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More things successful people do differently

1. Being a realistic optimist. Successful people have realistic goals, good plans and persistence. Set 'stretch' targets for change, but make sure they motivate rather than scare or lose your people.
2. Focus on getting better rather than being good. Don't just talk continuous improvement, follow through. Knowing exactly which aspects you want to improve will help direct attention and efforts.
3. Have grit. Successful people commit and stick to long-term goals. Change can be difficult. Be selective about projects, build resilience and foster a 'can do' attitude. It's true - when the going gets tough, the tough get going!
4. Build the willpower muscle. Willpower grows with practice/exercise. Have reasonable goals and a 'plan B' people can use when things get tough. In a change project, that might be the ability to call a committed someone who will be supportive.
5. Don't tempt fate. This goes to recognising we have finite resources. Choose a few key projects and focus on those. Plan and execute a few projects well, instead of chasing many that fail or underperform.
6. Focus on what you *will* do. Be positive. Help people focus on what needs to be done, not on what *mustn't* be done. Trying to suppress thoughts makes them even more active!

CHAMPIONING CHANGE USING 9 THINGS SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE DO DIFFERENTLY

Personal wins...and losses

Take a moment to reflect on the most recent personal goal you've achieved. It doesn't have to be one of life's major battles. It might be as basic as completing your 'To Do' list for the day, sticking to your promise to take an hour to read a novel or spending an hour's quality time with people you care about. It does feel good to achieve personal goals, doesn't it, even those which are quite modest?

Now, comes the harder bit. What about the personal goals you haven't yet reached? Sometimes, even small goals can prove quite elusive. Larger targets seemingly impossible to reach! Just what is it that leads you to succeed or fail?

Motivational psychologist, Dr Heidi Grant Halvorson, points out that most people (even those who are very successful!) are not too good at understanding what causes success and failure. She reminds us also of all the research showing that successful people reach their goals because of what they do. This seems much more important than who you are - which plays a smaller part.

Nine things successful people do differently

So what is it that successful people do differently? Firstly, they get specific. Secondly, they seize the moment to act on goals. They also know exactly how far they still have to go. Successful people are realistic optimists. They focus on getting better, rather than getting good. They have grit. They build their 'willpower' muscle. Successful people also don't tempt fate and they focus on what they will do, rather than on what they won't do.

So, how did you do on that list? In a nutshell, successful people know pretty much exactly what they're working towards in the moment. They also limit the number of goals they're trying to focus on at any one time. Then, they devote energy to completing the tasks, and stick with it even when the going gets tough.

Can we use these ideas to champion organisational change?

When we think about organisations, we often forget that they are made up of individual people! They are supposed to combine in a way that generates synergies - collaborative works should be greater than the sum of the individual parts. All too often, this is overlooked. Frequently we also forget about individuals.

John Jones and colleagues (2004) provide some valuable observations in the publication *strategy+business*: "*Plans themselves do not capture value; value is realized only through the sustained, collective actions of the thousands... Companies will reap the rewards [of strategic plans] only when change occurs at the level of individual employees.*"

What then if we apply what works for successful individuals (achieving goal weight, better golf swing etc.) to organisations that are made up of individuals? Can this help us explain why many organisations achieve such low rates of change success? More importantly, can we tap into what successful people do differently, starting at the individual level to achieve organisational change success?

Get specific

Successful people know exactly what they want to achieve. Gym 5 times a week, for an hour. Lose 3 kilograms by June etc. Can you say the same about the change projects that run in your organisation? Let's get more specific! What about your own change projects - those you run and others you contribute to? How clear are you on what needs to be done? Don't just 'think' about it. Challenge yourself to write down exactly what still needs to be done for particular key projects. Then, compare those thoughts with any project planning you do have. How did you do? What a great opportunity to do the same with the project team.

Seize the moment to act on your goals

Successful people not only have clear goals, they also hold them front of mind. This facilitates an opportunistic approach - if you get a moment, use it! UGM strategy and change research, and work with clients, shows that people are often unable to prioritise what is most needed. So, even if they do fill their allocated change project time with 'work', they may not be pursuing the most beneficial options for current change targets. Frankly, it's often not their fault that this happens.

Know exactly how far you have left to go

By now, the repeating messages relating to goal clarity should be pretty apparent. Successful people not only know specifically what has to be achieved, but they also know how they're progressing. What sort of monitoring do you have in place for your change projects? Are people in a position to be able to self-monitor? What steps can they take when they're behind, or ahead? Do they actively seek support to catch up, or is the slippage only detected at the big review meeting (which is unwieldy, detested and doesn't seem to achieve much).

Tapping into what successful individuals do differently

We ultimately rely on individuals to effect change. For this reason, it's definitely worthwhile to harness the things successful people do differently for our organisational change efforts. So far, we've looked at three of the nine behaviours. We pick up on the remaining six in our side bar. Of course, it's now up to you to apply these ideas to your own change initiatives!