

# 13 for 2013

## *How to make this your best year ever*

By Hugh Culver

It's inevitable—year after year I worry about the new year. After all, the start of the year is when we are supposed to have resolutions, goals, and wishful ambitions neatly recorded and committed to action. Right? But what happens if my best intentions die an early death?

Many studies claim that fewer than two out of ten New Year's resolutions stick. You were going to lose those 15 pounds. This time, you swore it would be different. Then one night the movie was good, the ice cream came out, and all bets were off.

Fewer than two out of ten New Year's resolutions actually stick.

You committed to yoga classes twice a week. And you did—until one you missed one class, and then another, and now you can't find your matt.

You resolved to sock money away every week in your retirement fund —until one day you came home with that new BlueRay, lazer-tag, gizmo-loaded, flat screen TV. Oops.

Our best intentions will always fight a tug-of-war with habits. And habits usually win.

**“The trick to getting more of what you want in life is to build, and strengthen, good habits.”**

Written, measurable goals are essential ingredients for success (have you ever *hoped* to have more money?). But, after goals are poured, you need to stir in a heavy shot of habits to actually make those sales calls, save the money, and lose the weight. The trick to getting more of what you want in life is to build, and continually strengthen, good habits.

This year, I am committing to practice brilliant habits. Sure, I have goals for family, income, work, and adventures - and I'm excited about them. But I am even more excited about strengthening the habits I will practice every day.

Here are 13 habits I am committed to. What about you?

These could make your day a little brighter, your lists a little shorter, and success at work and in life a lot bigger. But, before you read them I have a warning: don't make this another To-Do list! If you are like most people, you probably already have enough lists.

Here is what I recommend instead:

1. Read the list, enjoy dreaming about doing everything, but only pick three habits you will commit to. Repeat after me: “only three”.
2. Get clear what the reward will be for each one. Habits only work when we have an big, obvious, and valuable reward dangling ahead of us. Ask yourself: ‘If I do this everyday (or as often as needed) what will I enjoy in return?’
3. Write your new habits down and keep them visible for at least one month. Put them on the dashboard of your car, screen saver on your computer, fridge at home, or forearm tattoo.
4. Pay attention to small wins. Maybe the relationship with your co-worker feels more open, your pants fit a bit better, your desk looks a bit more organized, or you are enjoying taking breaks from work. Small wins lead to big wins, if you give them attention and repeat them.

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The more you integrate these habits into your day the more they are your way of doing things and the more likely you are to gain all the success they can bring you.

1. **Admit fault first** - life's too short to waste on blame, instead: suck it up, step up, apologise and move on. It's amazing how quickly a sticky situation can get unstuck when greased with a little humility. Remember: *The fastest way to change someone is for you to go first.*
2. **Treat your body better than your car** - get your body and heart working for at least 30 minutes everyday. Change either your morning, your commute, or end-of-day habits - make exercise something you look forward to.
3. **Be here** - our mind loves to be busy worrying, thinking and scheming but it doesn't serve the conversation we are in right now. Silence your inside chatter and give people the gift of your full presence—you may find you actually hear them, for the first time.
4. **Tell the truth** - you owe it to yourself and others to make truth-telling a habit. You will avoid a lot of unnecessary grief and, as Mark Twain promised, you will have less to remember.
5. **See the best in others** - it's easy to find fault in others, but rarely does it improve a relationship. Instead, pay attention to their strengths you value and remember you're not perfect either.
6. **Empty the mental RAM** - all day we are bombarded with information that clogs our mental capacity. Practice mental purging: read a chapter in a book, go for a walk, add to your journal, or enjoy a favourite hobby—your brain will thank you.
7. **Complete things** - nothing fuels success more than success; have a habit of breaking big jobs into small chunks and completing them. Design your day to be full of small accomplishments that build your overall success and have fun crossing tasks off your list!
8. **Declutter your life** - piles of paper, unfinished work, and half-read books only serve to make you feel busy, overwhelmed, and unsuccessful. Once a week, do yourself a favour and declutter your work space and home. Pay attention to how good it feels.
9. **Create a Stop Doing list** - We are all great at creating To-Do lists, but what about a Stop Doing list? Create more capacity in your life and work by deleting, delegating, or dumping low value, time consuming, fun-sucking tasks.
10. **Eat better and eat less** - if you want to improve your health, start with changing your eating habits. Replace the drive-through with a healthy snack or meal, put greens on your plate, and put down the fork before you want to. The recipes, advice, guides and tips are everywhere—there's no excuse for not using them.

Hugh Culver MBA, CSP speaks to leading organizations, like Imperial Oil, Shoppers Drug Mart, Royal Bank of Canada, Suncor, Telus, and the Red Cross on working smarter in the Age of Distraction. Learn more about Hugh's keynote presentations and resources at [www.HughCulver.com](http://www.HughCulver.com).



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11. **Smile more often** - it's a proven fact: smiling makes us feel better and is good for our health. Plus, when we smile, others around us get the gift and feel better. Practice in the café line-up and then graduate to your office and home—start giving the gift!
12. **Pause procrastination** - When you procrastinate you get a payoff; you avoid the work, the conflict, or hard decision you know you need to make. The trick is to tipping the scales on procrastination is to make the reward for “doing” outweigh the “reward” for avoiding.
13. **Make up your own** - do you really need someone (like me) telling you what you already know? Ask yourself this: ‘What will get me more of the results I want, make me feel good, and I know will stick? You know the answer. Now write it down, commit, and make it happen. I’m already proud of you.

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