

Good morning, everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht with The Family Business Institute. Digging Deeper.

I've been on a bit of a personal journey of late. And that journey, as I'm moving towards semi-retirement, I wanted to win a national championship in tennis, and that would be 70 and over tennis habits. And I happened to play a tournament this last week, and had the sort of distinct pleasure of playing, perhaps, the best player in the world in 65 and over. So, I got to see what excellence looks like.

And that reminded me of an article that I saw in one of our friends' newsletters, Arlin Sorenson, and he had watched a podcast and had taken some notes about habits that stick. And I had the opportunity to talk to this 65 and over gentleman about their routine for how they prepared, and how he stayed at such a high level. And it really struck me the things that he did every day and has been doing every day for quite a number of years.

So, back to Craig Groeschel and his podcast about habits. One of the first things Craig noted comes from a Duke University study that found 40% of what you do is the result of habits versus decisions you make. Okay so, we get 60% decisions, 40% habits. And he had this quote, which I thought was really a big quote. "The fastest way to do big things is to consistently do small right things." And I'm sure many of you set goals, and some of you may be like me, and you set high, very challenging goals in life.

But we know that a lot of goals end up being failures. The typical year end goals of losing 20 pounds, or quitting drinking, or whatever lifestyle wise people want to change. And they're usually pretty big, pretty broad, and there's a pretty high failure rate. So, that really struck me that the fastest way to do big things is to consistently do small and right things.

And I also had a realization a few weeks back that with my big goal, I needed to be taking some small steps every day that were going to lead me to that big goal. Just because I want it doesn't mean I can go out and all of a sudden be that person, because I'm certainly not playing at that level today. So, how do we do that? How do we become the leaders that we want to be? Accomplish the things that we want to accomplish? And so, how do you do that? How do you get those small goals working so that it leads to where we want to go, or being the person we want to be?

So, a couple of quotes, again, these are sort of from Craig Groeschel. "Make it small." If you want to be disciplined, never hit the snooze button again. That's a little small thing every day, but if you want to have discipline, well, start with a small discipline. Alarm goes off, you get out bed, you get going. If you want to be a leader who cares, write one note of appreciation daily. I know on a recent blog I suggested say, thank you at least 10 times every day to somebody. But if you want to be a leader who cares, write one note of appreciation daily. It's a small thing, something everybody can do. And the next thing you know, maybe you are that leader who cares. If you want to be a focused leader, start every day by writing down your three main priorities for the day. Again, a little thing, it's something everybody can do, but if you did that every day, pretty soon I think you might find out you're a more focused leader.

Okay so, those are three ways to think about doing those small things every day. But now, how do we make sure we accomplish it? One of his tips was to make it obvious. And to make it obvious he suggests visual cues. And again, just a little personal thing, I've been one of these fortunate people that hasn't had to take a lot of pills in life. But I was recently at my cardiologist than I got a couple more pills that I have to take. And I had a pretty good habit of always taking my pills in the evening when I brushed my teeth. And one of these obvious things that he notices, well, if you have to take pills on a daily basis, put your pill thing next to your toothbrush because you're going to brush your teeth before you go to bed. And then, you remember to take your pills.

Well, early on I had to take another pill. So, I had to take a pill two times a day, first time and I kept forgetting. So, finally, I developed this small habit, which was when I take my pills out at night to take, I take tomorrow's single pill and I put it again right next to my toothbrush outside of the pill box. So, that I remember to take it in the morning when I have to.

So, the tip there, first tip was make it small. Second tip is to make it obvious. Put some sort of clue there to make sure you remember to do the habit. And then, his third tip was try to transitioning to making it automatic. And a couple of examples he gave here. For example, after you have a meeting, make sure there's one action step, write it down. So, you make it automatic, you never finish a meeting without an action step.

Another one was when you arrive at the office, and I already mentioned this one, but a different way to think about it, as soon as you arrive at the office, write down those three priorities. Don't wait. Don't go do several things. Don't go check your mailbox, or look at your email, or whatever. Sit down, write your three priorities, make it an automatic thing. Once it becomes automatic, then you have habits that stick. And remember, it's the little habits that build into the big habits. And will allow you to accomplish the goals that you want.

And, finally, one last thing on your goals, don't make it so hard, and so much drudgery to do these habits that it becomes work. You can find joy in these little things. And as long as you're finding joy in the little habits, they will turn into the big habits, and the big goals that you're searching for.

Again, Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.