



TODAY'S MUST READS ▾

LEAD

31 Executives Share Their Daily Habits for Success

You might be surprised at the little things that make a big difference when it comes to getting ahead in business and life.



BY CHRISTINA DESMARAIS

[@salubriousdish](https://twitter.com/salubriousdish)NEXT
ARTICLE

IMAGE: Getty Images

While connections, intellect, and drive all can help a person succeed, consistency is key as well. Just as high-achieving athletes use discipline to win, business people who

do the right things day after day are primed for excellence. Here are the daily habits 30 successful executives rely on to accomplish great things in business and life.

1. Ask people what you can do for them.

"To receive great support and help you must be an even greater supporter and helper. Starting a business is extremely challenging, and requires the daily help and guidance of investors, partners and peers. Too often entrepreneurs fall into the trap of constantly asking things of others, while offering little in return. It's bad form and an easy way to burn bridges. But if you can be a thought leader and resource for your peers, and if you go out of your way to help them, they will ultimately go out of their way to help you. There are few greater compliments than having someone say, 'I would do anything for that person.' This habit will make that person you."

--Todd O'Hara, founder of Brunch, a messaging app for nearby friends.

2. Eat the frog.

"As a CEO, I am the team leader tasked with answering questions, putting out fires, and providing solutions. My to-do list is often put aside for the needs of my team. In order to ensure I accomplish my priorities for the day, I do the most important thing first, before I leave for the office. A lot of people call this 'eating the frog.' It's hard, but I do my best to do that every morning."

-- Lee Mayer, cofounder and CEO of an interior decorating platform Havenly.

3. Talk to someone new about your product every day.

"Don't just sit in your ivory tower--go out and learn what people are thinking about your product. I talk to people at grocery stores, at baseball games, and even my kids games (which can annoy them)."

--Andrea Cutright, CEO of Ask.fm, the world's largest Q&A social network with more than 150 million members in more than 150 countries.

4. Make staying in shape non-negotiable.

"Staying in shape is a habit, and takes priority on a daily basis. I don't allow the state of the business to get in the way of exercising. In fact, I schedule time to exercise in my head at the beginning of the week and every day to ensure I know when I will be working out. When I travel, I pack my gym clothes first, thinking about the week ahead and planning the schedule of workouts. I turn 54 next month and this is the best gift I could have ever given myself--a lifetime habit of staying in good shape. Just like putting

money away for retirement when you are young and making it a habit, pay yourself first when it comes to exercise."

--Randy H. Nelson, serial entrepreneur, former Nuclear Submarine Officer in the US Navy, CEO of Gold Dolphins LLC, and author of "The Second Decision: The Qualified Entrepreneur."

5. Learn to delegate.

"Delegating well is an art form, deceptively difficult, always improved [and] usually learned the hard way. Pay too much attention and you micromanage; pay too little attention and it seems like you don't care. Start by delegating work, where the key is to clearly verbalize your expectations, recognize the difference between something that's worse and something that's different than you would have done it, and make sure to avoid hero mode where you shoulder the largest burden."

--David Rusenko, founder and CEO of the global website-building platform Weebly.

6. Get enough sleep.

"I know from my medical training that lack of sleep can contribute to increased stress and poor decision making. I have a sleep regimen that I stick to whenever possible. One hour before bedtime: No work, no phones or computer screens because the blue light from screens has been shown to interfere with sleep cycles. A relaxing routine helps you sleep and be the most effective the next day."

--Dr. Sreekant Cherukuri, a board-certified otolaryngologist and founder of MDHearingAid, a company that sells hearing aids starting at \$350.

7. Use tech to turn off.

"My company is all about helping doctors use technology to better engage with their patients and I use tech to do the opposite: disengage. I have recurring calendar invites--one mid-morning, one at lunch and one mid-afternoon--that tell me: 'take a beat.' It reminds me to slow down and stop what I'm doing for about five minutes. This is when I let my mind wander and absorb the events of that day or morning. And I find it amazing how frequently those calendar invites pop up exactly when I need them most."

--Lucas Felt, president of The Medical Memory, a medical-video messaging platform for doctors and patients.

8. Walk and talk.

"It's easy to hurry through your day, whether walking from meeting to meeting or

answering copious emails and phone calls while chained to your desk. My personal rule is to stop and talk to every third person I come across daily as I am walking through the office. Why assign a number rather than just making a general effort to chat with everyone I pass? The rule ensures that I have a quality conversation and connect with a few different people throughout the day, rather than building a reputation for talking any person's ear off that crosses my path. Great conversations lead to stronger relationships and ideas."

[close X]

Advertisement

[Click Here to Learn More](#)

--Brad Wiskirchen, CEO of Kount, a private company that provides fraud detection and prevention services for companies including Spotify, Reeds and Jagex.

9. Hire people with high emotional intelligence.

"I'd hire a genius in EQ and B-student in IQ any day over the reverse. I've had to fire more high intellect people who simply don't know how to work well with others than I can count. The world has become so dependent on working across functions and sharing information that any low-EQ, high IQ hires, need not apply."

--David Siegel, CEO of Investopedia, an IAC company and financial publisher with over 20 million monthly unique visitors.

10. Don't panic in the face of unexpected challenge.

"When I am faced with an unforeseen challenge, which is inevitable, the first step is to stay calm, search for solutions--not excuses--and to relentlessly pursue execution of that solution."

--Jay Jumper, CEO of digital signature services company SIGNiX.

11. Check in with one employee at random.

"I strike up an impromptu conversation with one different employee every day. It shows that what they do matters, and it's fun to learn what they're working on, what they're excited about and what questions they have about the company. I find there's no better way to keep a pulse on your company's real culture."

--Matt Straz, founder and CEO of the HR software company Namely.

12. Invest in mentors.

"Whether through phone, email or coffee meetings, I spend a portion of my time each day connecting with people and absorbing outside insight. I do this in two ways. The first is to offer my help to others. Working with people who are building businesses drives my own creativity. The second is to receive help from others. Having a network of influencers with whom I can be extremely transparent has shaped some of the hardest decisions I've had to make and brought to light new ideas I may have otherwise overlooked. The return here far outweighs the time I invest in these relationships every day."

--David Mandell, cofounder and CEO of PivotDesk, an office-sharing marketplace that provides office space to businesses that need it.

13. Stay active.

"I've become addicted to Muay Thai kickboxing. Nothing like martial arts and a couple cuts and bruises to help you understand your personal limits and expand them. Startup life is a fight every day, and Muay Thai keeps me sharp."

--Randy Ross, cofounder and CEO of Cinematique, a touchable, shoppable video platform used by top brands and publications including LouisVuitton, Vox Media, Condé Nast, Victoria's Secret and Nordstrom.

14. Meet for lunch with five people from random departments across the company.

"Why five people? Because that's what fits in a car, and we try to do something that's delicious and off the beaten path. Our company is growing very fast--we've tripled in size to over 250 employees in the last two years. It's very important for us to make sure that we keep strong our culture of open, direct and honest communication, as this has been one of the key reasons for our growth. Lunch Buddies also helps people get to know others in the company who they might not cross paths with.

--Amanda Lannert, CEO, Jellyvision, an employee benefits technology company which provides software that helps 3 million employees around the U.S. make more informed decisions about their benefits.

15. Read things unrelated to the business.

"Some days it's historical or science fiction. Other times, I find myself reading academic or medical papers. No matter how far from the business my readings may take me, I always learn things that inspire and inform my work."

--Ram Palaniappan, founder of Activehours, a technology company that gives people

instant access to the pay they've earned and currently has users from over 4,000 employers nationwide, including Walmart, Apple and Starbucks.

16. Prepare mentally before going to work.

"I spend time listening to motivational tapes that enable me to visualize what I want to have happen that day. Through this process, I'm able to rid myself of the normal worries and stresses that come with running a business, while being laser focused on the positive outcome I envision for that day. As a result, I've had experiences which some might call miraculous, when applying this steadfastly."

--Marsha Friedman, CEO of EMSI Public Relations.

17. Intentionally daydream.

"Every day, in my drive to and from work, I purposely shut off the radio, put my cell phone away, and allow myself to daydream. Many view daydreaming as a useless activity. For me, daydreaming allows me to re-energize my battery which helps me focus when I need to and be present to those that need my attention. It also fuels creativity. Oftentimes, important ideas, connections, realizations come during and after I intentionally daydream."

-- Kirk Cassidy, president of Senior Planning Advisors and Strategic Investment Advisors.

18. Live in the question instead of the conclusion.

"When you are walking down the halls of conclusion, it is hard to see the doors of opportunity and possibility. Many organizations focus on reporting what is not working versus what is possible. Already over-extended leaders, ask, 'What can I do to fix this?' and feel the weight of the added burden. I live my life in the question. My favorites [are] 'What would need to happen?' 'What would need to happen for my customers to be surprised?' 'What would need to happen for us to win this contract?' 'What would need to happen to increase revenue by 20%?' Other questions include 'What would it take for more of this fun to show up in my life?' and 'How can this get even better?'"

--Debra McLaughlin, CEO of The Renegade Leader Coaching and Consulting Group.

19. Wake up early, work out and do something fun.

"It's simple but powerful. We all only get 24 hours in a day, and it's amazing what adding more time at the start when I'm fresh can do to not just getting more done, but getting more done well. No matter how busy I get throughout the day or how much I'm carrying on my shoulders, it's also important that I dedicate time to take care of my body and

clear my mind which helps me tackle the rest of the day. Staying healthy also means making fun a requirement of the day in my own world and that of my team. Whether it be reading, watching or doing something funny every day, nothing beats a good laugh and having one every day sets the tone for a good day."

--Doron Gordon, CEO of Samanage, a cloud-based enterprise service desk with clients including SXSW, PRA Group, and Inteva Products.

20. Ask "How are things going?"

"You can learn so much by asking one simple question: "How are things going?" I make a practice of walking the floor, traveling to our franchises and picking up the phone regularly, to seek input from both customers and employees. Talking with both of these stakeholder groups is key to understanding if priorities and initiatives, and even concerns, are aligned. There is no substitute for real conversations to keep you grounded to what is truly happening - and what needs to happen - in your organization."

-- Charlie Young, President and CEO of ERA Real Estate, a franchising leader in the residential real estate industry with 40 years of experience in developing consumer-oriented products and services.

21. Don't judge an idea by its cover.

"Every day a team member, guest or partner pitches an idea to me and my executive team. I remind myself, and others, not to pre-judge the idea by the person who brought it to the table, but rather to keep an open mind and judge the idea based on its merits. Put this mentality into your daily practice and you just might find the best ideas come from the most unlikely sources."

--Felix Rappaport, president and CEO of Foxwoods Resort Casino, the largest casino in the Northern Hemisphere.

22. Know the news.

"At least once a day, I make sure I am up to speed with industry news. I like to see what's out there and if there is anything evolving. It reminds me that we are immersed in the product world - which is a great place to be if you like product - and although it's tied to the business, this time actually gives me a bit of a break from everything else."

--Mike Sorabella, CEO of shoe shopping site ShoeBuy.

23. Structure your time.

"I schedule all of my external meetings on Monday, Tuesday and Friday, and my internal meetings on the other days. It means I have to switch gears a lot less, and makes my days more productive. Typically, I also only work on email early in the morning and late at night. This allows me to focus during the day and not compulsively check my email, which can be really distracting."

--Tanisha Robinson, cofounder and CEO of e-commerce company Print Syndicate.

24. Use competition as a motivator.

"The most successful team members tend to have a competitive streak. Whether it's darts or the slam-dunk contests we have on the hoop in the office (and then share online), ensuring team members have a physical outlet for that competition keeps their energy up and builds a sense of team."

--John West, cofounder and CEO of Whistle Sports Network, a sports entertainment network and community engaging millions of young millennial fans worldwide.

25. Implement a 10-10-10 routine.

"First thing in the morning, I spend 10 minutes reflecting on all of the encouraging things in my life such as my family, health, work and the people I work with. Next, I spend 10 minutes journaling, writing about the wins from the day before, new ideas, progress on my goals, special things my kids have done, and anything I could have done differently or have improved on. Finally, I spend 10 minutes reading something positive. For me, that's usually the Bible. This 10-10-10 routine, which I picked up from Warren Rustand, positions me for success every day. It's a challenge to keep up with, but the impact it's had on me is significant."

--Tom Turner, CEO of DSI, an eDiscovery and digital forensics company that serves law firms and corporate legal departments worldwide.

26. Get to know your employees on a one-to-one basis.

"At some point, the company had grown to the point where I didn't have the time anymore to interview every single employee. There were people being recruited whom I'd never even spoken with, and I genuinely wanted to get to know them. So I started a program where I now invite new employees for lunch maybe two or three months in to discuss the challenges they're seeing and get direct feedback from these employees compared to what they're used to, what they've seen work and not work. Once I started doing that, the existing employees wanted in on these lunches as well, and it became the norm for getting direct feedback on what we're doing well, what we need to improve

upon from all levels and areas of the company. Some don't realize this, but honest employee feedback [can be] the key to a successful company."

--Ruvi Kitov, CEO of Tufin, a company that enables more than 1,500 to better manage their networks.

27. Surf and stay focused.

"I get up early around 4 a.m. two to three times a week to surf. I think that surfing relies on a number of factors that are also important for professional growth: Mindfulness, judgment, decisiveness, boldness, patience, focus, planning and velocity are keys to success in both surfing and business. You have to be prepared, thoughtful and bold whenever you're catching a wave and in various business situations."

--Ken Klein, Chairman of the Board and CEO of Tintri, a provider of VM-aware storage for the enterprise and the cloud.

28. Get up early.

"I like starting my day by getting up early, usually an hour before sunrise, doing some kind of aerobic exercise for 45 minutes, whether it's running, biking or power walking and then watching the sunrise. I find this daily routine not only helps to focus my mind for the day ahead, but also energizes me."

--Eileen Martinson, CEO of Sparta Systems, a provider of enterprise quality management software solutions used by the top 30 of 30 pharmaceutical companies as well as the top 13 of 15 medical device companies.

29. Make time for family.

"No matter how busy [you are] with work, [show up at your] son's baseball games and daughter's dance recitals."

--Mark Buff, CEO and founder of HDTV antenna maker Mohu.

30. Arrive at the office before anyone else.

"I get into the office early each day and go through the details before anyone else shows up. I have found that if I focus on the most important projects and tasks early and first, I can spend the day leading others and addressing topics, opportunities or problems that were not there yesterday. If you come in later than others, they have the opportunity to control your day for you."

--Craig Dunaway, president of Penn Station East Coast Subs, a sandwich franchise with

nearly 300 locations in 15 states.

31. Make your meetings mobile.

"For small, one- or two-person meetings, try to take them outdoors and [on foot]. There are a plethora of studies that show natural light and mobility are incredibly important to our mood, brain function and general health. It goes far beyond the simple health benefits of walking."

--Colin Darretta, founder and CEO of WellPath, a customized nutritional supplement service dedicated to optimizing wellness.

The opinions expressed here by Inc.com columnists are their own, not those of Inc.com.

PUBLISHED ON: NOV 25, 2015

Like Inc. on Facebook

ADVERTISEMENT