

★ Watch a video about Daniel Pink's ideas

Daniel Pink has a great animated video about the ideas in his book *Drive*:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6XAPnuFjJc>

You can design your presentations to stimulate and respond to this desire for mastery, especially if you have a session of a few hours. Plan your presentation and your activities so that people are mastering concepts and exercises as they go along. Set up exercises throughout the presentation so that they get a chance to try out what they have just learned and have an opportunity to show you, others, and themselves that they have mastered a particular idea or skill.

Takeaways

- * People have an inherent desire for mastery.
- * Structure your presentation so that people feel they are making small steps to mastery along the way.
- * Show people how they are progressing toward goals.

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PEOPLE'S ABILITY TO DELAY GRATIFICATION (OR NOT) STARTS YOUNG

You want to buy that Kindle, but you're thinking maybe you should wait a while. Maybe you should see if the price comes down later this year, or maybe you should pay down your credit card debt before you spend money on a new gadget for yourself. Do you wait or not?

Whether or not you are the type of person who can delay gratification, chances are high that you've been this way (a delayer or not a delayer) since you were a child.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Walter Mischel conducted a series of studies on delayed gratification with preschoolers. Years later he followed up with the original people in his study. He found that when the children who were able to delay gratification became teenagers, they were more successful in school, received higher SAT scores, and were better able to cope with stress and frustration. He followed them into adulthood, and the differences continued. On the other side, the children who could *not* delay gratification as preschoolers were more likely to have problems as adults, including drug abuse.

★ Watch a video about Mischel's experiment

Here's a video with an update on Walter Mischel's study, which was called the marshmallow experiment:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6EjJsPylEOY>

Ozlem Ayduk from the University of California, Berkeley, is bringing these same individuals back to the lab. The researchers are using fMRI brain imaging to get a better look at the parts of the brain that are active in delayed gratification. As I write this book, her research is not yet complete.

GIVING A PRESENTATION FOR NON-DELAYERS

Since you don't know how many people in your audience might be good or bad at delaying gratification, you should assume that you have both types of people in your sessions. You need to make sure that you are not making people wait till the end of your presentation to "get it." You need to have "a-ha" moments throughout the presentation so that people who "can't wait" feel that they are learning something "right now."

Takeaways

- * Some people are good at delaying gratification, and others are not.
- * Assume that you have both types of people in your sessions. Build in “a-ha” moments throughout the presentation so that people who “can’t wait” feel that they are learning something “right now.”

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PEOPLE ARE INHERENTLY LAZY

It might be exaggerating a bit to say that people are inherently lazy. But research does show us that people will do the least amount of work possible to get a task done.

When you give a presentation, you are often hoping that people will change their view on a topic and/or change their behavior based on the presentation. Although this is possible, you might not want to expect too much. It’s difficult for people to change—and they may not want to work that hard.

IS LAZY ANOTHER WORD FOR EFFICIENT?

Over eons of evolution, humans have learned that they will survive longer and better if they conserve their energy. You want to spend enough energy to have enough resources (food, water, sex, shelter), but beyond that you are wasting your energy if you spend too much time running around getting or doing more stuff. Of course, questions about how much is enough, whether we have enough stuff yet, and how long the stuff should last (and on and on) still vex us, but putting the philosophical questions aside, for most activities, most of the time, humans work on a principle called *satisficing*.

SATISFY PLUS SUFFICE EQUALS SATISFICE

Herbert Simon is credited with coining the term *satisfice*. He used it to describe a decision-making strategy in which a person chooses the option that is adequate rather than optimal. The idea of satisficing is that the cost of making a complete analysis of all the options is not only not worth it but may be impossible. According to Simon, we often don’t have the cognitive faculties to weigh all the options. So it makes more sense to make a decision based on “what will do” or what is “good enough” rather than trying to find the optimal or perfect solution.

DON'T EXPECT TOO MUCH

You are probably excited about your topic and think that the whole world should be too. But everybody has their own worldview. It is possible that your audience might be willing to put a little bit of effort into whatever change you are asking them to make, but it is unlikely that everyone will be willing to make drastic change at once or to work very hard to make change happen.

Don’t expect too much change. Evaluate where people are now, and where you would like them to be. Don’t ask people to make too much of a leap just from listening to your one presentation.

Takeaways

- * Assume that people will get things done with the least amount of work possible. That may not always be the case, but it's true more often than not.
- * People will satisfice; that is, they will look for the good-enough solution rather than the optimal solution.
- * Don't expect too much change from one presentation. Be realistic about what you can really ask people to do, or they may not do anything at all.

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FORMING A HABIT TAKES A LONG TIME AND REQUIRES SMALL STEPS

When you wake up in the morning, you brush your teeth, then check your iPhone and email, then take a shower, and then get dressed (or whatever your particular pattern is). You do this every day. It's a habit. Why are you motivated to do these same tasks every day? What did it take for these activities to become a habit? What would it take to change the habit to something else?

Philippa Lally (2010) recently studied the "how" and "how long" of forming habits. She had people choose an eating, drinking, or activity behavior to carry out every day for 12 weeks. In addition, the participants had to go online and complete a habit index each day to record whether or not they had carried out the behavior.

HOW LONG IT TAKES TO CEMENT A HABIT

The average amount of time it took for people to form a habit was 66 days, but that number doesn't really tell the story, because there was a wide range. For some people and some behaviors, it took 18 days, but depending on the person and the behavior, it went all the way up to 254 days for the behavior to become an automatic habit. This is a lot longer than has been written about before. Lally found that people would initially show an increase in the automaticity of the behavior, and then they would hit a plateau: Their behavior followed an asymptote curve (**Figure 37.1**).

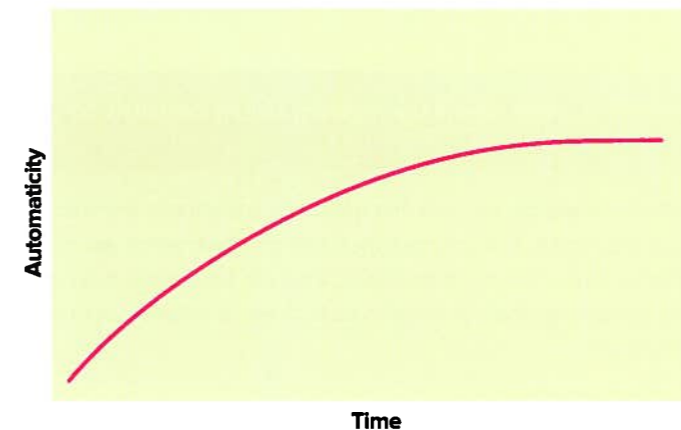


FIGURE 37.1 Creating a new habit forms an asymptote curve.

Work in small steps

If you want people to change something that has become a habit, you will need to be patient. You may need to break the behavior down into small steps and work on a step at a time. For example, instead of giving one presentation on the 10 steps that people should take to be more productive with time management, you might want to have a series of presentations and just cover one step at a time.

SOME BEHAVIORS BECOME HABITS FASTER THAN OTHERS

The more complex the behavior, the longer it took to become a habit (no surprise there). Participants who chose to create an exercise habit took one-and-a-half times longer to make it automatic than those who were building a new habit about eating fruit at lunch.

HOW BAD IS IT TO MISS A DAY?

Lally found that if people missed a day here and there, it didn't have a significant effect on how long it took to build the habit. But too many missed days, or multiple days in a row, did have an effect, and slowed the creation of the habit. Not surprisingly, the more consistent people were, the more quickly they reached the automatic point, although missing one day did not delay habit formation. Missing two or more days did.

★ Don't hesitate to forgive yourself

Michael Wohl (2010) found that the most effective way to prevent procrastination in the future is to forgive yourself now for the procrastinating you've done in the past.

➔ Motivate others to create a new habit by having them commit to something small

If you want people to commit to something big, you first need to get them to commit to something that is related, but very small. This changes their self-persona, which opens the door to larger commitments. When people form a habit, they are essentially making a new commitment. Choose something small for them to do first, and then you can build a bigger habit and commitment later.

Takeaways

- * If one of the actions you want people to take after your presentation is to permanently change a behavior or form a new habit, try to choose a small, easy task to do, rather than a complex one.
- * If the behavior you are trying to change is complicated, then you are going to have to start with a small step and have multiple presentations or meetings to build on that first small step.