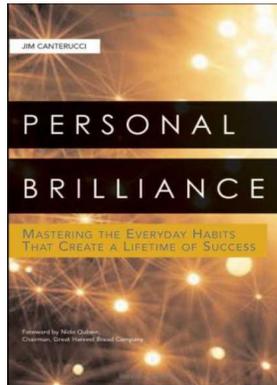


Personal Brilliance

Mastering the Everyday Habits that Create a Lifetime of Success



Author: Jim Canterucci
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■ The Big Idea

Do you seek greater success? In some way or another, we all do. You may crave achievement in your career or business, or wish for financial freedom. Perhaps you long for stronger personal and family relationships, or yearn for a deeper sense of spirituality.

There may be as many definitions of success as there are people who seek it, but there are certain core human attributes that assist us on our quest for happiness. Personal Brilliance is written to help you maximize your own Awareness, Curiosity, Focus and Initiative, those powerful traits we all have, but too often ignored or unused.

By constantly challenging your mind to explore new subjects and new perspectives, you intensify and strengthen the four traits every day. Just as physical exercise gives you more energy, solid habits of the mind fortify you mentally and emotionally, leaving you better equipped to achieve whatever you desire.

You've already got much of what it takes to succeed on your terms, whatever those terms may be.

Why You Need This Book

This book will help you build on your natural characteristics to become the person you were meant to be and achieve the goals you've always envisioned.

LIVE YOUR PICTURE OF SUCCESS

A great way to measure success is to identify the number of choices available to you at any given moment. If we look at two men, who are exactly the same in every observable way – with the same job, same financial status, and same family life – one may be more successful than the other.

In every situation, there is more than one option. Can you see all of the choices? Can you see the nuances of the choices? There are very few scenarios in which the answers are simply black or white. Success – and the opportunities that create it – lies in the gray area. And that's where your personal brilliance comes into play.

Personal brilliance will help you succeed no matter what success means to you.

HABITS MAKE IT EASY

A habit is something that you do so often and so regularly that it becomes automatic. This is a behavior that you can easily repeat. When you work with people, you try to determine their habits because most of our behaviors are based on our habits.

Our habits are directly related to our comfort and well-being. The process of adapting to our environment is what creates a habit. With habits we don't have to constantly experiment or deal with unknown risks.

Our habits help define us. The way we adapt to our environment and how we typically behave say a lot about who we are as human beings.

Habits are extremely difficult to change because they are tied to our identities. Notice that we did not say breaking a habit. Let us avoid that terminology because a habit is dependent on repetition. Therefore, if we replace the activity that is the former habit – such as lighting a cigarette after dinner – with some other activity – such as taking a walk or chewing a stick of gum – the repetition ceases and the coding of the smoking habit is reduced dramatically.

The key to succeeding in replacing old habits with new ones is ensuring that the new behaviors are more appealing, effective, and beneficial than their predecessors.

In effect, replacing less effective habits with more effective ones and creating new habits that foster greater success and well-being are the most expedient ways to increase and expand your personal brilliance.

THE POWER OF FOUR

There are four catalysts to enhance your personal brilliance that will be the cornerstones for this journey. They are Awareness, Curiosity, Focus and Initiative. All four catalysts are innate abilities, possessed by each of us.

AWARENESS

Your gift of awareness is an integral part of personal brilliance. When you use your awareness optimally, you are present, mindful, alert and grounded. You're positioned to see the highest number of options and you're able to grasp the cause and effect relationships that are creating your current opportunity or dilemma.

Becoming more aware means becoming conscious of more facts, objects, opinions, sensations, perceptions, feelings and thoughts. We strive to see more pieces of any given puzzle. Being aware of more is the first step in beginning to see connections between ideas. Seeing the bigger picture and making more connections leads to a brilliant result.

Awareness is the equivalent of being able to open your eyes to begin the process of seeing.

CURIOSITY

Curiosity is a vital catalyst of personal brilliance. Actively exploring the environment, asking questions, investigating possibilities, and possessing a sense of wonder are all part of being curious. In effect, curiosity is the cure for boredom!

Curiosity requires freedom – freedom from the barriers that inhibit discovery. Questions are key. Once you open up to the nuances of life, it's easy to find things that fascinate you and to begin wondering “why?” and “how?”

Curiosity works together seamlessly with awareness, focus and initiative. While the gift of awareness helps you assess how things are, curiosity helps you clarify problems, ideas and situations, and it encourages you to explore how they could be different.

- When you're curious about something, your mind shifts into an investigative mode of thinking, which amplifies your awareness.
- Following the path of a question expands your focus because each bit of information that you gather gives a greater perspective.
- Curiosity can get you going! There's nothing like a burning question to trigger your initiative.

Another advantage of being curious is that your brain is designed to reward you for exploring fresh ideas and trying new activities. When you experience novelty, your brain produces more dopamine – an important brain chemical that lifts your mood and increases your sense of well-being.

When you develop heightened curiosity, you improve the quality of your life by asking quality questions and being receptive to trying on new ideas. Heighten your curiosity by training the curiosity muscles regularly.

The following list is a recap of the techniques you can use to heighten your curiosity.

- Try new things. Even if they don't work out, you'll learn lessons to apply elsewhere.
- Seek out experts for their views.
- Do your own research.
- Seek alternative solutions, even when all is well. This gives you fallback positions.
- Routinely seek opinions from people who have no experience with the subject.
- Don't compartmentalize your life. This creates artificial barriers to brilliant solutions.
- When you have a problem, work like a detective. Ask questions. Look at everything. Follow every lead.
- Notice and eliminate assumptions. They're usually wrong.
- Fire your inner critic. Give ideas time to percolate before assessing them.
- "Browse" everywhere.
- Explore new places and types of information.
- Take different routes in your daily routine.

- Ask questions of those you encounter: Find out what they do and what else they do.

FOCUS

Expanding your focus is one of the most helpful aspects of developing personal brilliance. When we talk about focus, we are not referring to a laser beam type of perspective, where you block out everything but the opportunity or problem at hand.

Instead, when we say focus, we are referring to a 360-degree view. This type of focus is more like a broad spotlight that expands in a circle around an issue rather than a pinpointed laser. Focusing like a spotlight allows us to be aware of all that is within this wide circle of light. When you expand your focus, you avoid becoming myopic and create a bigger sphere in which to operate.

Focus is related to awareness in that focus is about the present. It's about now. In effect, every step of the process should be thought of as having a beginning, middle and end in itself, with complete attention given to each activity in the process until that activity is completed.

Focus is completely based in the present – when what you are doing is the same as what you are thinking. When you are in a focused state there is a feeling of mental smoothness. With the right focus, you don't become overly analytical.

Expanding your focus is one of the most powerful things you can do to enjoy greater success in all areas of life. By expanding your focus, you exponentially increase your possibilities, because a 360-degree vision takes in all of the available options and shows you how information can be used separately or in tandem for the most successful results.

While breaking through focus barriers involves strengthening your weak links, expanding your focus, is about refining and enlarging your current abilities. The

power of expanding your focus will enable you to take quantum leaps toward your definition of success.

INITIATIVE

Without harnessing the power of initiative, the wheel of innovation comes to a screeching halt. While awareness, curiosity, and focus are essential elements to personal brilliance, without the motivation to move forward, very little happens.

We all have a desire to make a difference, but for a variety of reasons, when it comes to taking initiative many people face a variety of challenges.

Fortunately, there are many things you can do to enhance your power of initiative, and the payoffs are huge.

The power of initiative is a critical catalyst for personal brilliance. You need it to bring your dreams to life, but it's also necessary in order to start the innovation process. Without the motivation to amplify your awareness, explore your curiosities, or expand your focus, you probably won't even make it to the drawing board, let alone come up with a new idea or solution.

There are four primary behaviors needed to successfully take initiative:

1. Identifying meaningful internal and external motivators
2. Aligning goals with personal and professional values
3. Reducing or allaying fears associated with your goals
4. Taking the first action step, followed by as many steps as it takes to reach the goal

People who accomplish what they set out to do keep their word to themselves and to others. Make a firm commitment to yourself that you will keep your promises, no matter what. The only permissible exception if your being truly too sick to get out of bed.

Without living by such a strict standard, our lives can become a series of justifications and rationalizations. Whether we realize it at the time or not, every time we break a commitment, our belief in ourselves goes down a notch. To take initiative, we must believe in ourselves and be willing to follow through with our intentions.

You can have all the awareness, curiosity, and focus in the world, but without the catalyst of initiative, innovation simply won't happen.

MAKING BRILLIANT, EVERYDAY CHOICES

It takes adults between twenty-one and twenty-eight days of practice to break a habit or create a new one. That means you're already well on your way to making awareness, curiosity, focus, and initiative part of your daily life.

Now that you have harness the power of each of these catalysts, the next step is to start putting them all together. The combined power of these four strengths spins the wheel of your personal brilliance and keeps it rolling.

One of the best ways to reinforce a habit is to keep it going for at least 100 days. At that point, it becomes second nature. To give yourself the incentive to keep going, take a few minutes to assess the progress that you have already made.

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