

SEEING IS BELIEVING

We form habits, and then habits form us. That's why it's important to understand how they work. In *The Power of Habit*, Charles Duhigg shows us the mechanics of the cue-routine-reward habit loop. He demonstrates how he changed an undesirable habit of his own by identifying his cues and rewards and inserting a new routine (habit) into the loop, thus achieving his desired result. But the book isn't about him. It's about the habits that specific individuals, organizations, and social movements purposely chose in order to transform and further themselves, their operations and their causes. And Duhigg, through all of the examples he shares, uncovers the secret behind successful habit formation: the *belief* that new habits can be acquired to produce desired results and that we have the free will to choose those habits.

Duhigg quotes William James: "Habits...are what allow us to 'do a thing with difficulty the first time, but soon do it more and more easily, and finally, with sufficient practice, do it semi-mechanically, or with hardly any consciousness at all.'" That "'thing,' " or routine, James wrote about is easier to perform if we first *visualize* ourselves doing it.

An apt example of this technique is the making of Olympic gold medalist Michael Phelps. At the beginning of Phelps's training, coach Bob Bowman instructed him to "'watch the videotape'" of the perfect race every morning and every night. In other words, mentally visualize it, regularly and repeatedly. Phelps used this keystone visualization habit (read more about keystone habits in our "Book Learning" article) and gained the skills, speed and focus he needed to become a champion. Phelps even visualized a plan of action for goggle failure. When his goggles filled with water in Beijing, he began pacing himself and counting strokes. After the 21st stroke, he glided to the wall for the world record. Visualization was the perfect practice for Phelps.

Anyone can develop this technique, which can be enhanced by utilizing the other senses too. That's because we all have our own way of

experiencing the world. While some people relate best to visual stimuli, others respond more strongly to varying combinations of sight, sound, taste, smell and feeling. If we incorporate more of our sense preferences into our own mental practice, our new habit-forming efforts will be even more efficient.

There's another twist on the visualization method that's possible to practice when learning to trade an old habit for a new one. Imagine a split TV screen, the old habit displayed on the left, and the new behavior on the right. Reach out and turn the dial until the image on the left fades and disappears. Then slide the right-screen image over to the left side, watching it expand to cover the entire screen. Turn the dial again to make the picture brighter and more sharply focused. Enhance the picture with any other sensory information that makes the experience more real. View the image for at least 30 seconds, giving it all your attention.



Repetition, duration, and intensity are crucial to perfect practice. Per Bowman's instructions to Phelps, visualizing both morning and night is good, but there's no need to limit practice to twice a day. The more frequently a new behavior is mentally rehearsed, the more familiar it becomes. Radio stations can

attest to the importance of familiarity. According to Duhigg, they regularly introduce and play new songs sandwiched between two established popular songs. The popular ones are "sticky"; they sound familiar, the way we expect them to sound, so our brains don't have to work too hard to listen to them. The more the new songs are played in this position, the more used to them we become. In the same way, familiarity with a new habit makes it more likely we'll feel comfortable performing that behavior.

What's more familiar than daydreams? They're proof that we're all blessed with imagination. When we choose to use that gift intentionally to see (feel, taste, hear) the new, productive behaviors we want to acquire, we become champions. Visualization is fun and effective; and we all can infuse it into our own habit changing initiatives.

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BOOK LEARNING

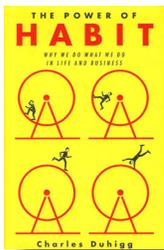
The Power of Habit

By Charles Duhigg

Random House, 2012

371 Pages

\$28.00



Those brains of ours: always trying to work smart, not hard. That’s why they chunk, converting series of actions into one automatic routine. The result is a new habit that frees our minds to multitask. We can tie our shoes and watch the morning news on TV at the same time. No problem. But shoe tying is a miniscule example of how habits serve us. In *The Power of Habit*, Charles Duhigg explores the science behind habit formation and shows us how individuals, companies and communities transformed their lives, their organizations and their cultures by acquiring new habits.

The way habits form gives us hope, because the process shows us that we can all acquire new ones. “Habits aren’t destiny.” Duhigg thoroughly explains the habit loop and how it works. Basically, there’s a cue, a routine, a craving for a reward and the reward itself. While the cue and reward always remain the same, we can vary the routine. Again: we can vary the routine and stop smoking, drinking, or biting our nails. Duhigg shows us how other people altered these specific behaviors by inserting new routines.

Because we are complex human beings, habit formation requires more than the introduction of a new routine into a habit loop. There’s also an emotional component: belief. To illustrate, Duhigg writes about NFL coach Tony Dungy. Dungy believed that players should and could learn to respond automatically with habitual moves (routines) when certain cues occurred during a game. Removing the decision-making component from each play would increase their speed and boost their winning record.

In 1996, Dungy was given the chance to test his theory in Tampa Bay. From then until 2001, the Buccaneers enjoyed success, but seemed to fall short under extreme pressure. After they had just missed playing in the Super Bowl for the second time in a row, Dungy was fired. Ironically, the Bucs went on to win the Super Bowl the next year, under a new coach, using Dungy’s strategy.

Soon, Dungy was hired by the Indianapolis Colts. It was the same story: The team experienced success but narrowly missed out on the Super Bowl, largely due to choking under pressure. When stress overrode Dungy’s new habits, the team fell back into their old mode of play, their old comfort zone. Then tragedy struck: In 2005, Dungy’s son committed suicide. The team displayed their love and support for their coach and wanted to help him through this difficult time. Duhigg writes, “The team gave in to Dungy’s vision of how football should be played in a way they hadn’t before. They started to believe.” In 2006, they won the Super Bowl.

Sometimes, habits take on a life of their own. Duhigg calls these keystone habits, and they generate whole series of other habits that propel individuals and groups toward their rewards. He shows us how Michael Phelps formed a keystone habit to become an Olympic champion. And he shows us how Paul O’Neill used the keystone habit of safety to transform a whole company, Alcoa. To do this, he relied on the classic habit loop. The cue was an employee injury. The routine was to report the injury to O’Neill, along with a plan to eliminate the possibility of that type of injury occurring again. The reward was promotion solely for people who used the system. After the new safety habit was instituted, other changes emerged. Rules and policies that had once been rejected or ignored were embraced. Communications systems were built to share information. A whole new culture formed at Alcoa. And something that O’Neill hadn’t even promised happened: profits increased.

In 1955, the Civil Rights Movement was born. Duhigg recalls how Rosa Parks’ refusal to give up her seat sparked the historic Montgomery Bus Boycott. His explanation of how social habits of strong ties between acquaintances start movements and how weak ties within neighborhoods and groups carry them forward is a prelude to revealing how a movement actually takes on a life of its own. It forms a new habit.

Tempers flared as a result of the boycott. When harassment and arrests of blacks began to occur, commitment to the cause began to wane, and Martin Luther King, Jr., Montgomery’s new pastor, began receiving complaints from his people. One night, a bomb exploded at King’s house. Members of the black community gathered. Police arrived on the scene. Violence erupted and could have escalated into a riot had the police chief not asked King to intervene. That’s when King gave his people a new habit: “‘We must love our white brothers, no matter what they do to us.’” This was a new, non-violent response to aggression, a Christian response. It gathered the black community together under the banner of a new identity that made the movement self-perpetuating and led to the signing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964.

This is just a glimpse into *The Power of Habit*. Duhigg covers so many other interesting and enlightening areas. For example: how a crisis can create new habits of shared responsibility and accountability; how consumers’ spending habits are tracked to make them targets for specific advertising; and the issue of taking responsibility for the habits we acquire. So here’s another good book to feed our habit of reading.

“*Destructive organizational habits can be found within hundreds of industries and at thousands of firms. And almost always, they are the products of thoughtlessness, of leaders who avoid thinking about the culture and so let it develop without guidance.*”

– Charles Duhigg

BUSINESS CORNERSTONES CONFERENCE REPORT

When talent, knowledge and experience come together in one room, look out! The combination of these three ingredients, embodied and communicated by seasoned business experts, creates a contagious and valuable learning atmosphere. That's what happened at the launch of our Business Cornerstones Conference series on October 23rd. This premier meeting focused on the first cornerstone element of business: people. Here are just a few highlights from several of the day's presentations.



Brent Hubby, president and second generation family owner of Professional DynaMetric Programs®, laid the foundation for the day by

explaining what makes people tick: our individual behavioral talents, our decision making styles, and our energy sources and capacity. Stressing that we all become frustrated because people aren't "doing it our way," he shared a valuable insight: We can't change people completely, but we can identify their personal strengths, give them work that will utilize their talents, and learn how to communicate with them in a way that will empower them to create positive results.

As a veteran businessman, former CEO of General Growth, and current Sr. VP of Human Resources at Principal Financial, Ralph Eucher brought a broad perspective to the group. He knows what it takes to be an employer of choice, and he shared three top characteristics. First, an organization has to treat its people well, and operate with fairness. Second, company leaders must care about their people, genuinely care; faking it won't work. Third, an employer has to operate with integrity and always align its actions with its core values.

Lloyd Rawls, president of the Rawls Group, is a specialist in family business and succession planning. He stressed the power of the family unit, and he defined succession as the continuation of success through the next generation of owners and managers. Speaking of the future, Lloyd described the family business as the canary in the coal mine and claimed

that, based on the recently observed strength of family businesses, other organizations will soon take off and prosper.

Dan revealed how to find new employees who will be both the best cultural and the best performance fit for an organization. These are the people who are recruited rather than hired. The difference is not semantics; it's strategy. Companies hire to fill a job; they recruit to build value. Managers hire to close a deal; they recruit to buy what the prospect brings to the table. Even if it looks like we have the brightest, most talented person sitting before us in the interview, Dan stressed the importance of first focusing on the characteristics of the position, rather than immediately selling the company to the candidate. His caution: The best person may not be the "right" person.



Scott Bailey, president of In the Black Ink, presented how to market your message internally. He related a personal experience from his work at Pella Corporation to illustrate how behavior can often speak louder than words. And he pointed to the difference in behavioral style between salespeople, company executives, and production workers, stressing the importance of effective communication between these three groups.

Our next conference will be January 15th, 2013, when we will explore the second cornerstone element: plans.



Here's A Thought

"The chains of a habit are so weak they cannot be felt until they become so strong they cannot be broken."

-Samuel Johnson

Our Tools

Professional
DynaMetric
Programs®

ProScan® TeamScan®
JobScan® Strat-Map®

Increasing Behavioral
Flex Ability™

Integrated Planning
Methodology™

Index of Workplace
Attitudes™

Internal Marketing System™

Cultural Due Diligence
System™

Closed Loop Performance
Systems™

CLOSING THOUGHTS



from DAN

One of the panel topics we covered at our October Business Cornerstones Conference was coaching for organizational and personal success. You can't have one without the other. That's why we first take the time to understand the characteristics of the job an employee performs before we presume to help her develop and grow in that position. For example, there's the perception that a nurse is a nurse no matter what area she works in. But the characteristics of an effective floor nurse differ from those of an effective ER nurse. The first must work with a consistent, steady routine to care for all the patients in her charge and report their daily progress to physicians. The second must be able to adapt to the erratic and emotionally charged crises of that department. Each assignment requires a specific set of behaviors.

When an employee is given the opportunity to undertake a new assignment within her organization, we compare the requirements of the new work with her PDP profile. Then we determine if her range of adaptability allows

her to take on the demands of the new role with minimal stress. For example, if she is currently in a position that utilizes her assertiveness, we make sure that it's feasible for her to work more collaboratively, if that's what the new job requires.

We frequently help a new employee shed former comfort zones and acclimate to her new company's culture. Because a new person is often brought on board to infuse new ideas into a group, we want to make sure that those contributions enhance the culture she has joined rather than recreate the one she came from.

We believe in organizations that make an investment in their employees. The best employers do it not only because they know they'll reap the rewards of more efficient work habits, better developed talent, and increased knowledge and skills, but also because it's the right thing to do. It's one way to treat people with the dignity and respect they deserve. It's a cornerstone for success.
