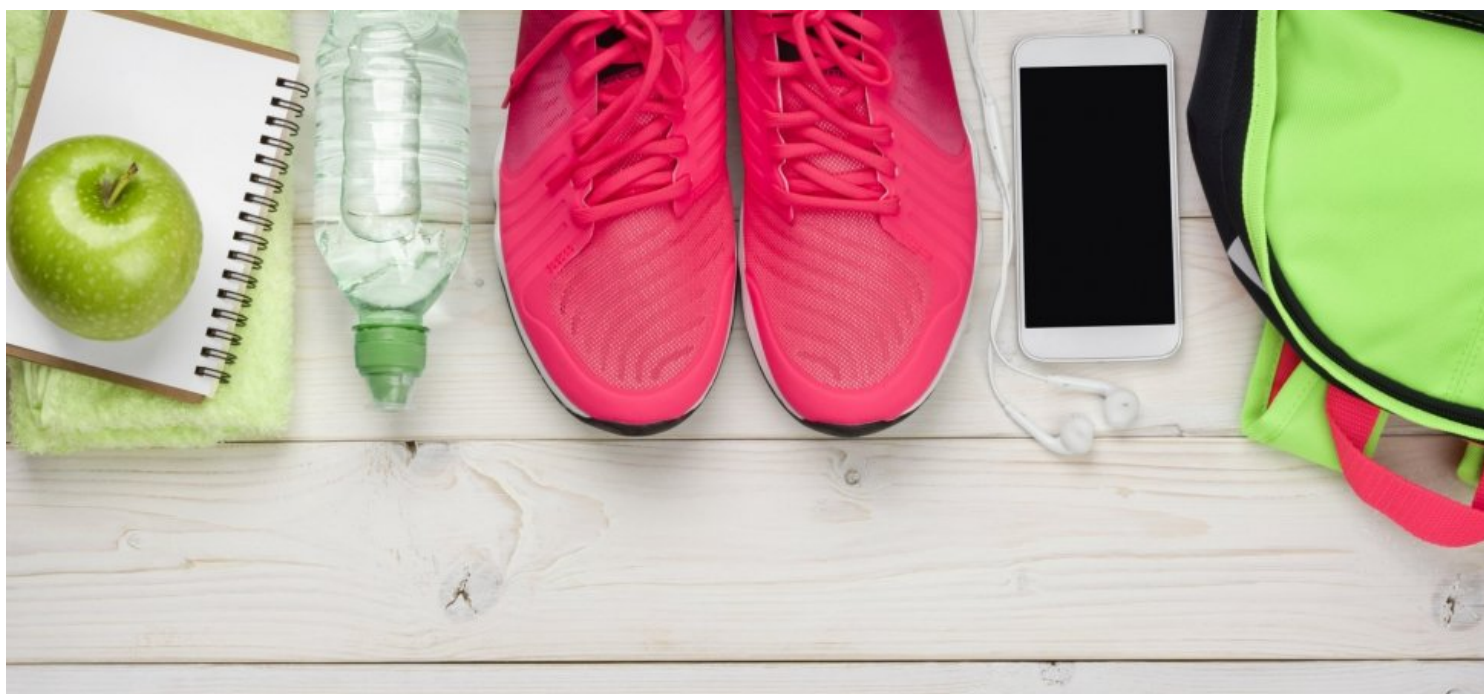




# 32 Simple Daily Habits That Separate High Achievers From Everyone Else

To be highly successful, you need to be highly disciplined.

By **Christina DesMarais** *Contributor, Inc.com* [@salubriousdish](#)



Anyone who has achieved great things in business and life knows that to be [highly successful](#), you need to be highly disciplined. I've asked hundreds of executives and entrepreneurs about the things they do every day that [help them succeed](#), and inevitably they credit simple routines which have been proven over time to give them an edge. Check out these quotes from nearly three dozen [high-achieving individuals](#) who share the habits that help them get ahead.

## 1. Sleep without an alarm.

"I only set an alarm when necessary or when something is out of routine. I find jolting awake to the sound of an alarm unpleasant. Instead, I learned you can train your brain to wake up at a certain time if you create rhythms and patterns in your life. It includes telling yourself what time you need to wake up in the morning before going to bed. It really works. I can wake myself up at 6 a.m. on the dot every day feeling great without hitting an alarm five times."

--*Alicia Wallace, co-founder and COO of [Kazi by All Across Africa](#), a brand which sells handcrafted goods made by African artisans*

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messages from our offices that I have to deal with. I'll make a phone call or two to staff on the walk to the train. I'll challenge myself to clear my email inbox while on the way in. Don't delay just because you're traveling. Or else you'll feel behind by the time you arrive at the office."

--Ian O'Rourke, co-founder and CEO of [Adthena](#), which provides competitive intelligence for search

### 3. Get a minimum of three cardio workouts a week that cause a sweat.

"Since I started a regular weekly workout routine two years ago, I have noticed that I am far healthier at work and in life. This allows me to take on more challenges without having as many setbacks. For example, I have not really been sick in two years since this routine started. My antibodies are far better able to prevent illness (which often can come from a weakened immune system). I play hockey once a week, do one spin class, and one individual elliptical machine workout at the gym. The workout choices are completely up to you, as long as you get a real sweat from them and they are longer than 20 minutes. Outside of being physically healthier I also find the workouts help free my mind from the day-to-day trapped thinking that can take place when I stay in work mode too long. The rush of oxygen to the brain while working out also seems to improve my creative and analytical thinking through the week. In short, the workouts prepare you for the marathon of running a business in better condition to succeed."

--Andrew Witkin, founder and president of [StickerYou](#), a custom sticker and label e-commerce platform

### 4. Take time to break away.

"I try to take time every day to pull away from my to-do list and think about the long-term and big ideas. Part of my daily routine is simply driving around, or never taking the same route twice, to see the city from different perspectives and continually change up how I look at Fishers."

--Scott Fadness, mayor of the City of Fishers, Indiana, named "[Best Place to Live in the U.S.](#)" by Time

### 5. Balance structure and dynamic thinking.

"Running a company, you have to balance both structure and dynamic thinking. Getting caught up in too much of a routine makes both myself and the brand stale, so having differentiated aspects to my day keeps me energized and stimulated with a variety of different inputs. And then, I dedicate about two hours a night for reflection time, so I can contemplate the day, which allows my creative thinking to be open and agile."

--Dara Maleki, founder and CEO of [The Pizza Press](#), a fast-casual, build-your-own pizza franchise

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Facebook, or read the news? What's usually waiting for you is yesterday's problems, and that can put you in a negative state of mind. Fear, anger, frustration, and overwhelm are the four emotions this type of mindless awakening can cause. Daily prepping will force you to start your day with an emotion such as gratitude, appreciation, love, or joy. I spend the first 30 minutes of my day going for a brisk jog and I repeatedly ask myself the following three questions: 'What goals am I committed to accomplishing in the next six months? What do I have to be grateful for? Which of life's problems can I appreciate today?' Answering these questions while experiencing a physiological lift from running works in unison to get my mind and body in the right frame of reference for the day. Running isn't the only answer, as you can do this in the shower, during a lift, while you meditate, or in your favorite place of solitude. The best decisions, attitude, and actions come in a peak state of energy, positivity, and clarity."

--Devan Kline, CEO of [Burn Boot Camp](#), a national fitness franchise for women offering creative camps led by elite trainers

### 7. Spend time with your team.

"Spend the majority of the day interacting with team members, customers, suppliers, and partners. Be sure to recognize superior performance in your team members and, if necessary, correct poor performance. I believe all people want to be successful and contribute. It is important, especially for leaders, to give feedback to their organization and people. This habit ensures people know they are valued, allows me to effectively manage communication, and provides me time to think."

--Peter Boylan, president of [PJ's Coffee](#), a New Orleans-based coffeehouse

### 8. Journal.

"I follow Shawn Achor's Happiness Experiment or supplement with the Five Minute Journal where I do the following: 1. Meditate/pray; 2. Journal about a positive experience from the day before; 3. Journal about three things for which I am grateful; 4. Send out a positive note to someone in my social circle; and 5. Train/workout. I find that by following this morning ritual, I reshape my natural tendency to be task/execution oriented and find both value and joy in the positive moments of yesterday (part 2), of my life (part 3) and my relationships (part 4). This naturally leads me to be a more positive and grateful person."

--Michael Abramson, president of [D1 Training](#), a fitness franchise utilizing the five basic tenets of athletic-based training to help people of all ages achieve their sport and fitness goals

### 9. Don't sell past the close.

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stop talking. It demonstrates conviction that you believe in what you're proposing and allows the other party the chance to reflect on it and either make a decision or ask a question."

--Dan Tarantin, president and CEO Harris Research, parent company to home service franchise brands [Chem-Dry Carpet and Upholstery Cleaning](#) and [N-Hance Wood Refinishing](#)

### 10. Interact with insightful people instead of reading.

"I think my peers--fellow executives--in general need more people interaction and less reading. It is the best way to get innovative ideas for the future. I make both internal and external interaction a priority. And, instead of reading the latest business management books, I pursue ongoing learning opportunities from a variety of sources."

--Atul Bhatnagar, president and CEO of Cambium Networks, connecting people, places, and things

### 11. Have a positive attitude and look for the lesson in every life occurrence.

"It's the key to living a fulfilling life. It doesn't mean that things always play out the way you intended, but it almost invariably is the path that we are intended to be on at that moment in time and it usually presents itself in order to [help us] learn an important lesson."

--Alex Glasscock, co-founder and CEO of the health and wellness spa [The Ranch](#)

### 12. Play with your kid first thing in the morning.

"I am often awakened by my 3-year-old around 5 a.m. to play with Legos. It is the ideal way to start the day. It may sound like a cliché, but your child will give you the most honest feedback and insight into how you are perceived. They will ask you the important questions, and provide you a perspective to what really matters before you head out to your daily battle. And most importantly, you start your day in a meaningful way, spending time with your kid, which energizes you and motivates you for the rest of the day."

--Shai Zelering, managing director of [Brookfield Property Group](#)

### 13. Prioritize.

"Every morning, I decide what the one or two most important things are that I can do to drive the business forward. It's not a to-do list but it helps me make sure that as much of my effort during the day [as possible] is focused on things that will have the most impact."

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### 14. Reprioritize your time on a daily basis.

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"Life and work are unpredictable. Most map out their schedule and talk themselves into the predetermined pattern of what's important, then wonder why they can't get anything done. Don't be afraid to adapt."

--Jason Harrington, president of [Ontario Systems](#), a provider of receivables management

### 15. Prioritize personal organization.

"I prioritize my weeks down to the day, and make a point to cross items off of my to-do list upon finalizing. Running a startup means I wear a lot of hats, and without habitual organizing, vital information would fall through the cracks."

--Stan Garber, president at [Scout RFP](#), a provider of sourcing and procurement software

### 16. Practice abundance thinking.

"Starting each day with reminding myself that the world is an abundant place helps me maintain an attitude of gratitude and meet my personal, family, and enterprise needs while thinking about the needs of others in the process. Someone else's success doesn't mean failure for me or my team. Figuratively speaking, enough fruit falls to the ground every day to feed the world many times over."

--John Wechsler, founder of entrepreneurial mentorship initiative [Launch Indiana](#)

### 17. Bookend your day.

"I find the key to success is how you start and end your day. At the beginning of each day, I prioritize my time to focus on strategic initiatives like planning, goal setting, or writing. This ensures I complete major projects before jumping into the day-to-day meetings and conversations. At the end of each day, I clean out my inbox, review tasks, and measure against company performance metrics. This makes sure that I complete time sensitive tasks and plan ahead for the next day. These routines keep me focused on what's important and organized to get it done."

--Eric Christopher, CEO of [Zylo](#), a software as a service optimization platform

### 18. Start early to avoid interruptions.

"I like to get into the office at least an hour before anyone else. For our office, where most people come in around 8:00 a.m., that means getting in sometime between 6:30 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. With fewer people in my office and fewer calls coming in, being in the office early allows me time to focus on planning and other strategic initiatives without interruptions and helps set the course of my day."

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## 19. Talk to a customer.

"I try to talk with a customer every day. We are all in business to serve and support customers, and providing legendary customer service has become an Octiv hallmark. Consistently talking with customers provides us with a firsthand look to understand their needs, goals, and frustrations, as well as a way to keep customer service top of mind for our team. This practice also leads to better product outcomes—we get our best product direction from the people who use Octiv on a daily basis."

--David Kerr, CEO at [Octiv](#), a platform for building next-generation sales documents

## 20. Do a fasting cardio blast workout every morning, first thing.

"This workout can be 15 minutes or an hour. Regardless, it gets my heart rate going, speeds up my metabolism, and gives me plenty of energy and focus for the day. I find when I get this done first thing in the morning, I don't stress about when and how I am going to squeeze a workout into a busy, scheduled day. The same goes for meal planning—if my meals are made and ready to go, I don't need to waste time going to lunch or deliberating what to eat. Also, it is a reminder that body fuel equates to brain food."

--Lori Leib, creative director at [Bodyography Professional Cosmetics](#)

## 21. Avoid multitasking and practice mindfulness.

"I've learned that the only way to excel on all cylinders is to be 100 percent mindful with whatever I'm doing and to try to avoid multitasking. If I'm designing a new AUrate ring, this is all that I focus on and the rest of my to-dos have to take a backseat, however difficult that may be. When I'm with my baby, tomorrow's important meeting isn't in the back of mind. Instead, I focus on being really there with her, however difficult that may be. It's not always easy and it's an ongoing exercise, but it's the main habit that keeps me sane, productive, and centered."

--Sophie Kahn, co-founder of [AUrate](#), a fine jewelry brand

## 22. Read about things that are important to you and your business every day.

"If you keep your mind churning on how to approach current and future issues, then you will be successful. Finally, I try and surround myself with passionate and ambitious individuals. Hearing their stories, current issues, and goals allows me to focus more on my own goals and sometimes shine a brighter path towards accomplishing them."

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### 23. Write down your personal and professional goals for the day.

"I share the goals with my team, friends, and family so that I have support and maintain accountability to achieve them. I am very clear about what I want, and I like being able to create my own destiny. When you take full responsibility for everything that happens in your life, it's incredibly powerful. I firmly believe that with a clear plan, anyone can achieve what they want."

--Lori Torres, CEO of [Parcel Pending](#), a package management solution

### 24. Schedule time to schedule time.

"I find that thoughtful planning drives efficiency through the roof, but it doesn't happen opportunistically. Having times specifically set aside to analyze and adjust scheduling can be a huge performance boost."

--Billy Bosworth, CEO of [DataStax](#), a provider of data management for cloud applications

### 25. Talk about three positive things at the dinner table.

"A few years ago, I started to ask everyone at my family's dinner table to describe three positive things that had happened to them during the day. At first, my children were skeptical... 'Oh, dad, why should I have to do this?' But when we realized we needed to be on the lookout for good things during the course of the day, that created a big change in the way we were all experiencing our days. Instead of seeing our day in negatives, we began to see the world through positive eyeglasses."

--Evan Hackel, author of the book [Engaging Leadership](#) and CEO of [Tortal Training](#), which makes effective training easier by specializing in engagement

### 26. Start your day with a question.

"Ask, 'Where do I need to put my attention today to create as much as possible right away?'"

--Gary Douglas, founder of the personal development company [Access Consciousness](#)

### 27. Be present and look to the future.

"Getting lost in stress stops you from being present with what is going on around you. My daily habit of being present (I like to call it 'pragmatic mindfulness') begins before I get out of bed and doesn't stop until I go to sleep. Each morning, I take a moment to let go of everything from yesterday...everything except for the knowledge and information that I can carry forward. I get my head out of the past, hit the reset button, and start fresh with, 'Which project or business requires my attention today?' At any point in the day, if I find myself getting distracted by problems, I shift focus and put my attention onto

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"These questions keep me connected and present with the strategic vision and focused on expansive ideas for my business. Asking these generative questions allows me to be proactive rather than reactive in my mindset."

--[Laleh Hancock](#), CEO of [Belapemo](#), founder and president of [Global Wellness for All](#), and a certified facilitator for the personal development company [Access Consciousness](#)

### 28. Practice mind mapping.

"I learned this technique at the age of 19 and have been using it just about every working day since. Mind mapping is a great way to plan out your day, strategize a meeting, or simply outline your thoughts. Think of a mind map like a content management system. A mind map can turn a long list of monotonous information into a colorful, memorable, and highly organized diagram that works in line with your brain's natural way of doing things. The idea is to essentially connect all of your ideas into a web-like structure. The middle of the page will have the key ideas, such as meeting agenda, to-do list, tasks to complete. Off of that central idea you will then branch out ideas linking to it. Those ideas can then have more ideas linking off of them too. I have found this to be such an efficient way of mapping out what I need to get done and the order with which I need to do them. Mind maps give me clarity and focus and a detailed road map of what I need to get done."

--[Brent Williams](#), managing director of [Tomorrow's Youth International](#), which provides advanced life skill seminars for Australian teenagers and young adults

### 29. Write your to-dos the night before.

"Most people wake up and the first thing they do is open their email and instantly they're met with a wall of work. This will often take the best part of half a day before you then realize that you haven't achieved anything that you were supposed to. However, you can avoid all this by making a habit, before you go to bed, of writing a list of the five most important things to do the next day. That way, when you wake up, your decision has already been made and you can just get started on the most important thing for the day. If you want to take this habit even further, then try to not do any other work until you've finished one or two items from your to-do list from the night before. This way, you'll feel a huge sense of accomplishment, and before you hit that wall of noise that is your email inbox, you would have already made huge progress. And it will also give you a bigger reason to get those emails done quickly, so you can get back to completing the rest of the tasks before the end of the day."

--[Dale Beaumont](#), business educator, speaker, author, and founder of [BusinessBlueprint](#) and [BRiN](#), an artificially intelligent business adviser



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your to-do list. I organize a few easy-to-accomplish small tasks for myself each day, and that little boost I get from checking off these micro-tasks really helps me achieve my bigger goals in the long run."

--Beth Kuchar, partner and co-founder of [Enbroaden](#) and president of [Innovate Pasadena](#)

### 31. Make sure your team knows how much you care.

"We often ask our teams to go above and beyond. In fact, on a regular basis. It's easy to get so focused on the numbers that we forget the people who make it happen. It's important to praise team members openly for their achievements, even small ones. Highlight their successes not only in work, but in life. Get to know what motivates them. Learn about their families. And thank team members both publicly and in private for all they do to make your company better."

--Dan Tarantin, president and CEO of Harris Research, parent company to home service franchise brands [Chem-Dry Carpet and Upholstery Cleaning](#) and [N-Hance Wood Refinishing](#)

### 32. Read.

"While working as a trader at Goldman Sachs, I developed a strong understanding of my product and the market in general by reading every single day. In a competitive environment, it's a no-brainer to stay on top of things. Now that I'm running a high growth direct-to-consumer fine jewelry brand, I make sure I do not miss a day keeping up with industry news and trends, competitive intelligence, and the overall consumer marketplace. Reading is also a way to teach yourself new skills and think about the world in a more nuanced way."

--Bouchra Ezzahraoui, co-founder of [AUrate](#), a fine jewelry brand

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