

SELECT

16 habits top-performing real estate agents commit to

The power of incremental change is monumental. Small improvements every day will compound into extraordinary results over time



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BY [CARL MEDFORD](#)

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Like it or not, we all have [habits](#). In fact, they subconsciously drive our lives – you act on your habits automatically because they – regardless of whether they are good or bad – are the tracks your subconscious autonomic system runs on.

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completely involuntary.” While some of our habits are good, such as the daily ritual of eating, other habits can be bad or even destructive, such as eating too much, leading to obesity and significant health problems.

If you desire to become successful in any venture, it is important to be able to recognize your current habits, select and enhance the good ones, and concurrently remove the ones that will keep you from achieving your goals. In their place, you will need to build new habits that will propel you in the right direction.

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As an example, if your goal is to lose weight, then you would begin by analyzing your eating habits. While it is critical to eat, your habits determining how you eat, what you eat and when you eat will dictate your level of success.

If your eating habits include binging on unhealthy foods many times a day, [the pathway to success](#) would be to identify the negative habit and replace it with healthier habits.

This could be as fundamental as changing the types of products that go into your grocery cart at the store, limiting the amount of food you eat in one

The elimination of bad habits and the development of new ones means changing the connections in our brains. [Christian Espinosa](#) explains, “These connections are called neural pathways. I sometimes think of it as a road — if I do something for the first time, the neural pathway is like an unpaved road. The more I repeat the task, the more it’ll turn into a habit.”

In contrast, removing a bad habit is akin to no longer driving down a superhighway in your brain by refusing to take the onramp: over time, access to the freeway is no longer as readily accessible as it once was.

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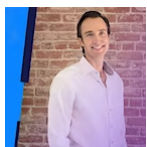
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As it relates to business, good habits can be defined as a desired pattern of behavior acquired by [constant repetition](#) that leads to an increase in performance and success. Those who are successful have learned how to maximize good behaviors and minimize the bad. They have learned how to identify negative habits and replace them with those that will enhance their careers.

To change a habit requires a commitment: here are the commitments that I believe are the guideposts to the habits of highly successful real estate agents.

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It has often been said, “If it’s not on your calendar, it doesn’t exist.” So true. Successful agents map out their day to maximize dollar-producing activities and minimize activities that are not productive. Called “time-blocking,” it is a fundamental component of [time management](#).

You only get 24 hours in any given day: effective agents pair their most productive hours with their highest dollar producing activities and lock in the times to ensure they are maximizing their days.

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In the end, the most important decisions you will make will be what you say, “No” to. [Oliver Burkeman](#), in *Four Thousand Weeks* states,

“So if a certain activity really matters to you — a creative project, say, though it could just as easily be nurturing a relationship, or activism in the service of some cause — the only way to be sure it will happen is to do some of it today, no matter how little, and no matter how many other genuinely big rocks may be begging for your attention.”

2. Commit to a productive morning routine

How you start the day will determine how it ends. Hal Elrod in his book, *The Miracle Morning: The Not-So-Obvious Secret Guaranteed to Transform Your Life*, clarifies,

“How you wake up each day and your morning routine (or lack thereof) dramatically affects your levels of success in every single area of your life. Focused, productive, successful mornings generate focused, productive, successful days—which inevitably create a successful life—in the same way that unfocused, unproductive, and mediocre mornings generate unfocused, unproductive, and mediocre days, and ultimately a mediocre quality of life. By simply changing the way you wake up in the morning, you can transform any area of your life, faster than you ever thought possible.”

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One of life's greatest ironies is that it usually takes the same amount of time to do something with [excellence](#) as it does to do it poorly. Why, then, choose to do it inadequately?

Mastery is simply a mindset that dictates how we show up for any activity — you can do the least amount possible to accomplish any given task or you can do the same task in such a way that your accomplishment sets you apart from everyone else. Most people automatically default to mediocre: winners choose to set the bar higher than everyone else.

Geoff Colvin, in [Talent is Overrated](#) explains,

“A study of figure skaters found that sub-elite skaters spent lots of time working on the jumps they could already do, while skaters at the highest levels spent more time on the jumps they couldn't do, the kind that ultimately win Olympic medals and that involve lots of falling down before they're mastered.”

Both groups of skaters spent the same amount of time practicing – but the winners practiced better.

4. Commit to developing systems

James Clear, in his landmark book, [Atomic Habits](#), states, “Forget about goals and focus on systems instead.” What does he mean? Using the analogy of a train, they do not run very well without tracks. Strange, but true. Goals are simply the tracks that stretch out ahead of your business to ensure you have a preplanned direction to go and specific benchmarks to meet.

In contrast, a system is everything required to get the tracks there in the first place. Train tracks do not [automatically](#) appear and they are not random: they are purposely set to direct the train to the intended destination. They also assume that there is a train to run on the tracks that are being laid.

goal states, “We will lay 100 miles of track in the next 30 days.” A system declares, “We will operate a railway.”

What systems will you need to meet your stated GCI and volume goals?

5. Commit to continuous learning

No person I have ever met has had all the innate knowledge required to succeed in life. As the world continuously morphs around us, we have all had to acquire new knowledge and learn new skills to meet emerging challenges.

Those I personally know who are at the top of their craft are all committed to [continuous learning](#). Whether a daily schedule of reading, listening to podcasts, attending training events and conferences, plugging into ongoing learning venues and more, high achievers run on the fuel provided by the insights and passions gleaned from ongoing learning.

6. Commit to practice

As a person who practiced violin for hours on end when I was young, I can attest to the fact that practicing is never fun. I can also confirm that you will only go as far as you are willing to focus your practice on actual improvement.

As a child, that was not my goal — it was to simply get through the time allotted for practice so I could go and do something I actually enjoyed. The end result? A mediocre violinist. Had I truly practiced, you might have seen me in a concert hall instead of here in this article.

Quoting Geoff Colvin again, he confirms:

“Doing things we know how to do well is enjoyable, and that’s exactly the opposite of what deliberate practice demands. Instead of doing what we’re good at, we insistently seek out what we’re not good at. Then we identify the painful, difficult activities that will make us better and do those things over and over. After each repetition, we force ourselves to see – or get others to

mentally exhausted.”

Colvin also quotes data that belies the idea that some people are born with innate [special skills](#) that the rest of us mortals can never hope to emulate.

“The gifts possessed by the best performers are not at all what we think they are. They are certainly not enough to explain the achievements of such people-and that’s if these gifts exist at all. Some researchers now argue that specifically targeted innate abilities are simply fiction. That is, you are not a natural-born clarinet virtuoso or car salesman or bond trader or brain surgeon – because no one is.”

It turns out that those who have climbed to the pinnacle of their craft have done it through targeted practice, getting started long before the rest of the pack and being ruthless in their commitment to incrementally improving every day. What separates

- Jerry Rice (football)
- Bobby Fischer (chess)
- Itzhak Perlman (violin)
- Michael Phelps (swimmer)
- Tiger Woods (golf)

from their competition? As I wrote in [“Want to become the best listing agent in your area?”](#), it turns out not to be intrinsic talent. The data confirms it was “one simple thing: they all practiced more than their competition. Not only did they put in more hours than the rest, but those hours were also intensely focused.”

7. Commit to coaching

Building on the previous point of practicing, it is important to note that an outside pair of eyes is often needed to see or hear things we cannot perceive

effective coach who has helped them get there.

8. Commit to mentoring

In the same way, top producers benefit from coaching, they themselves can grow dramatically by coaching others. James Clear explains:

“If you want to take something more seriously, do it publicly. Publishing an article pressures you to think clearly. Competing in a race pressures you to train consistently. Presenting on any topic pressures you to learn. Social pressure forces you to up your game.”

Richard Feynman, a Nobel Prize-winning physicist, often credited with the saying, “If you really want to master something, teach it,” would agree.

9. Commit to lead generation

Since you need clients who either want to buy or sell a home, [lead generation](#) is critical. While this should be obvious, and while at its most basic, it is simply finding a way to get in front of prospective clients, a significant number of Realtors are secret agents who base their business on the hope that clients will somehow find them, rather than them doing any kind of activity to find clients.

Conversely, they will pay inordinately large sums of money to have someone else do the prospecting for them (think Zillow). Top agents have a minimum of three legs to their lead generation machine, typically beginning with basic prospecting via phone or door knocking. Ironically, the most successful lead generation tactics are also the most cost-effective: it just takes a willingness to time block and make the calls day in and out.

Whatever the methodology, consistency is always the key and top agents, once they have the fundamentals locked in place, will only then begin to expand their efforts to more expensive methodologies that usually have a lower ROI (return on investment).

CRUCIAL DATABASE

While it is no secret that [a well-nurtured database](#) is the heart of every successful agent's business, I am constantly amazed at how few agents actually have a database yet alone work it consistently. While almost every brokerage provides a CRM (client relationship management system) of some sort for their agents — usually free or at a minimal cost — a lot of agents prefer to work off of Excel spreadsheets, Outlook or other platforms.

Set up correctly, a good CRM will actually do the heavy lifting for you, but you have to take the time to set it up, maintain it constantly and be committed to growing it consistently.

In our case, close to 60 percent of our business year in and out comes directly out of our database; for many agents, that number is actually higher. There is a good reason many call their database their data bank.

11. Commit to communicating

“Effective communication is the process of exchanging ideas, thoughts, opinions, knowledge and data so that the message is received and understood with clarity and purpose. When we communicate effectively, both the sender and receiver feel satisfied.”

This definition by [Coursera](#) is perfect and illustrates that continued success, which relies on client satisfaction, is based on effective communication. Coursera further explains that, “For communication to be effective, it must be clear, correct, complete, concise, and compassionate. We consider these to be the 5 C's of communication, though they may vary depending on who you're asking.”

Ironically, good communication does not begin with talking but rather with effective listening and asking questions. While most of us want to begin by downloading information about who we are and how awesome a business we have, Dorothy Leeds, author of [The 7 Powers of Questions](#), says,

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refuses to answer, pays more attention to a question than to a statement.”

By putting the other person — their needs and wants — ahead of your own gut response to talk, communication will be much more effective. Additionally, once you get into a [working relationship](#), a constant flow of communication will continue to build trust.

One of the primary complaints we hear about other agents from their clients is, “We never knew what was going on. They never communicated with us.” That is not the way to get a good review or a referral.

12. Commit to building a network

[Hal Elrod](#) states,

“Research has shown that we virtually become like the average of the five people we spend the most time with. Who you spend your time with may be the single most determining factor in the person you become and in your quality of life. If you are surrounded with lazy, weak-minded, excuse-making people, you’ll inevitably become like them. Spend time with positive, successful achievers and inevitably their attitudes and successful habits will reflect on you. You’ll become more and more like them.”

This is absolutely true, and top agents work hard to build networks with individuals who are functioning at a higher level than they are, not only in their own profession but across other businesses as well. Most brokerages have a top-agent network, and there are many [networking groups](#) available across the country.

13. Commit to state-of-the-art customer service

There is a fundamental difference between Target or Walmart and Neiman Marcus or Nordstroms: it is customer service. Or, in some cases, the complete lack thereof. Will Guidara, previous co-owner of Eleven Madison Park, winner

“Behavioral science expert Rory Sutherland says *the opposite of a good idea should be a good idea*. That’s why the idea of Unreasonable Hospitality was so compelling. The opposite of Unreasonable Hospitality isn’t treating people poorly, it’s reasonable hospitality – a perfectly fine way of doing business.”

The same principle has set Chick-fil-A apart from the rest of the pack and explains why loyal customers driving to Chick-fil-A will pass a number of other fast-food restaurants, all offering their own versions of chicken sandwiches. As stated in a [previous article](#),

“During the pandemic, I often heard the quip, “If the government had hired Chick-fil-A to oversee the vaccination process, it would have been a huge success rather than the fiasco it actually was.” One thing is certain — when it comes to managing the drive-through process, no one does it better.”

This is not rocket science — it just means that top agents pay attention to their client’s needs and wants and do what is necessary to exceed their client’s expectations in every way possible.

14. Commit to giving back

Top agents [give back](#). They realize that they have been blessed to be a blessing. Whether time spent volunteering in local organizations or funds given to meet needs literally around the world, they have a mindset of gratitude and contribution.

15. Commit to showing up

A post by [Emerging Leadership Foundation](#) informs,

“There is an old saying most often attributed to Woody Allen that ‘90 percent of life is showing up.’ Actually, it turns out that the number is somewhere between 75 percent and 90 percent, depending on the

make the call, or introduce yourself. The results will astonish you.”

Whether making prospecting calls, door knocking, script practice, or calling through your database, the pathway to success is simple. Just do it.

16. Commit to emotional intelligence

Created by two researchers, Peter Salavoy and John Mayer in their article “Emotional Intelligence” (1990) and later popularized by Dan Goleman in his book *Emotional Intelligence* (1995), EQ (Emotional Intelligence) is defined as “the ability to understand and manage your own emotions, as well as recognize and influence the emotions of those around you.”

Lauren Landry, in a blog post for the Harvard Business School Online Courses explains,

“More than a decade ago, Goleman highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership, telling the Harvard Business Review, ‘The most effective leaders are all alike in one crucial way: They all have a high degree of what has come to be known as emotional intelligence. It’s not that IQ and technical skills are irrelevant. They do matter, but...they are the entry-level requirements for executive positions.’”

Put succinctly, you may have all the skills and talents required, but if you cannot effectively manage your personal emotions, your chances of success are limited.

Further, you need to be able to identify emotions in those you are working with and be able to influence those emotions to a [positive outcome](#).

Lastly, your personal emotions will dictate whether or not you succeed. Award-winning agents have learned how to show up with a positive attitude, forward-thinking mindset and can-do spirit that rubs off on their clients. Learning to gauge and control your emotions is critical to success.

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pick one and get started.

Once you have a sense of mastery with your initial choice, then move on to the next. Growth is always **incremental** – if you bite off too much, you will fail every time. On the other hand, the power of incremental change is monumental: small improvements every day will compound into extraordinary results over time.

Carl Medford is the CEO of [The Medford Team](#).

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