



Week 3: Identity-Based Habits

Based on Atomic Habits by James Clear

Core Concept

Most people approach habits from the outside in, focusing on what they want to achieve (outcomes) or what they need to do (processes). But the most effective way to change behavior is to focus on who you wish to become (identity). Every action you take is a vote for the type of person you wish to become. The goal is not to read a book; the goal is to become a reader. The goal is not to run a marathon; the goal is to become a runner. When your habits align with your desired identity, you are motivated by intrinsic factors rather than external rewards. Your behaviors become automatic expressions of who you are.

Three Layers of Behavior Change

- **Outcomes:** What you get (losing 20 pounds, launching a product)
- **Processes:** What you do (exercising four times per week, implementing a new marketing system)
- **Identity:** What you believe (I am a healthy person, I am an innovative business leader)

Key Insights

- The ultimate form of intrinsic motivation is when a habit becomes part of your identity
- The more pride you have in a particular aspect of your identity, the more motivated you will be to maintain habits associated with it
- Identity emerges from habits; every action is a vote for who you want to become
- The biggest barrier to positive change is identity conflict

Discussion Questions

1. What type of business leader do you want to be known as? How do your current daily habits align with or contradict that identity?
2. Can you think of a time when your sense of identity prevented you from adopting a beneficial habit or change? How might you reframe your identity to support growth?
3. What identity does your company culture currently reinforce? What identity would you like it to reinforce? Clear suggests asking: What would a successful person do? How can you use this question to guide daily business decisions?
4. How many votes have you cast for your desired identity in the past week? What small evidence can you gather to reinforce who you want to become?

Group Exercise: Identity Mapping

Instructions:

Write down your primary business goal (outcome level).

Work backward: What type of person would achieve that goal? Write it as an identity statement starting with I am.

List three small habits that a person you would like to be would have. These are your daily votes for that identity.

Identify one current habit that conflicts with your desired identity. How can you start reducing this habit?

Share your identity statement and one supporting habit with the group.