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HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

3 Reasons Why Slow Growth Will Help You Achieve Goals Faster...

We all have goals that we would like to achieve.

Whilst these goals differ from one person to the next, we can certainly agree that all of us would prefer to reach our goals sooner than later if we had a choice.

While there is nothing wrong in achieving a goal within a short period of time, the insatiable desire to enjoy results immediately – with little regard for the process – adversely influences our health, our happiness and lives in general.

Let's be honest – the media and society in general is constantly glorifying the end result whether it is in the form of get-rich-

quick schemes, overnight rags-to-riches stories, one-day diets or six-pack-abs in six-minutes workouts. This type of mindset easily leads us to erroneously believe that the goal is what validates us and not the process.

Simply put, achieving the goal in the shortest possible time seems to be the norm as opposed to HOW we got there.

The truth is that if you intend fulfilling your true potential and becoming someone better, then you will need to discover the power of slow growth.

Lessons About Slow Growth from the Life of Young Chinese Weightlifters

A while ago I read an article about the disciplined approach that China adopts when cultivating young Olympic weightlifters.

China has always been considered an international powerhouse in the sport of weightlifting and overflowing with depth in the sport. Here is what the process involves in becoming an Olympic weightlifter in China...

Age 6+ — playful gymnastics and bodyweight exercises to train coordination and help understand their bodies better. This is important to ensure that future athletes enjoy their training and consider it as an activity rather than training. Gradually, they shift focus to technique drills with a stick.

Ages 8 to 10 — the children are mostly still playing as they move, but 10% to 30% of the time is spent focusing on weightlifting movements like pulls and squats. After 18 months of this, this technique is pretty solidly ingrained into these kids and they then start to toy around with the bar.

Ages 10 to 14 — from here onwards, the training time increases and becomes more serious. They start to train with a massive array of exercises from snatch to clean to jerk to pulls and overhead squats to duck walks and frog jumps and continuous stretching.

Age 14+ — the athletes begin working on their specific problems and work to develop the right balance of flexibility, power, strength, speed and technique. At the beginning of this phase, the athlete would have had about 5 to 7 years of training, including at least 3 years under the barbell. The next 4 years will be spent working towards securing a spot on the

Chinese National Team and eventually competing in the Olympics.

- Kirksman

Whilst not everyone will be able to associate with the weightlifting terminology and story above, there are some important lessons to learn here about the power of slow growth.

(1) Slow growth promotes your self-confidence

“Self-confidence is the first requisite to great undertakings” – Samuel Johnson

Of all the skills required to assist you in achieving your goals, I would be inclined to say that self-confidence is the most important.

By now you may be asking, how would I go about developing self-confidence? It is quite simple actually. Prove your own abilities to yourself over and over again in the form of small wins or progress.

Relating to the story above, do you think that Chinese weightlifters believe in themselves? Most definitely! By the age of twelve, they have put in more repetitions than an average

weightlifter will put in during their entire lifetime. Furthermore, they gained this confidence by progressing gradually but steadily. Might I add that the Chinese are typically smaller in posture than the average European.

What was impressive for me was the fact that Chinese weightlifters only start focusing on performance goals after they have spent years becoming comfortable with their bodies and proving their identities to themselves.

There is no secret formula or shortcut in this case. If you want to achieve something you need to have self-confidence in your own abilities. In simple terms, slow growth allows you to spend time developing the identity of a winner first. You can move onto performance later.

(2) Slow growth relieves pressure and allows for passion

“When we work hard on something we believe in, it is called passion. When we work hard on something we do not believe in, it is called stress” – Simon Sinek

Initially, the goal of the Chinese is to let the young weightlifters *enjoy* the process of moving and becoming athletic. This is very

different from the approach we usually undertake when trying to accomplish goals we set for ourselves.

Stated differently, when was the last time you took three years to enjoy a process before focusing on a specific goal you want to achieve?

Most of the time we approach a specific goal (lose 10kg, make more money, be a better spouse, etc.) with a narrow mindset instead of embracing the process of developing new skills, engaging in new experiences and often building a new identity for ourselves. This focus on the ultimate goal without any disregard for the process often leads us to believe that we are a failure simply because we have not achieved the end result – specific goal in this case – yet.

What would it feel like if we let ourselves enjoy the process of success as much as the end product?

If you think about some of the most enjoyable activities in your life, how did they start? It is unlikely that you fell in love with something if you started by immediately pursuing a goal. Most of the things we love and enjoy doing started with exploration and a slowly growing curiosity that evolved into a passion over time.

Forget about performance for now and rather allow yourself to enjoy the process of becoming someone new and better. Most of all, give yourself permission to enjoy this journey to greatness.

(3) Slow growth helps you understand how change actually happens

“We are always slow in admitting any great change of which we do not see the intermediate steps” – Charles Darwin

It is easy to overestimate the importance of one defining moment and underestimate the value of making better decisions on a daily basis.

Almost every habit we have – good or bad – is the end result of many small decisions we have made over time. If this holds true, then the result of thousands of small decisions made over the course of days, months and even years, would it not make sense that the path to success, happiness and health would also be by way of hundreds of small decisions?

Often when we become obsessed with achieving a specific result, the only thing we think about is how to get to our goal in the shortest time possible with the least amount of effort. However, slow growth reminds us that the process you follow for attaining

your goal is just as important as the goal itself – whether or not you achieve the goal.

I would say that living a healthy lifestyle is more about how you approach your goals than whether or not you achieve them.

For example, a healthy lifestyle is not defined by weighing a specific amount or conforming to certain preconceived ideas of how your body should look by the media. A healthy lifestyle involves finding pleasure in being active. It involves a willingness to live a balanced lifestyle. It is a certain amount of sacrifice to make time for exercising and cooking or consuming healthy meals. It is an understanding that rest is just as important as exercise for your health and wellbeing. It is a thousand of small decisions you make every day.

What if we start focusing on the process and not the product?

The desire to achieve results quickly often fools us to think that the end result is the prize.

However, slow growth teaches us the truth, which is that becoming the type of person you want to become – someone who lives by a higher standard, someone who believes in him/herself,

someone who can be counted on by the people that matter to them – is ultimately about the daily processes you follow and not the end product you achieve.

There is no denying that results matter. I would be the first to admit that invariably we set goals for ourselves to achieve them and with good reason. However, our tendency to achieve goals at all costs and define ourselves as a “success-or-failure” based on the outcome of our goal often does more harm than good when considering the bigger picture. Not only does it often discourage us from pursuing similar goals in the future, but it also prevents us from observing progress we have made on this journey to attaining our goal – how minute it may be. These progress successes will ultimately be the foundation for other ventures we attempt.

Let's spend less time putting people who achieved the numbers and results on a pedestal i.e. the championship athletes, tycoon entrepreneurs, blockbuster entertainment stars – and more time learning from the type of people who live their daily lives by a standard we want to replicate.

What if we worried less about what we win and instead more about how we win it?