30 CEOs Reveal the Daily Habits Responsible for Their Success

Getting to the top involves doing the right things, day after day.

By Christina DesMarais

Look at any CEO running a profitable organization and you'll find someone who has figured a few things out. One trait many of these leaders have in common: consistency. Check out these quotes from 30 successful CEOs regarding the daily habits that help them get ahead in business and life.

1. Try one new thing each day.

"Every day, I force myself to do something that is out of my comfort zone. If I hadn't left my comfort zone back in 2008 to buy that one-way ticket to Buenos Aires, I never would have met my business partner, Aaron Firestein, and BucketFeet would never exist."

--Raaja Nemani, co-founder and CEO of BucketFeet, a footwear brand that was founded in 2011 after a chance meeting between two travelers. It has grown from one hand-decorated pair of shoes to a brand that has collaborated with over 20,000 artists in more than 100 countries.

2. Don't do bad days.

"I am a huge fan of Mike Bloomberg and recently saw him speak in a conversation with Alan Patricof at an event. At one point, he turned to Patricof and said something to the effect of, 'Alan, I'm 73 years old, I don't do doubt and I don't do bad days.' That really stuck with me. Running a company is really hard, and every day is different, but having a bad day is a choice."

--Dan Teran, co-founder and CEO of Managed by Q, an office cleaning, management, and maintenance platform that recently expanded to San Francisco, following New York City and Chicago.

3. Stay informed about what's trending.

"[I spend] an hour or two every day keeping up with tech news on Twitter. It's not good to obsess over what other people are doing, but staying informed is certainly important."

--Michael Bruch, founder and CEO of Willow, a new social platform focused on personality and conversation and aligned with how friendships and partnerships are naturally formed offline.

4. Accept invitations to as many meetings and events as possible.

"You never know who you will meet or the advice you'll receive."

--Liat Zakay, founder and CEO of Donde Fashion, a visual search engine that allows users to shop from more than 6,000 brands and over 1 million products.

5. Experiment constantly.

"I'm always trying new things and changing how I work. As we've grown from a team of four to a team of 28, my job has changed pretty significantly, and by experimenting with new habits and processes regularly, I am always discovering better ways to run my team that make sense as we grow."

--Zach Supalla, co-founder and CEO of Particle, an "Internet of Things" startup that raised more than $1.1 million on Kickstarter and $4.9 million in series A funding.

6. Fight brain blocks with building blocks.

"There are footballs, golf balls, softballs, chessboards, Legos--everything a curious kid could dream of--covering our office space. Whenever I'm stuck on an idea, I play a quick game of catch or build a Lego house to give my brain a breather. Then it's back to the drawing board. I encourage my team to do the same thing, too. Just like any muscle, your brain needs a recovery session after a tough workout."

--Dan Hogan founder and CEO of Medalogix, a health care technology company that provides analytics, workflows, and business intelligence solutions to home health and hospice providers.

7. Never be afraid to email someone who is "too big."

"Most people are accommodating and open, as long as you are clear about your needs and what you have to offer."

--Kegan Schouwenburg, CEO of SOLS, a 3D-printing technology company.

8. Make punctuality a priority.

"I strive to be on time for every appointment, every day, without exception. This may seem like a no-brainer in the business world, but you would be surprised how many people still don't make this a priority. It's mind-boggling. If a leader is consistently late, it tells others that he or she is unreliable or has no respect for the time of the individuals he or she works with. If he or she is on time, the opposite is true."

--Andy Bailey, founder of Petra, a business-coaching firm serving 58 businesses in 17 states.

9. Never ask somebody to do something you wouldn't do yourself.

"No matter how exciting your company or the problems that you are solving are, there will always be day-to-day tasks that are simply boring. Showing that you are willing to roll up your sleeves when the going gets tough will be a positive example for your team. You will be amazed at how this reverberates."

--Herbert Moore, co-founder and CEO of WiseBanyan, a free financial adviser that minimizes fees and helps people start investing sooner.

10. Watch YouTube to learn from other great leaders.

"I spend time at the end of every night watching interviews, speeches, and panels of other leaders I admire. Through a bit of YouTube stalking, I've gotten great lessons on culture from Brian Chesky, brand building from Neil Blumenthal, and leadership from Esther Dyson."

--Lydia Gilbert, co-founder and COO of Dia&Co, an online personal styling service for women sizes 14 to 32.

11. Exercise and meditate.

"Transcendental meditation for 20 minutes in the morning and 20 minutes in the evening is the perfect complement to daily exercise, whether it's a trip to the gym or a run across the bridge. Since I've started this routine, I've found my mental clarity and focus have increased enormously."

--Elliot Tomaeno, founder and CEO of ASTRSK, a PR agency which has grown from five employees to 16 employees over the past year.

12. Listen to self-improvement books in the car.

"I spend about 45 minutes driving to and from work each day. I can spend that time listening to music or talk radio, but I choose to spend it listening to business books and self-improvement books. Over the last two and a half years, I have listened to nearly 40 audiobooks. These books have given me incredible insight into how to run my business and sharpen my skills. I can listen to a new book in a few days, versus reading a book, which would take me at least a month or two, if not longer, because with two little kids at home, I can never find the time."

--George Zlatin, co-founder and director of operations at Digital Third Coast, a full-service digital marketing agency that serves clients nationwide.

13. Start each day with an infectious positive attitude.

"I wake up and start every day with one initial thought: being thankful for the abundance in my life-- family, friends, company, and more. Nothing good ever comes easy. Hard work and dedication always pays off. Starting every day with a strong, positive thought is the best way to kickoff each day. I believe that a positive mindset is key to overcoming all obstacles, and I radiate this to my team. Just as negativity is infectious--think: one rotten apple at the bottom of a barrel ultimately will ruin them all--so is positivity. Choose to be positive. Be mindful of your attitude and how it affects others."

--Gary Miliefsky, CEO of SnoopWall, a counterveillance security company with more than 30 international partners.

14. Make time for everyone on your team, no matter where they are.

"We are based in the U.S., but also have teams and customers on the ground in Asia, South America, and Europe. Connecting with them every day is incredibly important for staying connected to that part of the business, making sure they know they're valued and getting things done. It's a big time commitment, and sometimes it feels like we have multiple jobs--in the morning in Europe, during the day in the Americas, and at night when the Asia teams are busy. But in the end, it's always worth it to be available and have live discussions when they matter the most."

--Mike Sands, CEO of Signal, a cross-channel marketing technology company used by thousands of brands and digital agencies around the world.

15. Make the most of drive time.

"I like to schedule some of my most important calls during my morning drive to the office. While it can be frustrating at times to have a long commute, not to mention often getting stuck in traffic, I find this time very useful for scheduling calls that are uninterrupted. It also allows me to accomplish a lot more for the day when I get into the office, knowing these important conversations have already taken place and I can focus on other matters."

--David Goldin, CEO and founder of Inc. 5000 company Capify, an alternative financing provider for small businesses which operates in the U.S., the U.K., Canada, and Australia.

16. Make every meeting the second meeting.

"Always have papers before a meeting, read them, and never just do a page-turn. That way, every meeting is really the second meeting."

--Craig Boundy, CEO of Experian North America, which was named one of the top 100 innovative companies in the world by *Forbes*.

17. Find your inner yogi.

"Yoga has helped in so many areas of my life. It forces me to unplug from whatever issue I'm dealing with, spend time as a student, and focus on being present in the moment. I can walk into a studio anywhere in the world and get centered in no time. Early in my career, I would have rolled my eyes reading some executive profess how being on a yoga mat makes them good at business. But I have found a regular practice makes me a better leader, more patient parent, and keeps me sharp mentally and physically."

--John Swanciger, CEO of Manta, an online small-business community and directory that garners 20 million visitors per month and more than 1,000 new members per day.

18. Surround yourself with people whose skills complement your own.

"As a leader, it's easy to feel like you need to know or do it all, but you will never be the best at everything. A mentor of mine once told me to focus on my strengths and team up with talented people for the rest. The old saying of 'it takes a village' is true in so many parts of life, and embracing it makes you a stronger, healthier person."

--Matt Lautz, CEO of Corvisa, a cloud communications and contact center solutions provider that was recently named a "2015 Hot Vendor" by Aragon Research.

19. Walk before bed.

"Every evening after the kids go to sleep, I take a 30-minute walk alone without music. It clears my head, calms me down from the daily stresses of running a startup, and allows me to get proper perspective and clarity about priorities. Most importantly, I sleep like a baby. I learned the importance of this 15 years ago, after reading a biography of Harry Truman, who had to deal with being the president at the end of WWII."

--Charlie Silver, CEO of Algebraix Data, which developed the first universal model of data and holds nine broad U.S. patents on its technology.

20. Make time in your life for fiction.

"It emboldens your imagination, gives your mind respite, and arms you with tactics on creating motivating, inspiring messaging. Don't be afraid to take time out to free your mind from the strictures of reality."

--Alicia Navarro, CEO of Skimlinks, a content monetization platform integrated with more than 20,000 merchants and processing more than 300 million clicks a month on more than 1.5 million sites around the world.

21. Focus on nutrition and appreciation.

"I have been having the same breakfast of a protein shake with healthy fats, a fresh pressed juice full of vegetables, and a double espresso for as long as I can remember. While I press the juice, I recite the three things I am most appreciative of that morning. Thinking on the things that are most important in my life helps me take down the kale and beet juice with a smile."

--Michael McDevitt, CEO of Terra's Kitchen, an e-commerce meal delivery service focused on providing healthy recipes in an eco-friendly vessel.

22. Leave your work out of the bedroom.

"Your bedroom should be a sanctuary. Leave the TV, electronics, and work outside. By creating a work-free zone, you can reduce stress levels and, in turn, make the working time far more efficient...and most importantly, your partner will appreciate it."

--Mark Fachler, founder and CEO of Veestro, a plant-based, prepared meal delivery company.

23. Use pictorial language to help people "see" the future.

"When describing the future, you can't use facts and figures. You don't have statistics to prove your points. You must largely rely on your imagination. And to convincingly bring your audience into the future, you must unlock their imaginations, helping them envision a different world. We all know, 'a picture is worth a thousand words.' So it shouldn't be a surprise that images, and visual language such as metaphors and analogies, are of vital importance in bridging the gap between the cerebral and the imaginative."

--Rob-Jan de Jong, founder of Vongolo Consulting and author of *Anticipate: The Art of Leading by Looking Ahead*, which Business Traveller included on its "Books You Should Read" list.

24. Exercise every day.

"I've exercised--whether it be lifting or running--religiously for the past 12 years of my life, and it has played a critical role in my daily attitude, work potential, and outlook on life."

--Hannibal Baldwin, co-founder and CEO at SiteZeus, which delivers location intelligence and real estate brokerage services to retail and hospitality brands through Web-based technology.

25. Don't panic and don't run.

"Teams look to their leaders to set the tone for how the business is operated. I ensure I establish and create a sense of urgency, while balancing it with control of key situations. I make time to speak with frustrated customers and meet with unhappy employees to stay close to the issues my team navigates on a daily basis. From these interchanges, I am able to learn more than I ever could learn from all the things that go according to plan."

--Mike Robinson, CEO of Broadview Networks, an information technology and communications partner for businesses across the U.S. Its flagship platform, OfficeSuite, is used by more than 210,000 business people nationwide.

26. Use the 70/30 approach to professional life.

"Cultivate good judgment by learning to be comfortable making 100 percent of a decision with 70 percent of the data. This approach forces you to weigh what is really important and to understand the remainder of the data isn't worth the time it takes to collect. Over time, you will make more good decisions and will accomplish more than the less confident and more risk averse. You will also be more competitive because you will accomplish more. Target being right 70 percent of the time with everything you do. Any extra time you spend on being right means you will miss opportunities, both personally and professionally."

--Tom Cotney, CEO of Mblox, an application-to-person mobile messaging provider that helps brands build profitable relationships with their customers.

27. Make lists.

"In addition to making a list of the top three things I must get done each day, I make a list of the three things that must be achieved each month and each week to ensure the company is staying on track."

--Dr. Lisa Dolev, founder and CEO of Qylur, a provider of automated, self-service, bag-screening technology that was deployed at the World Cup last year.

28. Encourage questions.

"Provide opportunity for at least one employee every day to ask you questions about whatever they have on their mind. It is very important to make employees feel like no question is out of limits. Q&A sessions with regular cadence make it easy for anyone in the organization to ask me questions. It is often these sessions that help me get the pulse of the company. It also becomes a forum for sharing ideas and discovering new ways of thinking or solving problems. But it's extremely important that these opportunities to ask questions are presented in all sorts of settings--large groups, small groups, one-on-ones, and a mix of formal and casual settings."

--Jyoti Bansal, founder and CEO of AppDynamics, a San Francisco-based company with 1,600 customers and billings in the past 12 months topping $175 million.

29. Talk to at least one customer every day.

"It's by far the most efficient and productive way to gather feedback on [the company] and to understand the business more deeply. My company is nothing without its users, and the information I receive from customers is hugely influential on how we conduct business and shape our plans for the future."

--Navid Hadzaad, founder and CEO of GoButler, a free, on-demand service that operates as a digital personal assistant.

30. Start your day with a clean inbox.

"In order to start the day completely organized, I get up at 6 a.m. and get to inbox zero. Anything that can be answered with a short note or delegated to a team lead, I get out of the way immediately. Other items I prioritize for later sit down email blocks or meetings later in the day. This way, I can be truly focused during morning meetings."

--Benjamin Habbel, founder and CEO of Voyat, a retention platform for hospitality that works with hotel brands across 15 countries and is connecting over 50,000 guests to hotels every month.

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