



Be Committed

The Power of Commitment

The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather in a lack of will.

- Vince Lombardi¹ legendary NFL coach

When Ben Comen ran cross-country for his high school in Anderson, S.C., he knew what place he'd come in even before the starter gun fired; he'd come in dead last.

Every race, every stinkin' race. Dead last. But Comen, then 16, was no loser.



Comen has cerebral palsy, a condition that doesn't affect his intellect – he earned A's and B's. What it does is this: "it seizes his muscles and contorts his body and gives him the balance of a Times Square drunk."² A Twinkie-sized rock or a licorice-thick branch would send him tumbling, and his brain couldn't send signals fast enough for his arms to cushion his fall.

And when he fell, he fell hard. However, Comen, battered and bruised, always, always, got back up.

Why would someone with great physical limitations put himself through such an ordeal?

Psychiatrist Ari Kiev would say Comen understood the power of commitment. In his book, *The Psychology of Risk*, Kiev wrote:



"Commitment enables you to be fearless in the face of obstacles so that you can turn obstacles into opportunities. When you commit to a vision, you become the cause rather than the effect of your life ..."

Commitment is the point beyond decision where you don't ask yourself, "Can I do it?" but declare instead, "I will do it." ... Commitment requires living in the action immediately before you ... commitment is the action in front of you today."³

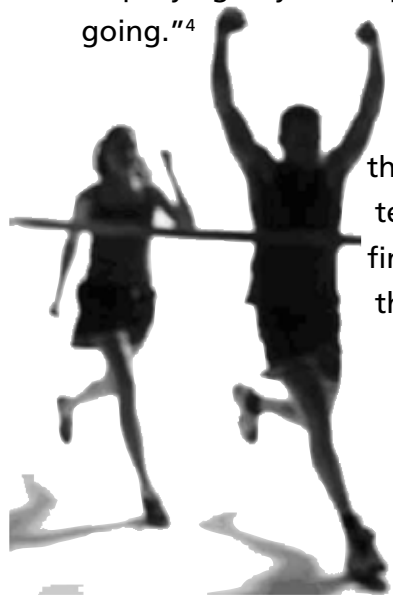
¹ *Winning Clients in a Wired World: Seven Strategies for Growing Your Business* by Kip Gregory, p. 239

² "Worth the Wait" by Rick Reilly, *Sports Illustrated*, October 20, 2003

³ *Ibid*, p. 41

Comen had no questions about what his actions would be at each race. Put one foot in front of the other, and aim for the finish line. Pretty simple.

Comen, now a college student, explains his actions this way: "Anybody can find something they can do – and do it well. I like to show people that you can either stop trying or you can pick yourself up and keep going. It's just more fun to keep going."⁴



And he kept going until he crossed the finish line, often more than 30 minutes after the winner. And he does so with his teammates and the kids from other teams, all of whom have finished, backtracking, and running beside him, cheering the last 10 minutes.

At a young age, Comen knew commitment.

When was the last time you zeroed in on a well-defined goal? When was the last time you worked tirelessly toward it? If you are stumped for answers, then it's been too long.

Me? Afraid of Commitment?

Why do so many New Year's Eve goals fall to the wayside by mid-February? Jill Koenig, author of *The Time Commandments*, says people fall short of their goals because they haven't fully committed to them in the first place.

Too often, people use the word "committed" rather loosely when they are referring to their goals, she said. For example, a person will use the word "committed" when the reality is they are merely "interested." The difference in the two words is enormous.⁵



Koenig, who coaches business people on goal setting and time management, says committed does not mean "interested" or "to try." To commit means to do and to keep doing, until you have succeeded. "To succeed, you must learn to sustain your drive, and focus on your goal without distraction,"⁶ she said.

⁴ *Ibid*, Reilly

⁵ "The Power of Commitment" by Jill Koenig, *American Chronicle*, May 2, 2007

⁶ *Ibid*

Be Like Mike

Michael Dell, that is. Dell is the founder and the CEO of Dell Inc., a company worth \$63 billion.⁷

From a young age, Dell gravitated toward computers. At 15, he took apart his first computer, an Apple II, just “to see how it worked.”⁸

He attended the University of Texas with the idea that he’d study to be a doctor. But his true calling quickly surfaced. In 1984, with \$1,000 in his name, Dell started PC’s Limited and ran it from his dorm room. Dell’s revolutionary idea: sell customized computer products directly to the customer. At 19, he was able to compete with the computer stalwarts, because he had no stores to maintain or middlemen on commission.

Dell stuck to his vision and by 1992, Dell Computer Corp. was listed on the Fortune 500, making Michael Dell the youngest CEO ever to head a Fortune 500 company.



At the Entrepreneurs Summit in Miami in May, Dell said: “I’m not a big believer in luck. I don’t think luck is a big factor in what we do, or what most people do ... There are plenty of smart people out there. But I think it’s up to us to make it happen.”⁹

How to Commit

Setting goals is easy. I want to lose 20 pounds by New Year’s. I want to double my sales this quarter. I want to run a marathon. I want to reduce the number of on-site accidents.

All admirable goals. Now what? That’s the hard part.

“It is the way the goals are set and the way plans are made to accomplish them that determines what happens afterward,” says Brian Tracy, best-selling author of *Maximum Achievement*, a book that outlines a 12-step goal-achieving process that has helped corporations worldwide obtain greater sales and profitability.

THE TWELVE-STEP SYSTEM¹⁰

Step one: Develop desire— intense, burning desire.

⁷ “Apple now worth double Dell’s market value” *MacDailyNews.com*, Nov. 5, 2007

⁸ “Face Time With Michael Dell” by Charles Fishman, *Fast Company* magazine, February 2001

⁹ Michael Dell Keynote Speech at the Entrepreneurs Summit in Miami, May 1, 2007, www.dell.com/downloads/global/corporate/speeches/msd/05012007_endeavour_entrepreneurs_summit.pdf

¹⁰ *Maximum Achievement* by Brian Tracy, pgs. 156-170

- Step two:** Develop belief. You must absolutely believe that it is possible for you to achieve your goal.
- Step three:** Write it down. When you write a goal down on a piece of paper, you crystallize it. You make it something concrete and tangible.
- Step four:** Make a list of all the ways you will benefit from achieving your goal.
- Step five:** Analyze your position, your starting point. Determining your starting point gives you a baseline from which to measure your progress.
- Step six:** Set a deadline on all tangible, measurable goals, such as increases in income or net worth, or running a certain number of miles.
- Step seven:** Make a list of all the obstacles that stand between you and the accomplishment of your goal.
- Step eight:** Identify the additional information you will need to achieve your goal.
- Step nine:** Make a list of all the people whose help and cooperation you will require.
- Step ten:** Make a plan, a list of all activities in the order of importance. What is the most important thing you have to do? What is the second most important thing? Keep asking this question until you have listed every activity based on its value to the completed goal.
- Step eleven:** Use visualization. Create a clear mental picture of your goal as it would appear if it were already achieved. This will fuel your desire and belief that the goal is attainable.
- Step twelve:** Make the decision, in advance, that you will never, never, give up.

If 12 steps are 11 too many, then try the Tom Peters one-step method: Slam the door on distractions.

"Tell people to buzz off from time to time, including your boss – process is important, but you also gain power from results, which come from narrowly focusing on the outcome¹¹," said Peters, author of the groundbreaking business book *In Search of Excellence*, and many other bestsellers.

I think I can, I think I can

"Until one is committed, there is always the chance to draw back; always ineffectiveness ... Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now."

Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe¹² (1749-1832),
German poet, dramatist, novelist



¹¹ *The Pursuit of WOW!* by Tom Peters, pgs. 52-53

¹² The Goethe Society of North America, <http://www.goethesociety.org/pages/quotescom.html>

Here are some examples of people who've made commitments and fulfilled them:

- Sergey Brin and Larry Page started with a simple idea to use links between Web pages to rank their relative importance. When they tried to sell their idea, they were told: Don't bother. People don't care about search engines. Good thing the two didn't listen. They took their idea and made it into Google, now the largest search engine on the Web.¹³ These days, the two Stanford graduate school dropouts are each worth \$18.5 billion, tied for the 5th richest person in the United States.¹⁴ Page says: "You have to be a little silly about the goals you are going to set. There is a phrase I learned in college called, 'Having a healthy disregard for the impossible'... You should try to do things that most people would not."¹⁵
- When Debra (Debbi) Fields was 20, she was a young housewife with no business experience. But what she lacked in business-school knowledge, she more than made up for with passion and a killer cookie recipe. She convinced a bank to finance an unproven business concept. The bank officer's faith paid off in spades. Her first cookie bakeshop—Mrs. Fields Chocolate Chippery—opened in 1997 in Palo Alto, Calif. By 1998, there were more than 600 Mrs. Fields company-owned and franchise stores in the United States and 10 other countries. Fields was a visionary when it came to embracing business technology. To this day, her management techniques are taught at Harvard Business School as a model for business efficiency.¹⁶
- For three years, John Grisham devoted 5 to 7 a.m. to writing his first book, *A Time to Kill*. At that time, he was working as an attorney and a second-term legislator in the Mississippi State Legislature. All the while he was writing the manuscript, Grisham read every book he could find dealing with the book publishing industry. He came up with a well-defined plan. "I sat down with my secretary and we made up two lists," he said. "One contained the names and addresses of 30 publishing house editors; the other, 30 names and addresses of literary agents. Having already put together a package containing a query letter, book summary, and the first three chapters, I had the secretary make 10 copies of each. She was to send a copy of each to the first five editors on the first list and the same



¹³ <http://www.answers.com/topic/backlink?cat=health>

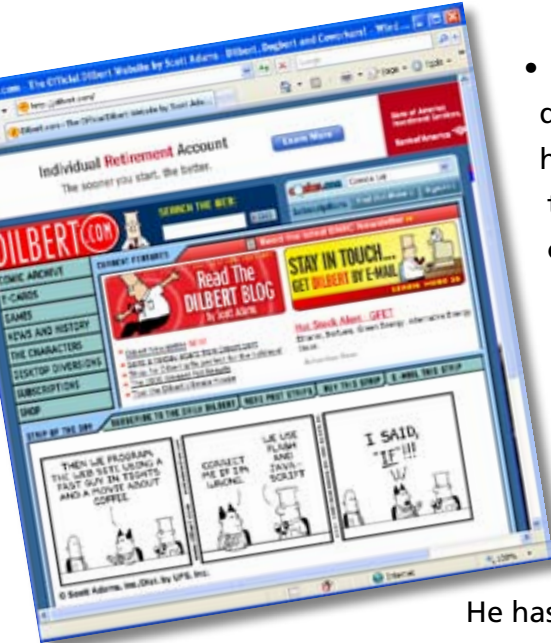
¹⁴ *The Forbes 400*, edited by Matthew Miller, September 20, 2007,

http://www.forbes.com/2007/09/19/richest-americans-forbes-lists-richlist07-cx_mm_0920rich_land.html

¹⁵ <http://www.thegoolestory.com/fromthebook.html>

¹⁶ <http://debbifields.com/about.html>

to the first five agents on the second. As with most novice authors, Grisham's work was handily rejected. Through it all, though, Grisham said he never got depressed. "I never thought of quitting. My attitude was: 'What the heck, let's have some fun.' Grisham eventually sold his first book and has written more than a dozen more, all bestsellers.¹⁷



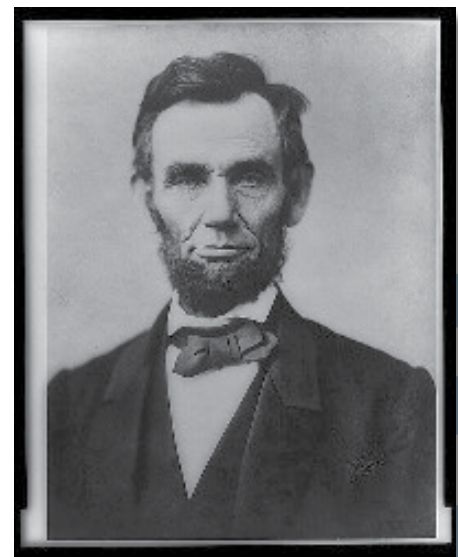
- Scott Adams, creator of the Dilbert cartoon, wrote down his goal to be a top syndicated cartoonist while he toiled away as a drone for an engineering firm. Fifteen times a day he would write: "I will be a syndicated columnist."¹⁸ On the advice of a kind cartoonist, Scott Adams bought a book called *The 1988 Artist Markets* and followed the instructions on how to get syndicated. He drew 50 sample strips and mailed copies to the major cartoon syndicates. United Media called a few weeks later and offered a contract, which he accepted.¹⁹ Adams continues to the practice of writing down specific goals, something he refers to as affirmations

He has upped his goals to "I will be the most successful syndicated." In 1996, his book *The Dilbert Principle and Dogbert's Top Secret Management Handbook* hit the New York Times best-selling book list as No. 1 and No. 2. His succeeding books have also been top-sellers.²⁰

It is clear that these people share common traits. They've set their sights on their goals and put one foot in front of another until they reached them.

In a speech to the House of Representatives in 1848, Abraham Lincoln said, "Determine that the thing can and shall be done, and then we shall find the way."²¹

Quite simply, declare yourself, and, then as Capt. Jean-Luc Picard of the USS Starship Enterprise, would say: "Make it so."²²



¹⁷ "A Time To Write" by Sammy McDavid, *Mississippi State Alumnus Magazine*, Winter 1990, http://library.msstate.edu/grisham_room/writer/weknewhim.htm

¹⁸ *The Power of Positive Thinking in Business* by Scott W. Ventrella, p. 102

¹⁹ http://www.leadingauthorities.com/281/Scott_Adams.htm

²⁰ *The Dilbert Future* by Scott Adams, p. 250

²¹ *Of the People, by the People, for the People* by Abraham Lincoln, p. 37

²² *Make It So (Star Trek: The Next Generation)* by Wess Roberts and Bill Ross

Here are links to a few Web sites that focus on achieving business and personal success:

Here you can find an essay on commitment by Ari Kiev, author of The Psychology of Risk.

http://www.musc.edu/medcenter/pe6_intranet_1yr/pe2006/0206/140206.htm

For tips on achieving goals and time management, visit Jill Koenig's Web site.

www.goalguru.com

Here you can download free inspiring lessons from best-selling author and management guru Tom Peters.

<http://www.tompeters.com/freestuff/index.php>

For free newsletters on all aspects of business including time management and personal success, visit leading business author and consultant Brian Tracy's Web site.

<http://www.briantracy.com/Newsletter/subscribe.aspx?ssid=51366466-0b97-4051-ba75-99fdcbe9e9c2>

