

Routine Power by Darren Hardy

Some of our best intentions fail because we don't have a system of execution. When it comes down to it, your new attitudes and behaviors must be incorporated into your monthly, weekly, and daily routines to affect any real, positive change. A routine is something you do every day without fail, so that eventually, like brushing your teeth or putting on your seatbelt, you do it without conscious thought.

If you look at anything you do that's successful, you'll see that you've probably developed a routine for it. These routines ease life's stresses by making our actions automatic and effective. To reach new goals and develop new habits, it's necessary to create new routines to support your objectives.

The greater the challenge, the more rigorous our routines need to be. Ever wonder why military boot camp is so hard—where relatively minor tasks like making the bed, shining your shoes, or standing at attention become over-the-top important? Building routines to prep soldiers for combat is the most effective way to elicit efficient, productive, and reliable performance under intense pressure. The seemingly simplistic routines built and developed during basic training are so exact that soft, fearful, slovenly teenagers are transformed into lean, confident, mission-driven soldiers in only eight to 12 weeks. Their routines are so well rehearsed that these young soldiers can instinctively act with precision in the middle of the chaos of combat. That intense level of training and practice prepares soldiers to carry out their duties—even under the threat of imminent death.

Now, your days might not be as dangerous, but **without the proper routines built into your schedule, the results of your life can be unruly and unnecessarily hard.** Developing a routine of predictable, daily disciplines prepares you to be victorious on the battlefield of life.

Golfer Jack Nicklaus was famous for his pre-shot routine. He was religious about the “dance” he would do before every shot, a series of routine mental and physical steps that got him fully focused and ready for the shot. Jack would start out behind the ball, and then pick out one or two intermediate spots between the ball and the target. As he walked around and approached the ball, the first thing he would do is line up his clubface to his intermediate target. He wouldn't put his feet into position until he felt he had his clubface properly squared up. Then he would take his stance. From there he would waggle the club and look out to his target, then back to his intermediate target and back to the golf club, with a repeat of the view. Then, and only then, would he strike the ball.

During one of the important Majors, a psychologist timed Nicklaus from the moment he pulled the club out of the bag until the moment he hit the ball, and guess what? In each shot, from the first tee to the eighteenth green, the timing of Jack's routine supposedly never varied more than one second. That is amazing! The same psychologist measured Greg Norman during his unfortunate collapse at the 1996 Masters. Lo and behold, his pre-shot routine got faster and faster as the round progressed. Varying his routine stunted his rhythm and consistency; he was never able to catch momentum. The moment Norman changed his routine, his performance became unpredictable and his results erratic.

Football kickers likewise cherish their pre-kick routines, which allow them to get into sync with the thousands of times they have done this same action. Without a pre-kick routine, their performance under great pressure of game time greatly diminishes. Pilots go through their preflight checklist. Even when a pilot has logged thousands of hours and the plane just came in with a “perfect” performance review from a previous destination, the pilot goes through a preflight checklist every time without fail. This not only prepares the plane, but, more important, centers the pilot and prepares him for the upcoming performance.

Of all the high achievers and business owners I've worked with, I've seen that, along with good habits, each has developed routines for accomplishing necessary daily disciplines. It's the only way any of us can regulate our behavior. There simply isn't any way around it. **A daily routine built on good habits and disciplines separates the most successful among us from everyone else. A routine is exceptionally powerful.**

To create profitable and effective routines, you must first decide what behaviors and habits you want to implement. Now it's your turn to be Jack Nicklaus and figure out your best pre-shot routine. Be intentional about what components belong. Once you establish, say, a morning routine, I want you to consider it cast in concrete until further notice. You get up. You do it—no argument. If someone or something interrupts you, start back at the beginning to anchor your foundation for the performance that follows.