



May 2020 » by Chad Dudley

THE ONE THING

By Gary W. Keller and Jay Papasan

"If you chase two rabbits, you will not catch either one."

Russian Proverb

ACTION ITEMS

- Read "Managers Schedule, Maker's Schedule" essay
- "The Role of Deliberate Practice in the Acquisition of Expert Performance" by K Anders Ericsson
- Connected: "The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How they Shape Our Lives" by James H. Fowler
- "The Top Five Regrets of Dying" by Bronnie Ware

KEY CONCEPTS

1: THE ONE THING

- "Be like a postage stamp...stick to one thing until you get there." - Josh Billings
- Coaching...what is the one thing you can do this week? This day that would make everything else easier or unnecessary?
- Go small. Narrow your focus. Tempted to always go big, go wide. No. Get laser focused.

2: THE DOMINO EFFECT

- A domino falling is a small amount of energy. But that energy can actually topple something that is 50% larger. If that chain continued, it would have geometric growth, eventually able to topple massive objects.
- Each day, find the lead domino, and knock it down.
- Success is built sequentially. One thing at a time.

3: SUCCESS LEAVES CLUES

- Businesses that have succeeded, started with being known for "one thing."
- No one succeeds alone.

- Passion for something leads to disproportionate time practicing it or working on it, which leads to excellence.
- Live your one thing.

PART 1: THE LIES. THEY MISLEAD AND DERAILED US.

- Life is too short to chase unicorns. It's too precious to rely on a rabbit's foot. The real solutions we seek are almost always hiding in plain sight; unfortunately, they've usually been obscured by an unbelievable amount of bunk, an astounding flood of "common sense" that turns out to be nonsense. Ever hear your boss evoke the frog-in-boiling-water metaphor? ("Toss a frog into a pot of hot water and it will jump right back out. But if you place a frog in lukewarm water and slowly raise the temperature, it will boil to death.") It's a lie—a very truthful lie, but a lie nonetheless. Anyone ever tell you "fish stink from the head down"? Not true. Just a fish tale that actually turns out to be fishy. Ever hear about how the explorer Cortez burned his ships on arriving at the Americas to motivate his men? Not true. Another lie. "Bet on the jockey, not the horse!" has long been a rallying cry for placing your faith in a company's leadership. However, as a betting strategy, this maxim will put you on the fast track to the pauper's house, which makes you wonder how it ever became a maxim at all. Over time, myths and mistruths get thrown around so often, they eventually feel familiar and start to sound like the truth. Then we start basing important decisions on them. The challenge we all face when forming our success strategies is that, just like tales of frogs, fish, explorers, and jockeys, success has its own lies too. "I just have too much that has to be done." "I'll get more done by doing things at the same time." "I need to be a more disciplined person." "I should be able to do what I want whenever I want." "I need more balance in my life." "Maybe I shouldn't dream so big." Repeat these thoughts often enough and they become the six lies about success that keep us from living The ONE Thing.
- The Six Lies Between You and Success
 - #1: Everything matters equally.

- #2: Multitasking
- #3: A disciplined life
- #4: Willpower is always on will-call
- #5: A balanced life
- #6: Big is bad

4: EVERYTHING MATTERS EQUALLY

- “Things that matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least.”
-Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
- Equality is a lie. This is the basis of all great decisions. In the world of achievement, everything doesn't matter equally.
- When everything feels urgent and important, everything seems equal. We become active and busy, but this doesn't actually move us any closer to success. Activity is often unrelated to productivity, and busyness rarely takes care of business.
- The Problem: “The things which are the most important don't always scream the loudest.”
-Bob Hawke
- Achievers always work from a clear sense of priority.
- Pair your “to do list” into a “success list.” Focus on the to dos that matter. That moves the dial.
- Juran Cracks the Code
 - Pareto points us in a very clear direction: the majority of what you want will come from the minority of what you do. Extraordinary results are disproportionately created by fewer actions than most realize.
 - Take it and keep going! Boil down the 20%, then do the 80/20 again. Get down to the 1% that matters the most!
- Application
 - #1: Go small. Focus on what matters.
 - #2: Go extreme.
 - #3: Say “no.”
 - #4: Don't get trapped in the “check off game.”

5: MULTITASKING

- “To do two things at once is to do neither.” -Publilius Syrus

- “Multitasking is merely the opportunity to screw up more than one thing at a time.” -Steve Uzzell
- People can actually do two or more things at once, such as walk and talk, or chew gum and read a map; but, like computers, what we can't do is focus on two things at once.
- It's not that we have too little time to do all the things we need to do, it's that we feel the need to do too many things in the time we have. So we double and triple up in the hope of getting everything done.
- “The cost in terms of extra time from having to task switch depends on how complex or simple the tasks are,” reports researcher Dr. David Meyer. “It can range from time increases of 25 percent or less for simple tasks to well over 100 percent or more for very complicated tasks.” Task switching exacts a cost few realize they're even paying.
- Distraction is natural. Don't feel bad when you get distracted. Everyone gets distracted.
- Multitasking takes a toll. At home or at work, distractions lead to poor choices, painful mistakes, and unnecessary stress.
- Distraction undermines results. When you try to do too much at once, you can end up doing nothing well. Figure out what matters most in the moment and give it your undivided attention.

6: A DISCIPLINED LIFE

- There is this pervasive idea that the successful person is the “disciplined person” who leads a “disciplined life.” It's a lie. The truth is we don't need any more discipline than we already have. We just need to direct and manage it a little better.
- Success is actually a short race—a sprint fueled by discipline just long enough for habit to kick in and take over.
- So when you see people who look like “disciplined” people, what you're really seeing is people who've trained a handful of habits into their lives.
- You don't need to be a disciplined person to be successful. In fact, you can become successful with less discipline than you think, for one simple reason: success is about doing the right thing, not about doing everything right.
- The fact of the matter is that aiming discipline at the right habit gives you license to be less disciplined in other areas. When you do the right thing, it can liberate you from having to monitor everything.
- The results suggest that it takes an average of 66 days to acquire a new habit. The full range was 18 to 254 days, but the 66 days represented a sweet spot—with easier behaviors taking fewer days on average and tough ones taking longer. Self-help circles tend to preach that it takes 21 days to make a change, but modern science doesn't back that up. It takes time to

develop the right habit, so don't give up too soon. Decide what the right one is, then give yourself all the time you need and apply all the discipline you can summon to develop it.

- Application
 - Don't be a disciplined person. Be a person of powerful habits and use selected discipline to develop them.
 - Build one habit at a time. Success is sequential, not simultaneous. No one actually has the discipline to acquire more than one powerful new habit at a time. Super-successful people aren't superhuman at all; they've just used selected discipline to develop a few significant habits. One at a time. Over time.
 - Give each habit enough time. Stick with the discipline long enough for it to become routine. Habits, on average, take 66 days to form. Once a habit is solidly established, you can either build on that habit or, if appropriate, build another one.

7: WILLPOWER IS ALWAYS ON WILL CALL

- When we tie our success to our willpower without understanding what that really means, we set ourselves up for failure. And we don't have to.
- For most of my life I never gave willpower much thought. Once I did, it captivated me. The ability to control oneself to determine one's actions is a pretty powerful idea. Base it on training, and it's called discipline. But to do it because you simply can? That's raw power. The power of will.
- The Marshmallow Test
 - 4 year old kids, given the option of getting a pretzel now, or if they waited 15 minutes, could get a marshmallow. Tough for them to wait.
 - Followed kids for years and years. The "high delayers," able to delay gratification in the short term for higher reward in the long term, were much more successful down the road.
- Think of willpower like the power bar on your cell phone. Every morning you start out with a full charge. As the day goes on, every time you draw on it, you're using it up. So as your green bar shrinks, so does your resolve, and when it eventually goes red, you're done. Willpower has a limited battery life but can be recharged with some downtime. It's a limited but renewable resource. Because you have a limited supply, each act of will creates a win-lose scenario where winning in an immediate situation through willpower makes you more likely to lose later because you have less of it. Make it through a tough day in the trenches, and the lure of late-night snacking can become your diet's downfall.
- The implications are staggering. The more we use our mind, the less minding power we have.

Willpower is like a fast-twitch muscle that gets tired and needs rest. It's incredibly powerful, but it has no endurance. As Kathleen Vohs put it in Prevention Magazine in 2009, "Willpower is like gas in your car... . When you resist something tempting, you use some up. The more you resist, the emptier your tank gets, until you run out of gas." In fact, a measly five extra digits is all it takes to drain our willpower dry.

- Food matters
 - The brain makes up 1/50th of our body mass but consumes a staggering 1/5th of the calories we burn for energy. If your brain were a car, in terms of gas mileage, it would be a Hummer.
 - Foods that elevate blood sugar evenly over long periods, like complex carbohydrates and proteins, become the fuel of choice for high-achievers—literal proof that “you are what you eat.”
- Default settings
 - When our willpower runs out, we all revert to our default settings. This begs the question: What are your default settings? If your willpower is dragging, will you grab the bag of carrots or the bag of chips? Will you be up for focusing on the work at hand or down for any distraction that drops in? When your most important work is done while your willpower wanes, default will define your level of achievement.
- Things that tax your willpower
 - Implementing new behaviors
 - Filtering distractions
 - Resisting temptation
 - Suppressing emotion
 - Restraining aggression
 - Suppressing impulses
 - Taking tests
 - Trying to impress others
 - Coping with fear
 - Doing something you don't enjoy
 - Selecting long-term over short-term rewards
- **So, if you want to get the most out of your day, do your most important work—your ONE Thing—early, before your willpower is drawn down. Since your self-control will be sapped**

throughout the day, use it when it's at full strength on what matters most.

8: A BALANCED LIFE

- A balanced life is a lie. The idea of balance is exactly that—an idea. In philosophy “the golden mean” is the moderate middle between polar extremes, a concept used to describe a place between two positions that is more desirable than one state or the other. This is a grand idea, but not a very practical one. Idealistic, but not realistic. Balance doesn't exist.
- If you think of balance as the middle, then out of balance is when you're away from it. Get too far away from the middle and you're living at the extremes. The problem with living in the middle is that it prevents you from making extraordinary time commitments to anything. In your effort to attend to all things, everything gets short changed and nothing gets its due. Sometimes this can be okay and sometimes not. Knowing when to pursue the middle and when to pursue the extremes is in essence the true beginning of wisdom. Extraordinary results are achieved by this negotiation with your time.
- **The reason we shouldn't pursue balance is that the magic never happens in the middle; magic happens at the extremes.**
- **When you gamble with your time, you may be placing a bet you can't cover. Even if you're sure you can win, be careful that you can live with what you lose.**
- Whether or not to go out of balance isn't really the question. The question is: “Do you go short or long?” In your personal life, go short and avoid long periods where you're out of balance. Going short lets you stay connected to all the things that matter most and move them along together. In your professional life, go long and make peace with the idea that the pursuit of extraordinary results may require you to be out of balance for long periods. Going long allows you to focus on what matters most, even at the expense of other, lesser priorities. In your personal life, nothing gets left behind. At work it's required.
- In his novel *Suzanne's Diary for Nicholas*, James Patterson artfully highlights where our priorities lie in our personal and professional balancing act: “Imagine life is a game in which you are juggling five balls. The balls are called work, family, health, friends, and integrity. And you're keeping all of them in the air. But one day you finally come to understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. The other four balls—family, health, friends, integrity—are made of glass. If you drop one of these, it will be irrevocably scuffed, nicked, perhaps even shattered.”

9: BIG IS BAD

- Big is bad is a lie. It's quite possibly the worst lie of all, for if you fear big success, you'll either avoid it or sabotage your efforts to achieve it.
- No one knows their ultimate ceiling for achievement, so worrying about it is a waste of time.
- Thinking big is essential to extraordinary results. Success requires action, and action requires thought. But here's the catch—the only actions that become springboards to succeeding big are those informed by big thinking to begin with. Make this connection, and the importance of how big you think begins to sink in.
- Don't fear big. Fear mediocrity. Fear waste. Fear the lack of living to your fullest. When we fear big, we either consciously or subconsciously work against it. We either run toward lesser outcomes and opportunities or we simply run away from the big ones. If courage isn't the absence of fear, but moving past it, then thinking big isn't the absence of doubts, but moving past them.

PART 2: THE TRUTH. THE SIMPLE PATH TO PRODUCTIVITY

- Here's what I found out: We overthink, overplan, and overanalyze our careers, our businesses, and our lives; that long hours are neither virtuous nor healthy; and that we usually succeed in spite of most of what we do, not because of it. I discovered that we can't manage time, and that the key to success isn't in all the things we do but in the handful of things we do well. I learned that success comes down to this: being appropriate in the moments of your life. If you can honestly say, "This is where I'm meant to be right now, doing exactly what I'm doing," then all the amazing possibilities for your life become possible.

10: THE FOCUSING QUESTION

- And here is the prime condition of success, the great secret—concentrate your energy, thought and capital exclusively upon the business in which you are engaged. Having begun on one line, resolve to fight it out on that line, to lead in it, adopt every improvement, have the best machinery, and know the most about it. The concerns which fail are those which have scattered their capital, which means that they have scattered their brains also. They have investments in this, or that, or the other, here, there and everywhere. "Don't put all your eggs in

one basket” is all wrong. I tell you “put all your eggs in one basket, and then watch that basket.”

- It’s simple. Answers come from questions, and the quality of any answer is directly determined by the quality of the question. Ask the wrong question, get the wrong answer. Ask the right question, get the right answer. Ask the most powerful question possible, and the answer can be life altering.
- Anyone who dreams of an uncommon life eventually discovers there is no choice but to seek an uncommon approach to living it.
- **The Focusing Question: “What is the one thing I can do such that by doing it, everything else will be easier or unnecessary?”**

11: THE SUCCESS HABIT

- “Success is simple. Do what’s right, the right way, at the right time.” —Arnold H. Glasow
- Apply the Focusing Question to all areas of your life:
 - Spiritual
 - Physical
 - Personal
 - Relationships
 - Job
 - Finances
- Tailor the question to match the area:
 - Job: What is the one thing I can do to generate more business?
 - Health: What is the one thing I can do to improve my cardio?
- Criteria
 - Must understand and believe it will make a difference.
 - Use it. Start each day asking that question and answering it.
 - Make it a habit.
 - Leverage reminders. Put it up somewhere where you see it.
 - Recruit support.

12: THE PATH TO GREAT ANSWERS

- “People do not decide their futures, they decide their habits and their habits decide their futures.” –F. M. Alexander
- The Great Question Matrix
 - Big vs. Small
 - Broad vs. Specific
 - Sample Question: “What can I do to double sales in six months?”
 - Small and Specific: What can I do to increase sales by 5% this year.
 - Not that challenging
 - Specific
 - Low goals don’t require extraordinary efforts.
 - Average question
 - Small and Broad: What can I do to increase sales?
 - More of a brainstorming question.
 - Big and Broad: “What can I do to double sales?”
 - Big goal, but broad. No time frame.
 - Too many questions remain.
 - Big & Specific: What can I do to double sales in 6 months?
 - Elements of a great question
 - Big, specific
 - Force you to a big answer
 - Then convert this to a Focusing Question. “What is the **one thing** I can do to double sales in six months such that by doing it everything else will be easier or unnecessary?”
- Find a great answer
 - Answers come in three categories.
 - Doable
 - Stretch
 - Possibility
 - A great answer is essentially a new answer. New path.
 - Research the experience of others when looking for your answer! You are smart, and you are probably not the first smart person to consider the question.

PART 3: EXTRAORDINARY RESULTS. UNLOCKING THE POSSIBILITIES

WITHIN YOU

- “Even if you are on the right track, you’ll get run over if you sit there.” --Will Rogers
- There is a natural rhythm that is a formula for implementing the “One Thing” and getting great results.
 - Purpose
 - Priority
 - Productivity
- Your Big One Thing is your purpose. Your small One Thing is the priority you take action on and achieve it.
- **Personal productivity is the building block of all business profit.** Can’t have unproductive people yet magically still have an immensely profitable business.

13: LIVE WITH PURPOSE

- “Life isn’t about finding yourself. It is about creating yourself.” -George Bernard Shaw
- Our purpose sets our priority and our priority determines the productivity our actions produce.
- Five factors that contribute to happiness
 - Positive emotion
 - Pleasure
 - Achievement
 - Relationships
 - Engagement
 - Meaning
- Ask yourself, “What is the One Thing I can do in my life that would mean the most to me and the world, such that by doing it, everything else would be easier or unnecessary?”

14: LIVE BY PRIORITY

- “Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now.”
-Alan Lakein
- Every day we are presented with the question...“What shall I do?”
 - Without purpose, there is not priority, and you will end up all over the place.
 - Purpose without priority is powerless.
- Rewards...the further it is in the future, the less motivation it provides.
- Goal setting

- Your someday goal
- Your five year goal
- Your one year goal
- Your monthly goal
- Your weekly goal
- Your daily goal
- Your right now goal
- It is the way to connect your future goal to the present.

15: LIVE FOR PRODUCTIVITY

- “Productivity isn’t about being a workhorse, keeping busy or burning the midnight oil...it’s more about priorities, planning and fiercely protecting your time.” -Margarita Tartakovsky
- Productive action transforms lives.
- **Always asks “what type of time management system are you using?”**
 - How did you choose that system?
 - If everyone has the same amount of time, yet some earn more than others, how we use that time determines what we make?”
 - So what is your time management system worth? What do you make?
- Time blocking
 - Makes sure that what has to get done gets done.
 - Block off time for:
 - Your one thing.
 - For planning your time.
 - For time off
 - For your one thing...block off **four hours a day!**
- Paul Graham’s 2009 Essay “Maker’s Schedule, Manager’s Schedule”
 - Maker: Do or create
 - Manager: oversee or direct
 - Maker: Requires large blocks of the clock, viewed in half day increments.
 - Manager: Gets divided into hours. Going from meeting to meeting. They often run the show, so they can get everyone to go at their frequency. Creates conflict. Let’s do a meeting now! Be a maker in the morning and a manager in the afternoon.
- Seinfeld

- Write jokes every day. That was his one thing.
- Tracked it every day and tried to not break the chain!
- “Perseverance is not a long race. It is a series of short races, one after another.”
-Walter Elliot
- Block
 - Build a bunker! Somewhere you are free from distraction!
 - Store provisions! Everything you need so you don’t have to leave.
 - Sweep for mines. Turn off phone, etc.
 - Enlist support. Let people know.

16: THE THREE COMMITMENTS

- The three commitments
 - Follow the path of mastery
 - Move from “E” to “P”
 - Live the accountability cycle.
- Follow the path of mastery
 - See it is as path you go down, not a destination that you arrive at.
 - Expertise tracks with hours invested.
 - “If people knew how hard I had to work to gain my mastery, it wouldn’t seem wonderful at all.” -Michelangelo
- Move from “E” to “P”
 - “Are you doing the best you can do or are you doing the best that can be done?”
 - Mastery is the pursuit of both.
 - Move from “E” to “P”
 - When we roll out of bed, we start to tackle the day in one of two ways.
Entrepreneurial “E” or
Purposeful “P”.
 - “E”: We see something that needs to be done, and we run off and do it with enthusiasm, energy, and our natural abilities. Hit ceiling of natural ability.
 - “P”: Analyze and seeks the best way it can be done.
 - Ask “E” to cut some firewood. They head to the woods to chop down some trees. Ask a “P” to cut some firewood, they will spend time thinking about the most efficient way to do it and possibly come up with a chainsaw.
 - Too many people hit a level where performance is “good enough,” the

“OK Plateau.” Good enough to get by, good enough to not change.

- Live the accountability cycle
 - Take complete ownership of your outcomes by holding no one but yourself responsible for them is the most powerful thing you can do to drive your success.
 - Are you going to be the author of your life or the victim of it?
 - Seek reality and deal with it.
 - People with written goals...39% more likely to achieve them. Those that write goals and send progress reports to friends were 77% more likely to achieve them.

17: THE FOUR THIEVES

- “Focus is a matter of deciding what things you are not going to do.” -John Carmack
- The Good Samaritan Experiment
 - Group of seminary students asked to give a talk on the Good Samaritan to a group.
 - Half were told they were late and had to rush to the destination, half were told they could take their time to get there.
 - The test put a person in need on the way of every student.
 - **Less than half stopped to help the person.**
 - Of those that were rushed, less than 10% stopped to help.
 - On their way to talk about helping people! You can lose your focus, especially if you are rushed!
- Four thieves of productivity
 - Inability to say “no”
 - Fear of chaos
 - Poor health habits
 - Environment doesn’t support your goals
- #1: Inability to say no
 - Each yes must be defended over time by 1,000 nos.
 - When you say “yes” to something, you must know what you are saying “no” to. Consider the cost before starting the journey!
 - “You can say no with respect, you can say no promptly, you can say no with a lead to someone who might say yes.” -Seth Godin
 - **A “yes” should be connected to your one thing for you to even consider accepting it.**
 - “I don’t know the key to success, but the surest way to fail is to try and please everyone.”

- #2: Fear of chaos
 - Messes are inevitable when you focus on one thing.
 - Other things don't get done (by you) when you focus on one thing.
 - "Anything you build on a large scale or with intense passion invites chaos." -Francis Ford Coppola.
 - We all have commitments, kids, family, etc. Have to give those attention, and you have to find time for your one thing.
- #3: Poor health habits
 - Personal energy management.
 - Physical health management.
 - High achievement and extraordinary results require big energy.
- #4: Environment doesn't support your goals
 - What is the physical, emotional, spiritual environment that you are in? Does it support your one thing?
 - Your circle sets the standard of what is appropriate.

18: THE JOURNEY

- Old Proverb. Every day there is a battle that goes on in each person, two wolves inside of us. One is fear. It is anxiety, fear, concern, uncertainty, hesitancy, indecision, and inaction. The other is faith. Calm, conviction, confidence, enthusiasm, decisiveness, excitement, and action. The one that wins? The one that you feed.
- **Live a life that is full of "I'm glad I didn't "I wish I had"**
- Top Five Regrets of Dying
 - Allow yourself to be happier...it is a choice
 - Stayed in touch with friends
 - Had the courage to express feelings
 - Hadn't worked so hard
 - Had the courage to live a life true to themselves, not the life others expected.