

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/make-yourself-1-better-every-day>

Professor of the Practice Tina Seelig recalls a philosophy Steve Garrity mentioned about improving through continual practice. Garrity, founder of Hearsay Systems, explains how progress is an iterative process which yields results over time. Work on your goals a bit each day to achieve movement.



Transcript

- So I'm so fascinated by something.. You and I had a conversation about it a year ago, about your thoughts on success, and you told me the story about the messages you tell the people on your team about doing 1% better each day, and it really resonated with me, and especially around the idea of being viewed as a super power.. Because you often don't see those 1% things that people do.. Can you describe it? Because I thought it was so brilliant and insightful.. - Yeah.. There's this, I've no idea where I found this or heard it, but I liked it so much I stole it, and one of our very talented designers at Hearsay made these awesome posters for our office that say, "1.01 to the 365 power is 38, and 0.99 to the 365 power is - 0.02 - Yeah, 0.02 and the point of it obviously being if you make yourself 1% better at something every day of the year, you're 38 times better, and obviously if you slip you're basically at zero, and I really like that 'cause it gets this kind of idea of iterative improvements which for so many things in life, not everything, right.. There's always sort of the discontinuous changes.. But there's a lot of things you can just, if you're 1% better every day, it's amazing how much progress you make, and so if you can just iterate through things, and figure out how to break it up into, I don't have to move the mountain, right? 'Cause it's really hard to get started on moving the mountain.. It's really easy to sit there and say like, "Ah it's really big, I'll do it tomorrow".. If you can find a way to do it very simply today, and just make a tiny bit of progress..

It's compound interest, right.. It's the thing your parents told you 10 years ago when you first got a checking account, right.. Compound interest wins, and it just puts it into motion.. - I think it's really powerful to think about those 1% things you can do each day that have a huge compounding effect.. What do you think about that? - I'm trying to think what a 1%.. When I sort of heard about this I was wondering what would a 1% action be.. What would a 1% domain be? So say that the area that you wanna focus on is engineering for example.. Is 1%, learning a new language, or getting code review by someone, or tackling a new problem, or just trying to figure out how to operationalize it? - I think it's a really good question.. I think in the engineering example, let's see if I can come up with some 1% things.. If you're trying to become a better software engineer right, the 1% thing might be, it's not picking up a new language in a given day but it might just be literally picking up one new sort of library, or one new design patter..

Just one little thing.. The example I would give and often give when I'm asked about this in terms of specific things is it's keyboard shortcuts for email.. If you don't already use keyboard shortcuts for email, learn them tonight.. It will take you five or ten minutes, and it will make you ten minutes faster every day for the rest of your life...