

# Twelve Habits to Make the New Year a Success

by Mike Hawkins

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A rhetorical question would be asking if you want to be part of the problem or solution in the New Year. Just like it would be to ask if you want to be successful or not. Yet as obvious as those answers are, half of the population will perform below average. Many will create more problems than will solve them. While few people plan to be worse off, many people will do little to improve their relationships, health, skills, net worth, or work performance.

Some will point out that circumstances out of their control will impact their performance in the New Year. This is true for everyone. Most will deal with unfortunate circumstances of some kind. Perhaps this is the single biggest obstacle to success for many people. It causes people to give their difficult circumstances much of their attention leading to a disheartening and spirit of defeat. Then they focus on their shortcomings and what they can't do instead of what they can.

We all need compassion and support in the midst of adversity. When life deals out a bad hand, we can't just ignore it. But do circumstances have to determine our outcomes? Should people

give most of their energy to that which is out of their control? Most successful people had to overcome something. Virtually every top athlete, successful business person, famous musician, proud parent, or other success story is rooted in an adversity that had to be overcome.

Those who aspire to make the New Year a great one will focus on the choices, attitudes, and behaviors within their control. Successful people know that despite circumstances, the activities in which they invest time will largely determine how well they finish the year compared to how they start it. Some will even let their difficulties inspire and drive them to be better than before. Some low performing individuals will become star performers. Some work teams will rise above the mediocrity that has defined them in years past. Some families will overcome years of conflict to become examples of harmony.

What will you do in the New Year to make it the best it can be? In what will you invest your time and money? What are the important choices and behaviors you plan to implement? Listed below are twelve to get you thinking. Consider what will be most impactful for you and those in your circle of influence. Adopt one at a time until they become habit, such as one a week or a month. Intentionally apply each until they become part of who you are and what you do. All are within your control and none are inherently difficult. People just make them that way.

1. **Care for family** – Nothing matters at work if/when life at home is a mess. Make your spouse, kids, and family your top priority. You only get one chance to raise your children. Live a balanced life.
2. **Accept yourself** – Preserve your self-esteem by accepting your uniqueness. Accept your weaknesses and past mistakes. No one is perfect. Don't let your self-confidence depend on other's validation.



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3. **Maintain fitness** – Exercise and eat properly to sustain your health, energy, and mental fitness. Your physical fitness impacts your memory, thinking, decision making, and overall performance.
4. **Uphold honorable motives** – Your reputation is your external identity that defines you. It determines your trustworthiness which largely depends on your character. Establish and follow honorable core values. Maintain your integrity.
5. **Resist complacency** – Challenge the status quo. Solicit new ideas and opinions. Experiment with emerging technologies and methods. Strive to keep learning and make continual improvements.
6. **Focus** – Set fewer goals and establish a daily discipline that makes progress toward them. Pursue them exclusively until achieved. Restrict distractions during the time you allocate to your top priorities.
7. **Give first** – Look for opportunities to give and help others. Strengthen those around you. It not only makes work and life more meaningful, it will be returned to you with interest.
8. **Leverage others** – Asking for help is a sign of wisdom, not weakness. Build your network. Seek wise counsel. Increase your scale by leveraging others and their resources.
9. **Show empathy** – Great communicators are listeners. Relate to people and their circumstances. Make people feel heard and understood. Express concern for their wellbeing and feelings.
10. **Start with the “why”** – Properly frame problems and opportunities before engaging them. Involve others and gain their buy in for the desired outcome before giving attention to the “what” and “how”.
11. **Ask, don’t tell** – Pull people instead of push them. Shape people’s thinking rather than command and control them. Telling isn’t leading. Ask questions that stimulate meaningful dialog. You will both learn.
12. **Be joyful** – Look for what is working as much as what isn’t. Compliment people. Show gratitude for others’ attitudes, skills, and efforts—not just the results. Find peace and happiness in what you do.

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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](http://www.ActivatingYourAmbition.com)), author of the *SCOPE of Leadership* six-book series on coaching leaders to lead as coaches ([www.ScopeOfLeadership.com](http://www.ScopeOfLeadership.com)), and president of Alpine Link Corp ([www.AlpineLink.com](http://www.AlpineLink.com)), a boutique consulting firm specializing in leadership development and sales performance improvement.

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