

## Vitamins, Oprah, and the Importance of Taking Action Right Away

By *Harrison Barnes*

For some reason, I have started getting calls from India around 11:00 each morning from a company trying to sell me mail-order drugs. They always lead off with telling me that they have Viagra, Cialis, and related stuff. I have never ordered drugs from India—and have not had the pleasure of trying Viagra or Cialis—but have started to enjoy the phone calls.

A few days ago, I asked the caller if they could send me some morphine.

“Yes, we can. Would you like it in 15, 20, 30, 60, 100, 120, or 200 mg tablets?” the caller asked.

I was amazed. I never knew it was so easy to get hard drugs like this. I did not order the morphine; however, each day a call comes through—like clockwork—offering me prescription drugs. Each day it is a different caller.

I have no idea how I got on a Viagra-oriented phone spam list. Nevertheless, I have my suspicions. I am pretty confident that I got on this list because of a recent order I placed for \$200 in vitamins from an American company. I read in a health book that green tea extract, garlic, and alpha-lipoic acid are good for your health and ordered a six months' supply. Within a week the calls from India offering me drugs started coming.

The problem with the vitamins I ordered is that I simply cannot remember to take the vitamins. Thus, the vitamins sit in my kitchen cupboard—with scores of other vitamins ordered after reading similar health books in past years—just wasting away. About five years ago, I read some book called something like the *Kimchee Miracle* about fermented Korean cabbage, and I purchased numerous plastic tubs of the stuff. For a few days, I ate this Kimchee; however, eventually I could no longer stand the taste. Approximately one year later, the fermentation of the cabbage reached a breaking point and one of the tubs exploded like a bomb in our refrigerator. The smell was still there two years later.

I am not sure, really, how many books I purchase each year. I probably purchase on average at least three books per week—sometimes more. I go to bookstores. I order them online. More recently, I have started doing digital downloads of these books. (Not too long ago I purchased a e-book over the Internet while flying between Los Angeles and New York.) In my office, there are thousands of books that have been partially to fully read and digested. It has gotten so bad that I have started storing many of my books in storage sheds I purchased at Costco and put up around my property at home.

With only a few notable exceptions, every single one of the books I have purchased in the past several years deals with business, management, marketing, exercise, yoga, religion, diet, motivation, time management, self-improvement, and similar topics. There is not a lot of fiction among the books I have purchased—in fact, I only read a few fiction books per year.

I have always been interested in improving myself and have been drawn to books like this since I was in elementary school. Who knows why I am so interested in this stuff—it does not matter, I suppose. What does matter is what I have done with this information.

Most business, diet, exercise, and self-improvement books recommend that you make some sort of radical change in your life. They will start out talking about how following a given program results in personal, business, and other improvements. A **course of action** will be recommended and the person will be encouraged to follow this course of action religiously.

The problem is very few people ever follow the course of action. I certainly have not consistently followed the recommendations of most of the books I have read. Most people I know certainly have not followed the recommendations of most of the books they have read.

One of the most popular television shows in the history of television is *Oprah*. I have seen this show probably ten times in my life—while sitting in airport lounges, visiting elderly relatives in nursing homes, and the like. While I certainly do not remember the majority of episodes I have watched, what I have noticed is that several of the episodes dealt with how to lose weight. Oprah has also written a book about how to lose weight, for which she received one of the highest advance fees in publishing history.

Despite all of the interest and attention on losing weight, something I cannot help but notice is that Oprah has never managed to keep her own weight down for a significant length of time. Since Oprah has set herself up as an authority on weight loss, you need to wonder how closely she is able to follow the advice she listens to and the advice she gives.

This brings me to my own predicament. I have read so many books and taken in so much information that you might ask: *Why haven't I followed all the advice of everything I have read?*

For example, I might read a book about something relevant to working in a business. I'd read the stuff and say to myself: “This person's brilliant. What a great idea. I need to do this!”

What ends up happening, though, is that I generally fail to follow through. A few weeks later, the book is filed into a bookshelf and nothing ends up happening. Or, I tell myself I am going to start doing something new, and then some event comes up and interferes—so it never happens. The book is forgotten and my life stays the way it is.

Come to think of it, I spend more time reading about improving than I spend improving.

At the same time, there are certain rituals that I have developed that I would not have done, were it not for my reading and studying.

- I incorporate spirituality into my life.

- I exercise at least twice per day.
- I meditate and do self-hypnosis often.
- I avoid carbohydrates the best I can.
- I plan each day.
- I practice gratitude each day.
- I plan each week.
- I spend the majority of my time doing the things I am best at.
- I sleep a certain number of hours per night.
- I make sure I incorporate greens into my diet each day.
- I eat protein within fifteen minutes of getting up.
- I write down my goals.
- I have dinner with my family each night.
- I make sure that various business routines repeat themselves each week.

Each of these “rituals” that I follow are what I personally have distilled to be the “best practices” for my life and are the result of reading and studying literally thousands of books. It does not sound like much, but having these routines has made an incredible difference in the quality of my life and the lives of the people I serve and am close to.

The problem with my routines, though—and the knowledge I have absorbed—is that I am not really doing everything I could. When I look around my library and the things I have learned, I know there is far, far more I could be doing to have a better life. I could incorporate more routine into my life. I could incorporate more difficult routines into my life. I could be more focused.

The reason I have not advanced farther in my life is that I have linked more pain to doing the things I need to improve than I have linked to not doing these things. It is much more fun and interesting to sit around and dream and think about how we are going to improve, than it is to actually go out and make major improvements in our lives.

It is like this for a great many of us. We would rather think and dream than act.

Imagine what your life would be like if you acted instead of dreaming about what you were going to do.

The key to making the most of your **career** and life is making sure you act on what you are learning. Anyone can talk about, read about, or dream about doing something. The key is being able to take action and do it.

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