

# ST APPOINTMENTS

MAKING OPPORTUNITIES KNOCK ON YOUR DOOR

## The Mantra of Consistent Effort

By NUWAN SAMARAPATHI

We all strive for improvements. We want improvements for ourselves, our families, communities, country and basically for the whole world. We are among the first to celebrate when things go right but often times we are also the first to give up when things that we are responsible for (for example, our health, our financial status, our relationships, etc) start to go sour or are not moving up the right path in the expected pace.

What you often fail to notice is that positive CHANGE is a product of CONSISTENT EFFORT! Let's talk about few main areas of life where you can apply this principle of consistent improvements.

### Physical Health

Your body is your vehicle on this earth. I know that most of you believe that you are much more



than your body. However, if the carrier of yourself, your body, is not kept alive and maintained well, you are sure to miss out on great possible adventures of your life! Whether you are a professional, an academic, or a tradesman, you have to be physically healthy to maintain your lifestyle, because without your health you do not have a life, let alone a lifestyle!

Now the biggest mistake we make is trying and wishing for change overnight. For instance, you suddenly get motivated to lose weight - so you go to a gym the very next day - run thirty minutes on the treadmill - spend twenty minutes doing weights - and another fifteen minutes on cycling! With your new found motivation you continue this regime for a week and then weigh yourself - and down goes your motivation! You become irritated at not seeing the results as quickly as you wanted!

The magic word to achieve the results you want is "consistency"! Whether you are eating healthy, drinking enough water throughout the day, meditating or building your body - in order to see results you are to keep at it consistently over a period of time!

### Career & Financial Strength

What applies to your physical health applies to your career and financial strength as well.

When it comes to career and finances "you either move forward or go backward. There is no standing still!" You cannot say "I am maintaining my income", because inflation is consistently reducing the value of your income. To avoid stagnation of your skills, personal growth and the income - you have to consistently move forward!

Ask yourself couple of tough but necessary questions: Am I someone who is comfortably floating in my job for the last 5-10 years? Does my job provide me with challenges and opportunities to expand myself intellectually and financially?

If you have all positive answers, by all means continue on the path you are on. However, if the answers are negative - maybe it is time to look for new goals and directions and teach yourself habits and new behaviors to work on consistently.

I recommend you to read the book "Who Moved My Cheese?" by Spencer Johnson. This bestselling highly effective book talks about the importance of consistently looking for more opportunities rather than waiting till you are forced to change due to elements beyond your control.

So, what are some of the consistent habits you can develop to improve your career and financial strength:

If you want to change the direction of your career - consistently look for better opportunities. Update your resume every few months, look out of available job opportunities, send and share your resume out - and most of all, do all this over a

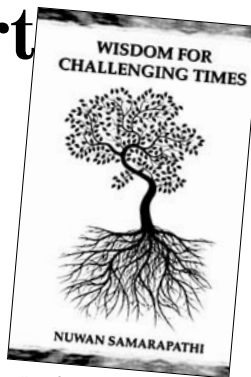
period of time, with the same enthusiasm, vigor and positive outlook

If you want to improve the value and quality of your current position - strive to perform at a higher standard, not on and off, but consistently. Demonstrate consistent positive habits, such as punctuality, commitment to higher standards and quality of work, and professionalism. Also, remember to consistently put your hand up for challenges and opportunities - this will sure to take your career forward.

### Relationships

Relationships, whether they are personal or professional, is another area of our life that needs constant and consistent nurturing and care. What are you doing consistently to improve the relationships that are important to you? While it is good to celebrate your relationships at special occasions (giving presents to your parents for the New Year or for Christmas, or appreciating your partner on Valentines Day or taking time and effort to get to know your manager closer to your appraisal day, etc), what matters most and what is going to create lasting positive change is what you do consistently over a significant period of time!

So, whether it is your physical health, career and financial strength, relationships or any other important area of your life - remember to apply the mantra of consistency if you wish to see certain and lasting change!



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### Staying....

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**2. Listen**  
It comes as no surprise that listening is critical to thinking on your feet. Why do you need to listen? To make sure you fully understand the question or request before you reply. If you answer too soon, you risk going into a line of thinking that is unnecessary or inappropriate. To help you with your listening remember to:

- Look directly at the questioner
- Observe body language as well as what is being spoken
- Try to interpret what is being suggested by the question or request.

**3. Have the Question Repeated**  
If you're feeling particularly under pressure, ask for the question to be repeated. This gives you a bit more time to think about your response. At first glance people think this will only make them look unsure. It doesn't. It makes you look concerned that you give an appropriate response. It also gives the questioner an opportunity to rephrase and ask a question that is more on point. Remember, the questioner may well have just "thought on his or her feet" to ask the question, so answer the question a second chance, the question may well be better articulated and clearer to all.

By asking to have the question repeated you also get another opportunity to assess the intentions of the questioner. If it is more specific or better worded, chances are the person really wants to learn more. If the repeated question is more aggressive than the first one, then you know the person is more interested in making you uncomfortable than anything else. When that's the case, the next tip comes in very handy.

**4. Use Stall Tactics**  
Sometimes you need more time to get your thoughts straight and calm yourself down enough to make a clear reply. The last thing you want to do is blurt out the first thing that comes to your mind. Often this is a defensive comment that only makes you look insecure and anxious rather than confident and composed.

Repeat the question yourself. This gives you time to think and you clarify exactly what is being asked. It also allows you to rephrase if necessary and put a positive spin on the request. "How have I considered the impact on customers in order to make sure they have a continued positive experience during the expansion?"

Narrow the focus. Here, you ask a question of your own to not only clarify, but to bring the question down to a manageable scope. "You're interest-

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ed in hearing how I've considered customer impacts. What impacts are you most interested in: product availability or in-store service?"

Ask for clarification. Again, this will force the questioner to be more specific and hopefully get more to a specific point. "When you say you want to know how I've analyzed customer impacts, do you mean you want a detailed analysis or a list of the tools and methods I used?"

Ask for a definition. Jargon and specific terminology may present a problem for you. Ask to have words and ideas clarified to ensure you are talking about the same thing.

**5. Use Silence to Your Advantage**  
We are conditioned to believe that silence is uncomfortable. However, if you use it sparingly, it communicates that you are in control of your thoughts and confident in your ability to answer expertly. When you rush to answer you also typically rush your words. Pausing to collect your thoughts tells your brain to slow everything down.

**6. Stick to One Point and One Supporting Piece of Information**  
There's a high risk that, under pressure, you'll answer a question with either too much or too little information. If you give too short an answer, you risk letting the conversation slip into interrogation mode. (You'll get another question, and the questioner will be firmly in control of the dialogue unfolds).

When your reply is too long, you risk losing the people's interest, coming across as boring, or giving away things that are better left unsaid. Remember, you aren't being asked to give a speech on the subject. The questioner wants to know something. Respect that and give them an answer, with just enough supporting information.

This technique gives you focus. Rather than trying to tie together all the ideas that are running through your head, when you pick one main point and one supporting fact, you allow yourself to answer accurately and assuredly.

**Tip:** If you don't know the answer, say so. There is no point trying to make something up. You will end up looking foolish and this will lower your confidence when you need to know on your feet in the future. There is (usually) nothing wrong with not knowing something. Simply make sure you follow up as soon as possible afterwards with a researched answer.

**7. Prepare some "what ifs"**  
With a bit of forethought, it's often possible to predict the types of questions you might be asked, so you can prepare and rehearse some answers to questions that might cover your way. Let's say you are presenting the monthly sales figures to your management team. The chances are your report will cover most of the obvious questions that the management team might have, but what other questions might you predict? What's different about this month? What new questions might be asked? How would you respond? What additional information might you need to have to hand to support more detailed questions?

In particular, spend some time brainstorming questions that people might ask, and preparing and rehearsing good answers to them.

**8. Practice Clear Delivery**  
How you say something is almost as important as what you say. If you mumble or use "umm" or "ah" every second, you need to work on what you are saying plummets. Whenever you are speaking with people, make a point to practice these key oration skills:

- Speak in a strong voice. (Don't confuse strong with loud!)
- Use pauses strategically to emphasize a point or slow yourself down
- Vary your tone and pay attention to how your message will be perceived given the situation you use
- Use eye contact appropriately
- Pay attention to your grammar
- Use the level of formality that is appropriate to the situation.

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