

Staying Motivated While Building Your Business

Article featured in RE/MAX mid-states newsletter, targeted agent and brokers. This piece featured Old Republic's branding.

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You're a self-starter, a big thinker, and you're willing to follow your dreams—otherwise, you never would have chosen a career in real estate. Congratulations! Making that leap into the unknown is the hardest part of the equation. The *second* biggest challenge is staying motivated until you see the fruits of your labor.

Motivation—What *Exactly* Is It?

Self-help authors and talk show hosts constantly throw around the term, but behavioral theorists have spent a good deal of time studying motivation. We could go into great detail about the reaction that occurs in your brain when you strive to close that big deal, and we could also explore the biochemical origin of that blissful feeling that arises when you finally get what you want—but there's no need to get too technical. We'll simply mention that dopamine and other neurotransmitters are associated with the reward system of the brain, which allows you to experience the joy that comes from working hard and achieving your goals. Many illicit drugs act on the same neural pathways, but hard work is a natural and healthy way to experience that blissful high. Motivation is simply the driver that pushes you in the right direction.

Understanding the Value of Delayed Gratification

In 1972, a Stanford University psychologist conducted an experiment in which he took a group of pre-school-aged children and offered them each a single marshmallow, telling them that if they could resist eating the marshmallow for several minutes, he would give them a second marshmallow. Some kids ate the marshmallow right away; others held out for the greater reward. By following the test subjects over the years, he found a direct correlation between each subject's future success and their ability to delay gratification as children. In other words, the longer the children could resist eating that first marshmallow, the better they did in school... and in life!

Now, don't let it get you down if you were the kid who wouldn't have lasted two seconds alone with a tasty treat, but take heed of those little masters of self-control who managed to hold back. They reported various techniques to trick their brains into resisting the marshmallow. They reported directing their attention away from the tempting aspects of the marshmallow, focusing on other things in the room.

Today's world has a million "marshmallows" floating around to tempt the self-employed—Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, idle texting and chitchat—all threatening to steal your time and thwart your

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productivity. Learn to resist those temptations during your workday, keeping your highest priorities at the forefront of your mind.

Forging Ahead

You've probably heard that Thomas Edison failed 10,000 times before he succeeded in perfecting the light bulb, and looking back on his life's work he said, "The most certain way to succeed is to always try just one more time." Watching several deals fall apart in a row can do a number on your self-esteem and temporarily sap your motivation, but take a step back and remember the big picture. Understand that success happens over time, not overnight. Know that you will have lucky streaks and not-so-lucky streaks, but if you stay focused on the building blocks—if you meet enough prospects, shake enough hands, and show enough homes—you *will* succeed in real estate. To quote Edison once again, "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." Eventually, of course, he made it happen—and so can you!

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