



Unglued

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Success is in the habits

I’ve lost about 13 pounds since the beginning of the year – not through some fad diet or by starving myself, but by becoming aware of my habits, avoiding bad ones, and developing good ones.

It occurs to me that the same strategy can apply to any business or life goal.

Here’s what my habit strategy looks like in practice: Though I believe there’s no such thing as “bad” foods, I know that *habitual* consumption of sweets, wine, and other high-calorie or high-fat foods will work against my weight loss goal. So I avoid consuming those things at a place or time that could start a habit. For example, I will not buy a pastry when I go to my favorite WIFI coffee shop. Since I spend a lot of time there, it would be far too easy to fall into the habit of buying a pastry every time. Similarly, I will not order dessert in the senior residence dining room where I eat with my father most nights. Though my octogenarian dad is in the habit of ordering cheesecake every night, I refrain. And though there’s usually an open bottle of wine in the refrigerator at home, I only drink when Dad and I go to my sister’s for family celebration dinners, or on other special social occasions.

At the same time, I’ve developed some helpful habits – workouts at least three days a week and clocking 7,500 – 10,000 daily steps on the pedometer.

So what would this strategy look like for a business goal? (This newsletter is late because I had to think long and hard about the answer to this question!)

Let’s say my goal is to build my writing business to the point it will produce half of my annual income; what are the habits that work for and against this goal? (This is not unlike a SWOT analysis you may have done for your business, but it’s more personal.) Here are some of my answers:

Habits I need to avoid: Reading and responding to personal email at any/all times of the day. Checking email for those related to the goal is OK; but getting sucked into responding to personal items, reading jokes, etc., is a time killer that detracts from my goal. Here’s another: Volunteering for responsibilities without an exit strategy. While I love giving back to my various communities, I have an unfortunate tendency to volunteer too often and to take on responsibilities that could last a lifetime I let them.

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Habits I need to develop: Constantly improving my craft. I believe in life-long learning, but I have fallen out of the habit of taking a class or two, specifically related to writing or editing, each year. Another good habit: Asking “need questions.” The only way to build my business is to find those who need a writer/editor. And one of the best ways to find those folks is to ask questions: Do you need someone to help you develop some brochures for your next trade show? Do you need an expert to clean up the spelling and grammar errors on your web site? Do you want someone to help you conceptualize and build a new web site? Do you need a writer/editor to help you with the final draft of that book you’re determined to publish? What are the writing projects on your back burner that you’d like to just dump on someone who knows what she’s doing?

Habits are those patterns of thinking or doing that either help or hinder our ability to create what we want in life. Coming unglued (from bad habits) can be a good thing!

What are your best (or worst) business habits? Send me an email with “habits” in the subject line. I’ll compile the responses (with anonymity) and send them to the group.

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...working for you wherever I am!