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4 TIPS TO MAKE GETTING OUTSIDE EASIER

Hunkering down and waiting for the dark and chilly winter season to pass sounds pretty nice. But the reality is, if we deprive ourselves of time outside, we do ourselves a big disservice both mentally and physically. Staying indoors all day affects your energy and mood, which makes it hard to get anything done, so here are four easy tips to make it easier to get a little fresh air.

1. Make it a priority. Getting outside means making the conscious effort to do so. If you want to reap its benefits, you have to decide to make it a priority in your day-to-day schedule. If you make the act important to you, you have more motivation to actually do it.

2. Use mornings effectively. Waking up and getting the day started can be hard. But studies have shown that natural light helps decrease your melatonin production, which means you feel ready to face the day sooner. So, set yourself a second alarm to head outside and take a quick walk around the block just after waking. Don't even wash your face or grab coffee. Just get out there.

3. Take your work outside. If you're working from home, take some work outdoors. Phone and virtual meetings are a great outdoor option, especially if you'll just be an active listener and aren't required to work simultaneously. Attach a note to your meeting reminders to get yourself set up outside five minutes before you start.

4. Create a schedule. It might feel strange to set reminders throughout the day to step outside, but you easily get wrapped up in activities and overlook breaks, and these reminders are exactly what you need. Start with 10-minute blocks three times a day. If you stick to them, soon you won't need a schedule to get outside anymore.

Winter weather may be cold, but even when you're bundled up under a jacket and scarf, just 5-10 minutes outside can do wonders for your mood and energy for hours.



Steve's Update

I am writing this newsletter a few weeks before Christmas. This has been one heck of a dumpster fire year! Good riddance to 2020! 2021 has to be better. Right now, we are seeing another surge of COVID-19 cases, but the vaccines are just about to get some kind of approval. By the time you guys read this, I would like to think that people are getting the vaccine. It will take time for enough people to get vaccinated to actually squash this virus. I think it is fair to say that everyone is ready to get back to living their lives.

We just had a little COVID-19 scare in my home. My daughter Kristina's friend, who she has lunch with every day, tested positive. The school therefore had her and my son Jimmy stay home in quarantine for two weeks. The doctors told me and the wife to quarantine as well. Since Kristina was the one initially exposed, they recommended we separate her from the rest of the family. So, we put her in the finished basement where she has her own bathroom, bed, and big-screen TV. She was fine. That made our Thanksgiving a little disappointing though.

Today was the last day of the quarantine, and nobody has a fever or shows any symptoms. So, Tina is allowed out of the basement, and she and Jimmy will be able to go back to school after the weekend. I celebrated the end of my quarantine by going for a walk in the Massapequa Preserve.

Unfortunately, the governor extended the state of emergency here in New York. This means our New York salespeople can't come back to work yet. Some of the salespeople went to work in New Jersey but for a few, it is just too far. I think he won't lift this state of emergency till after the vaccine is distributed.



A picture of my walk on the Preserve!

Last month, I mentioned a property in Pennsylvania I was looking at. I also mentioned that there is always something wrong with every property I look at. As it turns out, the present owner has a contract with a lumber company to cut down every tree over 16 inches in diameter! That piece of information would have been nice to know before I drove out there to look at it! Needless to say, I passed on that property. I revised my search and now I am looking in Delaware County, New York. It is a little bit further, but the prices seem to be more reasonable.

I hope everybody had a great holiday season and a happy New Year. May 2021 be a better year for everybody!

- Steve Mellis

Be a Better Leader

4 Leadership Books You Need to Read

For leaders at all levels in all types of business, 2020 was a tough year. Those businesses that managed to not only survive but also thrive all have one big factor in common: good leadership. If you want to be a better leader for your team in 2021, here are the latest leadership books you should add to your reading list.

'Friday Forward: Inspiration and Motivation to End Your Week Stronger Than It Started' by Robert Glazer

Glazer is an entrepreneur and bestselling author who has taken 52 of the most impactful stories from his inspirational newsletter that goes out to more than 100,000 readers and put them in one convenient book. These stories of struggling entrepreneurs who turned things around can give you the push you need to make an impact in your own circles and end your work weeks stronger than they started.

'Unleashed: The Unapologetic Leader's Guide to Empowering Everyone Around You' by Frances Frei and Anne Morriss

Frei is one of the world's foremost authorities on leadership. In her new book, she's teamed up with Anne Morriss, a leader in the genomics industry. The book teaches leaders how to empower others. Great leadership takes grit, thick skin, and compassion, and "Unleashed" offers advice from top-performing organizations on how to best achieve all three.

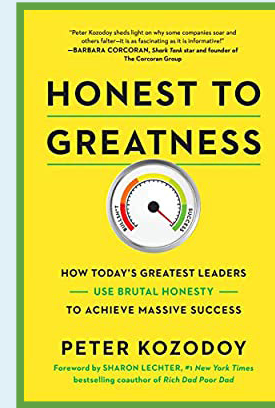
'Personality Isn't Permanent: Break Free From Self-Limiting Beliefs and Rewrite Your Story' by Benjamin Hardy

Organizational psychologist Benjamin Hardy makes a fascinating argument for why your current personality isn't the one that's most important. His new book pushes readers to consider who they want their future self to be, and his ideas aren't theoretical — they're

full of proven ways to change your priorities, break habits, and use your environment to make you a better version of yourself.

'Honest to Greatness: How Today's Greatest Leaders Use Brutal Honesty to Achieve Massive Success' by Peter Kozodoy

The turmoil of 2020 has pushed brands to reconsider how they appeal to their customers. Many are walking away from deceitful promises and aiming for radical honesty and authenticity, instead. In his new book, Kozodoy examines how this revolution came to be and why it's working. His guide teaches leaders how they can embrace these qualities to make their businesses better.



How Habit Tracking and Daily Resolutions Could Transform Your Life

Yearly resolutions are so last year ... if they're your only resolutions, that is.

Having long-term goals isn't a bad thing, but do you have a daily plan to reach them? The huge boost of motivation in January isn't always enough to sustain you all year long. That's why there are major benefits to starting new healthy habits, whether you increase your weekly exercise time, eat healthier foods, or work on getting better or more sleep.

Luckily, sticking with these habits might be as easy as making daily resolutions to complement your yearly goals.

B.J. Fogg, a Stanford University professor and author of "Tiny Habits: The Small Changes That Change Everything," notes that tiny habits can make a new habit easy to implement into your daily ritual. For example, taking a short daily walk could lead to an exercise habit, or keeping an apple in your bag every day could encourage healthier snacking.

It's important that you stick with it because habits take a long time to create. One study published by the European Journal of Social



Psychology asked people about a simple habit they wanted to form, like drinking water at lunch or taking a walk before dinner. They found that the average amount of time it took before the action became automatic was 66 days! Don't be too hard on yourself if you miss a day, but know that sticking to a new habit is serious work, so starting small might help you out.

Another important aspect of forming new daily habits is rewarding yourself. Bad habits, like smoking, have an inherent reward. However, healthy habits can have rewards too! Try consuming a bit of dark chocolate after a workout or treating yourself to a fresh beverage or relaxing to a podcast after tackling an important task. Find ways to reward yourself, and you'll be more likely to stick to your new habit.

Certain daily resolutions don't have to be related to exercise or diet to majorly improve your life. For example, having a gratitude journal might boost your long-term happiness by 10% and improve your blood pressure.

Don't hesitate to improve your quality of life! Just start small, and you'll be amazed by how far you'll go.

BUSINESS BUDGETING FOR 2021

YOU CAN STILL PLAN AROUND UNPREDICTABILITY

This is the time of year when businesses would usually be looking at their budget and planning for the coming year. But COVID-19 has made the future entirely unpredictable, which makes properly planning your budget difficult. But all is not lost — there are some basic budgeting tactics you can implement to face 2021 with confidence.

CREATE A FORECAST

If you're not entirely confident in your ability to forecast sales for 2021, you're not alone. But you do still have options. If 2020 went great, perhaps try setting your sights up 10% from last year. If you want to play it safe, keep your forecast on par with 2020. If even that doesn't feel reliable, then jump back to 2019 and use it as a base for creating your budget. You can ramp up 10% or 20% from there. Don't just forecast this year blindly — use data from a point you can rely on and plan accordingly from there.

KNOW WHAT TO INCLUDE

Your budget needs to have flexible sales goals and realistic expense plans this year. Many businesses are having to change their marketing focus and invest differently, so you have to be willing

to adapt your budget too. As you set sales goals, be aware of your margins and get flexible with the way you're achieving them if you want to improve them. Also take into account new expenses you may have in response to 2020, like staffing changes and Paycheck Protection Program loans. Take stock of what's new and different for your business this year and include it in your budget plan.

REMEMBER THE ESSENTIALS

Even though last year was a wild ride, you can't throw all your best practices out the window. Certain budget-forward thinking will always be essential, no matter where your business has landed. If sales are strong, drive profits while you can to build your reserves. Modify your products or services to align with customer behavior. Keep your accounts receivable clean. Don't use credit cards to finance your business. Pay close attention to your balance sheet to keep a handle on debt. Cultivate an ongoing relationship with your banker.

If you find a reliable baseline, are willing to be flexible and realistic, and if you can recalibrate your plans on the go, you can budget your way to a much better year.

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