

50. Show Up! (It's a Start.)

While editing and fact-checking one of my latest presentations, my colleague Cathy Mosca came across a slide in which I had written, “Ninety percent of success is showing up.” It didn’t quite ring true. She checked it and corrected it to . . . **80 percent.** Our exchange encouraged me to do some Googling. I immediately confirmed that I was wrong and she was right—no surprise—but also came across a lovely little essay by Brad Isaac at his site PersistenceUnlimited.com:

“80 percent of success is just showing up.”
—Woody Allen

“I often think about that quotation. It may sound easy to shrug off, but not if you look a little deeper. It doesn’t just mean show up for job interviews or to work for an 80 percent increase in success.

“Showing up also means . . . **starting.**

“For instance, did you show up at the gym today? **‘Just showing up’ means you’re 80 percent of the way to a good workout.** The hard part of fighting yourself to get dressed in workout gear, dealing with traffic and the worry about pain you might experience is over. Now all that is left is to just do the workout. Pretty simple, huh? Even a child could do it.

“Same thing with opportunity. It’s easier to make significant progress on a project if you simply show up to do it. Candidly, one of my hardest tasks of the day is ‘showing up’ for Development Visual Studio. It seems simple enough . . . just double click on an icon. But if I think too much about the seemingly 10,000 things I have to do once I launch it, I am much more likely to ‘accidentally’ launch my Web browser or fiddle with email.

“But once I’m in there, the work is typically easy and fun. Some days I can knock out more tasks than I planned. And I feel like a success at the end of the day.

“You can be or do whatever you want just by showing up. If you want to be an author, show up to write your manuscript every day, show up to writing classes, show up to make phone calls to editors. Doesn’t it make sense that someone who arrives at the door of opportunity has more success than someone just sitting at home?”

“So increase your chances by 80 percent. Show Up!”

So: Show up!

It works!

Here’s a tip on ensuring that you will, indeed, show up: Make a personal “show-up” commitment—a commitment from which you can’t escape without grave embarrassment. You’re busy as hell, and really don’t have time to go to your Smalltown Theater board meeting on Thursday. But you really ought to go, for a host of reasons. On Tuesday, email or call Mary, your board colleague: “How about I pick you up Thursday, and we’ll chat on the way to the meeting.” Of course, you can stiff Mary, and the world won’t end. Nonetheless, your little . . . self-set “show-up-or-stiff-Mary” trap . . . vastly increases the odds of your making the painful effort to go to that meeting.

▶ SMALL STATE, BIG IMPACT

I consider it the **Ultimate Proof** that Showing Up Matters. Namely, the drafting of the United States Constitution, as reported in David Stewart’s *Summer of 1787*.

We typically think of the Convention in terms of the Great Men—of Washington and Madison and Franklin. But the facts are very different:

(1) Given this, that, and the other, including a miserable summer-long heat wave, there were on average only 30 folks present on the floor at Independence Hall. Some states, like New Hampshire, didn't even bother to send delegates; other states' delegates, like New York's, were rarely in attendance.

(2) States were allowed to decide on the number of delegates they'd send to Philadelphia. The two biggest states, Virginia and Pennsylvania, sent seven. But wee Delaware sent five! Moreover, all five Delaware delegates were in attendance close to 100 percent of the time! Hence, Delaware had an *enormous* impact on the final document! (Call it the "Constitution of the Great State of Delaware, as used by the rest of us.")

(3) **Delaware's Big Secret: Showing Up!!** More or less "proof positive" of "showing up"—this is one hell of a compelling case with consequences of the utmost significance!

(This story repeats remarks in the introduction. In this instance it's merited.)