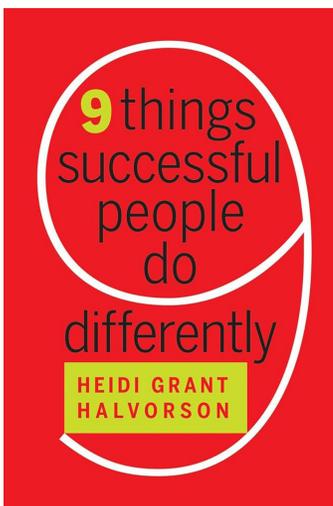


EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Heidi Grant Halvorson

Heidi Grant Halvorson, PhD, is a motivational psychologist, the Associate Director of Columbia Business School's Motivation Center, and author of Succeed: How We Can Reach Our Goals.

9 Things Successful People Do Differently

THE NUTSHELL

Why do some people succeed while others don't? Why do some people succeed in some areas but not others? It isn't just because of some innate talents or abilities. Research shows that successful people reach their goals because of specific things they do. There are actually nine strategies they use to set and pursue goals that have the biggest impact on performance.

Habit #1: Get Specific

When setting a goal, it's important to be as specific as possible. "Lose five pounds" is a better goal than "lose some weight" because it gives you a clear idea of what success looks like. Being specific keeps you motivated. It's also important to be specific about the actions you need to take to reach your goal.

Habit #2—Seize the Moment to Act on Your Goals

Most of us miss opportunities to act on goals just because we are so busy we don't notice them. To seize the moment, you need to make some decisions in advance. Decide when and where you will take each action that moves you towards your goals. For example, say "On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday I will work out for 30 minutes at 5:00." Studies show that this kind of planning will help your brain grab the opportunity when it arises, which will increase your chances of success by roughly 300%.

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Habit #3—Know Exactly How Far You Have Left to Go

In order to achieve a goal, you have to monitor your progress. You need to know how well you are doing, so you can adjust your actions or strategies as needed. To that end you need to get feedback by checking your progress regularly. You can't stay motivated without feedback.

Habit #4—Be a Realistic Optimist

Positive thinking can be very helpful in accomplishing your goals. However, if it leads you to underestimate how difficult it will be to reach your goal, it won't be helpful. Most goals worth achieving take time, effort, planning, and persistence. To be successful, you need to understand the important difference between believing you will succeed and believing you will succeed *easily*. It's the difference between being a realistic optimist and an unrealistic optimist.

Habit #5—Focus on Getting Better, Rather Than Being Good

People approach any task with one of two types of goals: *be-good* goals, or *get-better* goals. With *be-good* goals, the focus is on proving yourself—proving that you have a lot of ability or that you know what you are doing. With *get-better* goals, the focus is on developing ability and learning to master a new skill.

Be-good goals create stress when we are faced with something new or unfamiliar. We feel like we don't know what we are doing, which creates anxiety, which actually leads to poorer performance. *Get-better* goals have the opposite effect. When we think about what we are doing in terms of getting better, we stay motivated, even when setbacks happen. And research also shows that people with *get-better* goals actually enjoy their work more and find it more interesting.

Habit #6—Have Grit

Grit is persistence and commitment to long-term goals. Grit is all about not giving up when it gets hard, even when tired, discouraged, or bored. People with grit do better in life—they get higher grades, pursue more education, and rise higher. The good news is that even if you aren't "gritty" you can grow in grit.

Habit #7—Build Your Willpower Muscle

Your willpower, or self-control, is a muscle, and just like the other muscles in your body, it needs exercise. When you give it regular workouts by putting it to good use, it will grow stronger, and be better able to help you accomplish your goals.

To grow your willpower, take on a challenge that forces you to do something you really don't want to do. Give up snacks or TV, do 100 sit-ups a day, eat some fruit, etc. *Start with one thing*. It will be hard in the beginning, but it will get easier—which is the whole point. Your willpower is growing, and as it grows, you can take on more challenges and grow it even more.

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Habit #8—Don't Tempt Fate

No matter how strong your willpower muscle becomes, there is a limit, and if you overuse it, you will temporarily run out of steam. Many people over-estimate their ability to resist temptation, which results in putting themselves in situations where temptation abounds.

Resisting temptation is a key part of reaching almost any goal. What we *want* to do is often the very opposite of what we *need* to do in order to achieve our goals. One thing that you have to do if you are going to move forward successfully is to make peace with the fact that your willpower is limited. It will *always* be limited!

Habit #9—Focus on What You *Will* Do, Not on What You *Won't* Do

If you really want to make a significant change in your life, plan how you will replace unhelpful behaviors with more productive ones. Too often, people focus their efforts on what they want to stop doing and fail to consider how they will fill the void. Research on thought suppression (Don't think about pink elephants) has shown that trying to avoid a thought makes it even more active in your mind. The same is true when it comes to behavior: trying *not* to do something increases the impulse rather than lessens it.

If you want to change your ways, ask yourself, what will I do instead? For example, if you want to get control of your temper, you could make a plan like "if I start to get angry, I am going to take three deep breaths."

Conclusion

Successful people set specific goals and seize opportunities to act on them. They always know how far they have to go and stay focused on what still needs to be done. They believe they will succeed, but embrace the reality that success won't come easily. They focus on making progress rather than being perfect. They believe they can develop their abilities through their effort, which makes them gritty in the face of setbacks and challenges. They build their willpower through exercise, and try not to put themselves in situations where temptations abound. Finally, they focus on what they will do, not what they won't do.

There is nothing they do that you can't do, too!