

incremental progress

increment/al - the amount or degree by which something changes
progress - a forward or onward movement (as to an objective or to a goal)

We all wish for overnight successes. Alas, for most of us, there is no short cut to success. It is the small, consistent, daily actions and the thousands of little things that make all the difference.

To be sure, having clear objectives and goals are core to any success we want to attain – as individuals, as a team, or as an organization. It gives you direction and a sense of purpose. But by itself, it is not enough to drive achievement. In fact, an excessive focus on the big picture can be paralyzing, instead of inspiring. You begin with a grand gesture, full of excitement and passion. But wait – how do you keep going? How do you stay inspired when progress is so slow? How do you transform big ideas into consistent effort?

It's easy to get frustrated when you're at work or even in the process of determining what it is you want to create for yourself. Things always take longer than you think they will and there are always more and more questions that arise and tasks you never knew you would need to tackle.

But here's the deal. There is no short cut.

As outsiders it sometimes appears that others took a shortcut or "got lucky". We don't know what went on behind the scenes though to get them where they are today. Look at for example the rock star who suddenly showed up out of nowhere with a #1 hit and skyrocketed to the top of the charts. It would appear that she got lucky, found the right song, had the right manager, someone discovered them and it was a fairytale ride to the top. What we didn't see was, she has been playing guitar since she was 4 years old, singing just as long. Has been through hundreds of talent competitions, played in several failing bands, spends months on the road sleeping in a van, etc. Until one day, she got noticed.

All of those years of making incremental progress finally got her past the tipping point. We all want the instant rise to success. Regardless of what your business is you set goals, you push yourself and you undoubtedly face frustration when it's not happening fast enough. However, without the incremental progress you would not be able to manage success should it hit in an instant. You need the infrastructure and experience that incremental progress gives you.

For example, think of the rise of our oceans. We don't notice that every day our oceans are rising at a very slow rate (incremental progress). We only notice when there is massive incident, like a hurricane, that pushes the water levels to temporary new heights. This is a false high, the water will retreat because the foundation is not at that level yet.

3 Strategies For Embracing Incremental Progress

Acknowledge your accomplishments everyday. At the end of the day take time to inventory what you accomplished in that day. Take a couple minutes to jot these down in your journal or in your calendar.

Start tracking and measuring. If you played sports when you were younger or just follow sports, you know the importance of keeping score. Keeping score is not always about the immediate outcome of winning or losing, it's about showing progress. Keeping score helps you identify trends and see what's working and what's not.

Celebrate! If you want more of anything you must appreciate what you have. Give yourself credit for what you have accomplished so far. Set small goals and celebrate the wins. You deserve it. Yes, some accomplishments deserve a bigger celebration – like a bottle champagne! And even the smallest accomplishment deserves a pat on the back. Be proud of your work and incremental progress you are making.

P.S. If you really need a boost, set aside an hour or so and recap the past year. Where were you one year ago in your life? Write down what you have accomplished in that time. Everything, don't gloss over the tiny details, those are the things that add up to massive progress. If you can't recall the tasks you've completed, look back through your calendar and photos. They will trigger the events of that time and help you see just how amazing you are. When you're done...CELEBRATE!