PRODUCTIVITY & FOCUS

The ONE Thing

by Gary Keller and Jay Papasan

Extraordinary results come from asking one question and doing the one thing that matters most.

BEST POINTS FROM THE BOOK

01 **Extraordinary results come from going small: narrowing your focus to the one thing that matters most.**

Doing fewer things for more effect beats doing more things with less. Subtract until only the essential remains.

02 **Success is a domino run. Line up the right first domino and it can topple one 50% bigger - then another, and another.**

Success is sequential, not simultaneous. One right action, done now, builds geometric momentum over time.

03 **Replace your to-do list with a success list, then take Pareto to the extreme.**

A minority of your efforts produces the majority of your results. Keep cutting the 20% down until one vital thing is left standing.

04 **Multitasking is a lie. You cannot focus on two things at once - you only switch between them, and you pay for every switch.**

Task-switching wastes time, adds errors, and leaves attention residue behind. Do one thing until it is done.

05 **You do not need more discipline. You need one habit, held long enough for discipline to become unnecessary.**

Success is a short sprint of discipline until the habit kicks in - about 66 days on average. Build one powerful habit at a time.

06 **Willpower is not on will-call. It runs like a battery that drains all day long.**

Spend it on your ONE Thing first, early, before decisions, distractions, and temptations use it up.

07 **A balanced life is a lie - counterbalance instead.**

At work, go extreme on your priority and let lesser things wait longer. In your personal life, counterbalance quickly so nothing important stays neglected.

08 **Big is not bad. Small thinking is what caps your results.**

What you think drives what you do. Ask bigger questions and aim beyond your goal - fearing big guarantees average.

09 **Live by the Focusing Question: What is the ONE Thing I can do such that by doing it everything else will be easier or unnecessary?**

Ask it for the big picture and for right now, every day, until asking becomes a habit. The answer is your lead domino.

10 **Set your goals to the now: someday, five years, one year, this month, this week, today, right now.**

Drilling down connects this moment to your biggest goal, so the small thing you do today is provably on track.

11 **Time-block your ONE Thing - up to four hours a day - and protect the block like your most important meeting.**

Block your time off first, then your ONE Thing, then planning time. If it gets erased from your calendar, your results get erased with it.

12 **Guard your focus from the Four Thieves: the inability to say no, fear of chaos, poor health habits, and an environment that does not support you.**

One yes must be defended by a thousand nos. Accept the mess, protect your energy, and surround yourself with people who raise your standards.

THE BOOK, IN SHORT

The big idea: extraordinary results are directly determined by how narrow you can make your focus. After his company's success stalled, Keller turned it around by doing the opposite of working more - he went small, ignoring everything he could do to find the one thing he should do, and results compounded from there.

First, the book dismantles six lies between you and success: everything matters equally (replace the to-do list with a short success list built on extreme Pareto), multitasking (really just costly task-switching), a disciplined life (you only need discipline until the right habit forms, about 66 days), willpower always on will-call (it drains like a battery, so spend it early), a balanced life (impossible - counterbalance instead), and big is bad (small thinking, not big goals, is the real ceiling).

The truth is one tool: the Focusing Question - What is the ONE Thing I can do such that by doing it everything else will be easier or unnecessary? Keller turns it into a daily success habit, used at two levels: the big-picture question that finds your direction, and the small-focus question that finds your next action. Great answers, he argues, live outside your comfort zone - in the realm of possibility, not the merely doable.

Extraordinary results come when purpose, priority, and productivity line up. Purpose decides where you are going; priority, set by Goal Setting to the Now, drills a someday goal down to what you can do right now; productivity means time-blocking that ONE Thing and honoring three commitments - follow the path of mastery, move from an entrepreneurial approach to a purposeful one, and live the accountability cycle. Guard it all against the Four Thieves, and the payoff the book promises is a life lived with no regrets.

DO THIS WEEK

This week, do Goal Setting to the Now on paper: write your someday goal, then the ONE Thing for five years, one year, this month, this week, and today that keeps you on track. Each morning, time-block that day's ONE Thing before email or phone - start with one hour and build toward four - and let nothing else in until it is done.

By Gary Keller and Jay Papasan, first published 2013. Read it if your days are full but your results feel stuck on average.