

Reaching Your Peak Potential

by Mike Hawkins
mike@alpinelink.com



Ever thought about your *peak potential*? In other words, how much impact you can have, money you can make, or capable you can become? It could be in terms of leading an organization, raising great children, winning an award, creating a product, or making the world a better place.

People with ambition think about their potential. They strive to achieve. They have ideas, set goals, and pursue plans which move them forward. They seek to improve in areas such as their finances, family, fitness, education, friends, or faith. But is there ever a time when a person should say

“I’m successful enough,” “I’ve achieved enough,” or “I’m good enough”? Perhaps, but if so, is that moment a person’s peak potential?

Achievements, whether based on the time it takes to run a mile, a person’s title, or an amount of money, do not define a person’s capabilities or limits. People can always improve if they choose to put in the effort required. People can do more, learn more, read more, know more, care more, and produce more. American football’s Peyton Manning didn’t perform his best or set his many records until he was released from his team of 14 years and joined the Denver Broncos. The same goes for organizations. In 2016 the Chicago Cubs won the World Series, a feat they had not reached since 1908. Performance at any level, high or low, doesn’t equal potential.

The best definition of peak potential is doing the most you can with what you have. Giving every day your best within realistic expectations. Continually learning, growing, and performing. Learning from your mistakes, utilizing your assets, increasing your knowledge, and advancing your skills from your current level. For some, this is accomplishing the seemingly impossible. For the majority, however, reaching peak potential isn’t working to the point of exhaustion or gaining notoriety for some public achievement. It is being the best they can be given their circumstances. It is being the best gardener, doctor, parent, sales person, or leader they can be.

One principle is certain: being your best is not being complacent. It is not doing what you have always done. Or worse, giving up and blaming or complaining about your circumstances rather than doing something about them. Complacency, especially in a world of continual change and advancement, does not work very long and certainly doesn’t contribute to reaching peak potential. Like it or not, you have to continually learn and improve. You either grow to stay ahead or grow to keep up. You either lead and improve on your terms or you follow and improve on someone else’s.

What does it take to reach your peak potential? Here are ten proven principles to follow:



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1. **Rise above your fears and prior mistakes.** Look forward. Be courageous and confident. Believe in yourself. Don't be defined by what you've done or not done in the past.
2. **Define your own standards.** Don't be constrained by what others have said or done. Don't limit your thinking to what others have achieved. There is always a better method or new benchmark to set.
3. **Do what you believe in and have passion for.** Follow your curiosity. Add to and work on that which you have ability in. The improvements might be smaller as you mature, but no less important.
4. **Set goals within a vision.** Define your desired future. Know the outcomes you expect to achieve. Have a mental picture of where you are going and focus your attention on getting there.
5. **Pursue excellence in whatever you do.** Accept that you will not be perfect, but don't accept mediocrity. If something is worth your investment, it is worth doing with excellence.
6. **Set a realistic expectation of what you can do on a daily basis and do it.** Give each day your best. Be disciplined and follow good habits. Make progress every day and you will achieve your goals.
7. **Include learning and improving in your daily activities.** Don't merely "do". If all you do is do, you will fall behind as the world's body of knowledge and capabilities continually grow.
8. **Leverage your resources.** Seek wise counsel. Enlist the help of others. Associate with people who support you, yet also challenge you. Employ the best tools, techniques, and practices available.
9. **Maintain your energy.** Keep your mind and body in shape. Follow good nutrition and fitness guidelines. Get sufficient rest. Give yourself downtime to recharge your batteries.
10. **Persist.** Make adjustments as needed, but don't give up. Don't let setbacks derail you. Learn from them and move on. The road to being your best isn't easy. Overcoming obstacles are the milestones to arriving at your desired outcome.

Article written by Mike Hawkins, award-winning author of *Activating Your Ambition: A Guide to Coaching the Best Out of Yourself and Others* (www.ActivatingYourAmbition.com), author of the *SCOPE of Leadership* six-book series on coaching leaders to lead as coaches (www.ScopeOfLeadership.com), and president of Alpine Link Corp (www.AlpineLink.com), a boutique consulting firm specializing in leadership development and sales performance improvement.

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