Management (TQM) approach boils down to what is now known as *The Deming Cycle* - a simple 4 step process that Deming asserted should be rigorously applied to every act an organisation undertakes;

1. **Plan** - map out what you're going to try, predict your results
2. **Do** - execute - take small steps
3. **Study** - check your results
4. **Act** - if it worked, standardise the approach; if it didn't, improve the process

The discipline of the Deming Cycle lies not in doing it just once...

One daily self-discipline challenge - Apply the Deming Cycle to the first important task you've got on your list today (A meeting? A proposal? A communiqué?) First, map it out - what needs to come together, what do you think you'll get at the end? Then follow your plan as best you can. Book a time to review what happened, and if you're happy, ingrain the approach as a standard (checklist? proforma? policy?) If you're not, start planning something to change it next time. (Too busy to remember this? Write those four words in big font and stick them where you'll see them).

The outcomes of applying PDSA religiously within Japanese organisations were the most efficient, precise, voluminous outputs in the world. Worth trying to learn from?

Have a mighty disciplined day!

The Discipline Factory

Where you build disciplines

When you think you're done...

... there's usually room for one more.

The personal trainer can get one more sit up or lat pull down from you.

The blitz day can inspire you to make one more phone call before 5pm.

The wheelbarrow will take one more shovelful of dirt.

The team will respond to one more backpat.

There's one more book you can read on the subject you think you're already expert in.

My eldest's teacher set the kids some homework yesterday - write down a list of adjectives. How many? That's up to you. As many as you can. Just know that the person with the *least* number will (tongue in cheek) be penalised. She's up to 220 and has a goal of 366. Then... she could go to 367 (just in case someone else decided on the leap year number...)

It's not easy going one more. Novak Djokovic tripped at 41 straight wins (takes something special to hit 42). 'One more' takes concentration, want, discipline, focus, clarity. You've come so far... the money ball is 'one more' - take the shot.

One daily self-discipline challenge - Plant a one-more on your to-do list today. The big client you're waiting, waiting to hear back from on a proposal... is there one more contact or value demonstration you can make? The prospects list - is there one more name that you can put on it? The 'stop doing' list of things that waste time and don't contribute sufficiently to your bigger picture goal - is there one more fruitless task you can extinguish? Look for that one more lat pull down to sculpt a beautiful outcome today.

See, I think there's two reasons to run. One is for the run itself. Two is for the 'after-run'. If you love the first, then lucky you - running is easy. If you *don't* (but you're enamoured with what it can do for you), then running is discipline. Discipline is one more step.

Have a mighty disciplined day!

The Discipline Factory

Where you build disciplines

Erythrosine

"Established good habits are just as hard to break as bad habits."

Robert Puller

Have you ever chewed those tablets the dentist gives you to see how much plaque is on your teeth? The ones that stain the plaque red and leave normal tooth enamel white? The active ingredient is a soluble food dye called Erythrosine (pharmacology was my other major... it's allllll coming together).

We got our kids to chew some the other night to see just how well their twice-daily habit was being executed. One exposed a flawed technique on back upper molars, the other showed that front gums weren't getting the attention they needed. There's nowhere to hide when you brave up & chew these babies - glowing red smiles.

It's one thing to build a discipline as important as brushing. It's another to routinely check if hairline cracks in technique are building up over time to make the habit 'bad'.

One daily self-discipline challenge - decide on one plaque-exposing test you can perform on a discipline you've been building. The daily to-do list - run it by your boss and ask them if they believe the priority ranking you've given the tasks is right. The pre-call plan you've built for the client at 2pm - ask a colleague to run over it and critique whether it's likely to achieve the outcome you're aiming for. The CRM you're trying to keep up to speed - have your customer service partner spot-check you on it. The VIP's in your team - take 10 minutes to audit the leaders-time-invested:profit-individuals-generate ratio that sound business doctrine says you should follow. Chew the Erythrosine, expose the flaws, and correct your brushing technique.

What's great about this stuff is it takes ages to wear off - you have to actively brush it off, and that means practicing 'the right way'. Consider how you'll let the embarrassing bad habit reminder hang around a while (note? checklist? coach?).

Then start the correction now. And remember to *smile* - this is stopping sales

decay!

Have a mighty disciplined day!

The Discipline Factory

Where you build disciplines

Face it

"Most passport pictures are a good likeness, and it's time we faced it."

Katharine Brush

Face it.

There's 14 working days left to hit your mid-year goal.

The skills that got you this far aren't deep or broad enough to take you to the next post.

Some people will drop off your dance card list.

Others are planning product launches, swish new marketing campaigns that are all about making your life hard.

Your boss won't grant you the carte blanche freedom you're dying for.

The pricing pressure will continue. No, it'll exacerbate.

The career fairy isn't coming.

It's never going to get easier to get up at 5am, only harder as your bones age.

The fundamentals you learnt at induction haven't changed.

You need to set and reset and reset goals to have focus.

CRM records aren't for the company.

The thing you say you'll start tomorrow.... really? (Double check your track record on that).

You're the pig others are trying to teach to sing.

(I mean that metaphorically...)

The service you pride yourself on, that's better than others.... isn't.

Facing it takes discipline.

Dealing with it in daily repetitive bite size compounding chunks takes a lion heart.

One daily self-discipline challenge - Take 3 minutes to let the cold shower of reality wash over you... that it's the 10th of June, 2011. You're years old. There's no going back, no changing the CV or wishing you were someone else. The funds you've got are the funds you've got. The place you're in is the vehicle you've got to effect change today. You can wallow, cheer, dream, get angry, shake with fear, do the chicken dance... but what needs to happen now is disciplined. You give another minute to remind yourself of what you want most. You take the to-do list, you form it in to a ranked plan, you confirm the day's goals, and... (this is the kicker) you start working bit by bit.

Have a mighty disciplined day!

The Discipline Factory

Where you build disciplines

Disciplined in your discipline

"We judge others by their behaviour. We judge ourselves by our intentions."

Ian Percy

If you're a bespoke tailor, and you take my inner thigh measurement while wearing a t-shirt and torn jeans,
well...

If you're in the vitamins game, and you sit opposite me coughing and spluttering,
err...

If you sell dynamic lifter and your front lawn looks like a dustbowl,
or you clean cars and yours looks like it's just finished Dakar,
or you're IT gurus, but you don't answer your emails,
or you carry a marketer's business card, but your website looks like it cost \$50,
or you profess glowing service practices, but behave like a prat when you're shopping,
or you say you're a leader worth following, but you forget the avid follower wants,
or you talk about discipline, and you don't get an email out on time every time (even
on public holidays),
or you...
... you get my drift.

Noam Chomsky's theory of 'Domain Specificity' - that what we know in one area of our life, we forget in another (why sparkies have powerpoints hanging off their home walls and top sales reps are nightmares at communicating within their own business) - isn't an excuse. For maximum results, clients need to see your behaviour *everywhere* as an extension of your offering (even on the nightclub speakers at 2am). Are you disciplined in how you represent *your* particular discipline?

One daily self-discipline challenge - Perform a 60-second talk-walking audit. Would they buy one of your suits based on the suit you're wearing? Would they take training from you based on your own training? If you want them using CRM, are *you* using CRM? Is the brand you're trying to sell showing through in your acts, deeds, carriage and backyard? Do you wear the company's wares? We want to know that if it's good enough for me, it's good enough for you.

For most of you, it's a rest day today (hi to the hard workers in Perth, where this note lands reeeeaally early). Think of it as a wonderful discipline reset button day. The trick to this success business is rigorous implementation. You know what to do. Spend the day getting your head around the fact that you've just got to follow the shoe company's advice. And here's to the Queen - as disciplined as they come!

Have a mighty disciplined day!

The Discipline Factory

Where you build disciplines

ODM

In recognition of their tireless, disciplined efforts...

Be inspired by the 376 AO, AM, OAM and BGW (BI**dy Good Work) medal recipients on yesterday's Queens Birthday list.

Common threads?

... Physiotherapist Ruth Grant, being recognised for 40+ years of tireless dedication to clinical health.

... Elaine Stokes, who, having raised a child with ADHD, dedicated the next 30 years of her life to studying the effects of food and nutrition on children with the disorder.

... Max 'Tangles' Walker, who leveraged a platform of cricket success to give more than 20 years service to the Lighthouse Foundation and Rotary Medical Aid.

... Shea-Oak Log pig breeder Colin Lienert, who this year will parade his swine at the Royal Adelaide Show for the 80th time.

A lifetime (or pretty good chunk of) slogging and grinding and staying focused on and treading a single-minded path.

No overnight instant gratification change-causes-with-the-seasons flip-flopping.

Exfoliating their noses on a grindstone for the long shift.

Doing bits and chalking up small wins and taking ever-more steps that have added up, over and over, to create a pretty impressive CV.

And look closely - you'll see they've done it for others, not just themselves.

If an ODM - Order of Discipline Medal - was handed out in your team, who'd get it?

One daily self-discipline challenge - Look in your team, and pick someone with a discipline that you admire. Tell them. Ask how they do it. Ask if they'd help you do it better yourself. Offer your service to them in return. Write it all down. Then start. Simple? Rare. And it works.

Great results take time. No-one got an Order for being flash for 5 minutes. The medal mightn't be your motivator. But it's the long-term litmus test of whether you made a dent in the world. Are you willing to be a 40 year journeyman in what you're doing? If not, time to rethink your life strategy. If so, pick up your tools and get busy.

Have a mighty disciplined day!

The Discipline Factory

Where you build disciplines

The discipline needed to lie

"I'm not upset that you lied to me. I'm upset that now I can't believe you."

Nietzsche

I'm going through Professor Paul Ekman's FACE training - learning to recognise and read facial microexpressions. Prof Ekman is the man behind the research that's dramatised in TV's *Lie to me*.

Ekman discusses why lies are so difficult to carry off for a period of time. He says people fail to anticipate;

- when, how often, or by whom they'll come under suspicion
- what they'll need to say as a cover
- how hard it is to remember what they said to keep their story straight
- the guilt they may feel down the track
- how disrupted your life becomes when you're constantly worried about being caught
- the severe penalty a loss of trust imposes when the lie is uncovered

To plan for those things, to overcome them, needs remarkable discipline. Of course, it's ultimately (invariably) futile. The truth almost always comes out long term.

One daily self-discipline challenge - Don't lie today. Not to others - a given. But to yourself. The shortcut you're trying to kid yourself doesn't matter. The face-saving move that you know isn't helping you longer term. Feigning naivety, or blocking out the little voice that says "*do this unattractive but important task*" while you garner instant pleasure from the sugary-but-wasteful actions.

"Radical honesty" discipline is, I'd suggest, unachievable for most of us (we've developed butt-covering lying mechanisms for a reason). But to go into each and every day with an item on your checklist that says "*Don't lie, to myself or anyone else*"... will it help you build better plans and implement with honesty? I'd be lying if I guaranteed you a 'yes'... but I think it will.

Have a mighty disciplined day!

The Discipline Factory

Where you build disciplines

When the crowd's gone home

"Practice is a means of inviting the perfection desired."

Dance teacher Martha Graham

On a wet Sydney Sunday at the SCG, the local Swans slugged it out to defeat the Richmond Tigers by 10 points. An error-ridden game, both sides had the chance to kick away, but slippery leather made for a lot of misses.

After the game, when everyone else had gone in for a shower and the crowd headed home, young Tiger Trent Cotchin grabbed a football, went back to the muddy goalsquare, and practiced his goal kicking. The TV commentators in the box, still not packed up, remarked *"that's why he's got a big future as a leader of this club"*.

Greg Williams, a Carlton-Swans Brownlow medallist, was famous for getting to training early and staying late. He'd grab a bag of footballs and, all alone, practice his goal-kicking. When he'd kicked the bagful, he'd run up into the grandstands, pick the balls up, and start again. Not blessed with the natural ability of some peers, Williams won the highest accolades by working when no-one was watching.

There's no cheers or external reinforcement for this kind of practice. Just what comes from within.

One daily self-discipline challenge - practice today when no-one's watching. Grab a 10 minute window to role-play in the mirror. Say the words aloud as you're driving to the appointment. Go out to the warehouse and get hands-on with the widget. Write down how you'd approach the performance management conversation you know will come again. Get on the simulation software. Repeat the training course exercises sitting in the folder gathering dust. Don't do it because it'll tick a box or please a boss. Do it because it's what the best do.

No-one will ever know that you put in an extra 30 minutes each morning away from peer eyes to read or study or rehearse. They'll see it though, down the track. They'll never quite put a finger on how you got so good. It's a discipline to lonely-up and do the after-hours work needed to get ever-better. Are you serious enough about what you want to do it?

Have a mighty disciplined day!

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It can be better

"There's always room for improvement - it's the biggest room in the house."

Louise Leber

Masterchef tragic that I am, I read Matt Preston's column in the 'tiser this week that covered his recent trip to Spain and 3-Michelin-Star Chef Elena Arzak's globally-renowned restaurant.

On analysing why this remote eatery on the Bay of Biscay attracts among-world's-best status, Preston discovered that before any dish nestles in their menu, the kitchen team refer to an 11-point checklist (yes!). They ask - "*Can the dish be improved with...*"

1. A vinaigrette
2. Salsa
3. Fruit acidity
4. Crunchiness
5. Dusts or freeze-dried powders
6. Gels
7. Decorations from seeds, sprouts or flowers
8. Garnish
9. Clouds, airs or foams
10. Purees or mojos
11. Spices or seasoning

It takes bold bravery to admit it can be better, and it takes a checklist to help you implement the thinking with proven consistency.

One daily self-discipline challenge - look at your day, really look at it. Is it the perfect day to take mighty steps forward in your unflagging pursuit of the goals so personally important to you? Admit it - the day could be better. So - how can you improve it? Take 5 minutes to design yourself a 5-point checklist that hones in on the key improvements you might make today (and any other day). Plan one extra thing for a top 3 VIP? Say no to a time burner? Study for 10 extra minutes to build the knowledge tower? Make 2 more thank-you calls? Your list, your ideas - admit today can improve, and give yourself the gift of a discipline support tool for rigorous referencing.

Of course, your current daily activity dish is edible. It'll fill a hole. So will old mate competitor's down the road. And at this mid-year reset point, they're readying to add a new garnish for 2011-2012. But what they don't have is a proven checklist to provoke daily, challenge, guarantee consistency in continuous improvement thinking. You can. Write it today. Delish.

Have a mighty disciplined day!

The Discipline Factory

Where you build disciplines

Diminishing vs appreciating

"The most powerful force in the Universe is compound interest."

Albert Einstein

The law of diminishing returns says that at some point, the things you're continually doing will generate progressively smaller upsides. The lawn will only get so green with continued fertilisation. Extra hours invested making a sandwich will only make it taste marginally better. Three more PowerPoint slides might make the presentation better, but not much.

Appreciation though is where something grows in value without much (or any) extra input. A ramshackle house on the beach that in a few more years will be worth double. The \$10 a week you put into the blue chip share account. The poor lifting technique you employ with gay abandon in youth that pays your back back post-40.

Both offer positive returns, but do we frequently get the two mixed up?

A religious habit of thank-you notes for everyone that did something that helped you yesterday - diminishing return, or bound to appreciate?

Whining to the boss about how unfair the budget is - progressively more or less powerful?

Daily reading, writing or 'rithmetic slots to build your knowledge, profile or budgetary disciplines?

What about giving directives and explicit instructions to team members versus coaching and supporting - both have a place; which diminishes and which will appreciate?

Too hard to categorise each daily task in these baskets? Maybe a rule of thumb helps - if it's something that makes people say "*I really appreciate that - thank you*", and your stocks go up... it's appreciating. If it could overtly trigger someone to take a dim view of you, themselves or others - it's diminishing.

One daily self-discipline challenge - Consider 3 appreciating disciplines you could invest in today. Adding an extra line to each email you write - "*I really appreciate the effort you're going to - thank you.*" Beat your follow-up deadline by an hour. Pick up the book you've been promising to read and lock the door for 15 minutes. Now to view the diminishing return task for what it is - long-term redundant. Is it still worth investing in today?

I think the best tasks are ones that have the potential for multiple appreciation streams - for others, for your stocks, for your own satisfaction & growth. I think they're often disguised as diminishing return tasks, because they're hard, and there are few overt short-term dividends making themselves apparent. That's how I view these daily emails. I hope I'm right. I appreciate you reading.

Have a mighty disciplined day!

The Discipline Factory

Where you build disciplines

Who handles hurt

"And in truth, I've never known a man worth his salt who in the long run, deep down in his heart, didn't appreciate the grind, the discipline. There is something in good men that really yearns for discipline and the harsh reality of head to head combat."

Vince Lombardi

At some point in the near future, the metaphorical success train that's carrying your team, territory or top product is going to come off the tracks. Hopefully a minor derauling, but cataclysmic crashes aren't out of the question.

There'll be the hysterical wailers, making much noise and flailing arms uselessly.

There'll be the naysayers, who apparently told you so.

There'll be the morbid onlookers, the turn-away-ers and the opportunists looking to profit from your wreckage.

There'll also be those that you know you can turn to, who deal with hurt well, who have a bounce-back-ability or calmness or sleeves-rolled-up can-do attitude that says *"there's nothing to do but to start and keep going"*. The disciplined re-railers.

I know who I want on my team. Someone who, at the bottom, started climbing first.

Ready to push through winter pain?

One daily self-discipline challenge - assess your tolerance for hurt. If the pin comes out of the grenade on the biggest project you're working on, or the top client says see-ya, or your first 11 is decimated by walk-outs... have you got the stomach (and the plan) to deal with it? Knowing that it will happen (and in some way, shape or form, it will), what do you need to invest time doing this week to maximise re-railing speed and minimise shockwave spread throughout the stakeholder crew? Diarise 15 minutes this week to think about risk mitigation, and consider 'hurt tolerance' as a selection criteria for who you let on your engine from this day forth.

I think hurt tolerance is part nature, part nurture. Can't change the nature bit, but nurture-proofing strategies might include 'active exposure to potentially explosive situations', 'using goal-based checklists as reference point 1 when the sky falls' and 'picking role models carefully'. Fairweather is easy. Test your tolerance to the tough stuff.

Have a mighty disciplined day!

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Where you build disciplines

The importance timeline

"A leader is someone who steps back from the entire system and tries to build a more collaborative, more innovative system that will work over the long term."

Robert Reich

Welcome to Scramblesville - population, most of the professional world. The run towards the end-of-fin year where 'urgent' gets higher priority, the last-gasp lunges appear and focus hones in on short-term cash and listening to the noisiest.

The overwhelming desire to clear the urgent off the desk is a high-ranking discipline saboteur. Must grab cash. Must silence the demanding voices. Must put out the bushfire. Must wade through the pile. Must have a meeting. Must delay the follow-up note while I do all this. Must put the client-centric initiative into the new year's basket because right now, it's just not that impor....

... yes it is. There's two differences between urgency and importance. The first is a timeline - the important might take longer to pay off. The second - urgent things aren't necessarily even important - there's simply no correlation between them. The important will pay off - there are no guarantees on the urgent.

In your time-poor, ever-more-complex professional Universe, the *only thing* you can busy yourself with is the important. There's simply no time to waste on 'just urgent'.

One daily self-discipline challenge - Take 10 minutes, a metaphysical ruler, and reflect on an important business initiative you implemented way back when that, at the time, wasn't urgent (but you had the foresight to see as important). Measure the impact longer term (keep measuring into the future if you haven't yet seen the full impact). Now compare those metres with the millimetres achieved by miring yourself in the things that seemed urgent 2 weeks ago. Pretty dumb comparison, huh?

It takes market-best discipline to say no to the urgent in favour of the longer term important. The boss won't always agree with you. The yelling gets louder. Not everyone can take it. Are you up for backing your judgement and belief in the longer-term impact of doing the important? If so, 2012 just started.

Have a mighty disciplined day!

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Where you build disciplines

Working not flying

"Nothing is a waste of time if you use the experience wisely."

Rodin (the sculptor, not the footballer)

Jeff Bezos wrote the business plan for Amazon.com from the passenger seat of his car while his wife drove them from coast to American coast.

Lots of people have been stuck waiting for planes, trains and automobiles these past couple of weeks while the Chilean Volcano Gods reclaim the skies. Some sit and moan, others enjoy Qantas Club hospitality, and a rare few realise what a blessing in disguise the inability to rush is.

That seed for a campaign that's been germinating in your mind? You just got the hours you needed to get it onto paper.

The proactive phone calls to check in, thank, congratulate, request, suggest, coach or support? The lines are now open.

The frog - the paperwork task you know needs 3 hours intense coffee-fuelled focus to churn through - it's now on a plate waiting with Worcestershire sauce.

Weren't catching a plane? Unaffected by the ash? Consider your version of a time gift - the appointment that cancels today, the meeting that wraps up 10 minutes early, the 15 minutes of quiet you enjoy at the office before the phones begin, the accumulation of 5 minute blocks that arise when you pull up in your car early for each appointment. A lunch hour (if you need an hour to eat lunch....). Even 5am - it's a time gift that few choose to unwrap.

When plan a's time allocation changes, move swiftly to pop plan b into its place.

One daily self-discipline challenge - make the most of delayed departure times. Take 5 minutes to prepare an "In case of free time" task that you could sink your teeth into when time windows appear. Write it on your prioritised to-do list. And when the moment comes... have the discipline to do it once. Then again tomorrow. You just raised the bar.

Have a mighty disciplined day!

The Discipline Factory

Where you build disciplines

Breaking the Mexican standoff

"How much of human life is lost in waiting."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

I get to see a lot of waiting games played across teams.

The staff member waiting for an endorsement or directive from the boss.

The boss waiting for the team to show some initiative before applying leaders guidance.

The sales rep waiting for marketing to come out with a better brochure before seeing the client.

The marketer waiting for the reps to use the tools they've already got before launching new ones.

Operations waiting for a system failure before investing time to improve systems.

Everyone else waiting to see what operations come up with.

Even waiting for self-disciplines to magically kick in without effort or structure.

Mexican standoffs like this are just dumb. They're borne out of a. not really knowing what to do (having to admit incompetence), b. fear of what others might think or say when they take the lead and initiate change (herd mentality), or c. churlish hubris (why should I have to go first?)

Because you do. Because if you don't, maybe no-one else will*.

Is the potential upside of you sparking change, boldly going where no chicken's been before, and heaven forbid, even precipitating a slow-to-catch-fire-but-definitely-smouldering cultural change for the better, worth the risk?

If it is (and it almost always is), then have the courage to throw down your sombrero and start, and the discipline to push forward when the knockers and ignorers start their short-term rejection campaign (that is destined to quickly die).

One daily self-discipline challenge - take a teaspoon of cement this morning and break the standoff with a bold move. Make it early - it'll galvanise the courage you apply to everything else you've got on your plate today. And if you don't know what to do... ask for help. The crowd that loves supporting the courageous Mexican gunslinger is bigger than you think.

* Well, someone always will eventually. And they get the credit. And the followers. And growth and momentum and pride. And you get the hollow bubkis because you didn't trust yourself. Step out onto the ledge and start the change process yourself.

Have a mighty disciplined day!

The Discipline Factory

Where you build disciplines

Cabaret, compliance & chopsticks

"The biggest reason more salespeople aren't successful?
Failure to implement."

Phil Harris

A serendipitous moment that occurs only in discipline factories, where frequency meets fortune and we get the rare opportunity to combine the magical rule of 3, discipline role models and the chance to pump the tyres of VIP clients...

Last Thursday night, I had the privilege to watch Rhonda Burchmore perform at the Adelaide Cabaret Festival, singing and swinging the life story of Julie London (*Cry me a river, Fly me to the moon*). Magnetic stage presence, a slit in her skirt that reached her neck and a remarkably sultry voice was overshadowed by a moment when it all went wrong. In an effort to gracefully hoik herself up onto a piano for a song, she slipped and came a gutser. Rather than let it throw her show into chaos, she seamlessly incorporated it into the act with funny banter, thinking on her feet and segueing via a different path into the next song. And the band played on... consummate disciplined professionalism.

Next morning, I facilitated a workshop with a mighty sales team who each planned one key account strategy with 12+ month goals in mind. The common wisdom that came from a seasoned and successful crew was that 'compliance to business plans' was perhaps the single biggest obstacle between *their* distributor clients and successful outcomes. They also iterated the reverse logic - if we have call plans and we abandon them halfway through a conversation, then failure to comply will be *our* undoing. Proven sales discipline wisdom.

Then on Saturday, my eldest took to the piano for the daily 5 minute spot that, despite early grizzles, is starting to become ingrained. Hearing her tap out a strange version of a tune, she explained she was experimenting, trying a song she knows in a different key. Brave boundary stretching behaviours that only ever comes when the discipline patterns are knitting in.

Cabaret, compliance and chopsticks (well, it was called *Boxcar Rumble*, but you get it).

Take a disciplined hand to this last week of June.

One daily self-discipline challenge - Prepare for a slip. Comply to your plans. And where a discipline is settling, provoke it with a key change.

Tomorrow is the 42nd discipline factory. The future of this discipline support tool revealed then. Into a mighty day with you!

(One for the very generous and talented Dale Wood Business Sales Consultancy Team, the Coopers Brewery Sales Ninjas and my beautiful eldest Aislin. Thank you for inspiration.)

Have a mighty disciplined day!

The Discipline Factory

Where you build disciplines

The Fabry-Perot Optical Resonator

"Ever tried? Ever failed? No matter. Fail again. Fail better."

Samuel Beckett

Have you ever stood in a clothing store dressing room, or an elevator, where there's a mirror on either side of you? And if you look into one mirror, you can see it reflecting in the other, which is reflecting the other, which is reflecting... a never-ending series of reflections, all getting smaller and smaller in the distance. It's called a Fabry-Perot Optical Resonator. It's how lasers work, using two mirrors to reflect & concentrate light to a single straight line beam.

Discipline is a Fabry-Perot Optical Resonator.

Think.
Plan.
Do.
Review.

Think.
Plan.
Do.
Review.

Think.
Plan.
Do.
Review.

....(foreverandeverandeverandever)

It's easy to reflect once. Keep doing it. It creates laser focus.

One daily self-discipline challenge - Think about what you want to achieve today. Take 10 minutes to plan it. Then have a crack at the title. And before you hang up your labcoat at closing time, take 5 minutes to review your input and output. Go home knowing you have to do it again, better, tomorrow. That's it.

Thanks for spending the last 42 work mornings with me in *The Discipline Factory*. I hope you've enjoyed it and that something's stuck.

Have a mighty disciplined day!

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