

Success at Work: It's all fun and games

Written by Julie Desmond
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Tiger Woods has a good job: he swings a club as few times as possible in order to get a little white ball into a hole. Then he writes the number of swings on a scorecard. Kyrie Irving has a good job: his team clears the way so he can throw a ball toward a net as often as possible. Then he looks up at the scoreboard and finds out how many went in. Waiters have a pretty good job: they deliver food to tables as efficiently as possible without dropping anything, then count tips at the end of the night to measure success or failure.

These jobs, and all jobs for that matter, common features. They all have tools: a ball or tray, or maybe a computer, a whiteboard, a delivery truck... almost anything. And they all have quantifiable goals: scoreboard, tips, students' test scores... almost anything. These jobs also have an identifiable timeline: eighteen holes, two halves of a game, a school year, a lunch shift. A person who can identify his tools, his goals and his timeline can be successful at anything. Can you?

What are your tools? What are the key assets you have on hand while you work? These could be tools, literally, or resources at your disposal. Are you fully utilizing your toolset? Do you regularly bring out every club in your bag? Do you get everybody off the bench to play defense from time to time? To make the most of your tools, you need to know what you have, and you need to know what else you need. Make a list of tools you use (if it's a computer, what programs do you use every day? Word? Excel?). Next, make a list of tools you could acquire that would help you work better, faster, more efficiently. Reviewing the lists from time to time will help you know where you can improve your score.

What are your goals? A commission? A website developed? A life saved? Whatever your goals are, write them down. People underestimate the value of writing things down. Once you've done it, you can throw the paper away. Just do it. The difference between those who reach their goals and those who don't often comes down to who kept score. Tiger has a scorecard. Irving has a scoreboard. Keep track of your progress and the goals you are reaching for.

What is your timeline? You can't eat an elephant in one sitting. But if you are inclined to eat elephants, you can probably achieve that goal one bite at a time. So how many bites will there be? How much time do you require per bite? Break it down, then add it up. Eighteen holes, two halves of a game. What can you achieve in a predicted, finite span of time? Everyone achieves more on the day before vacation. Why? Because the clock is ticking.

Career coaches talk incessantly about goals, goal setting, etc. This is because goals are the single most reliable bridge from "striving" to "superstar." Is there one thing you can do today to improve your score? Is there one thing you can do today that will disqualify you from the game altogether? Know what game you are playing, and you'll win every time.

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