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The compound effect of small wins

As we progress into the new year, this period offers us a unique opportunity to celebrate our wins and learn from the failures we may have encountered. It is a time to pause, reflect, and identify the small actions that contributed to our successes, so that we can intentionally compound them into even greater victories in the future. In his book, *Atomic Habits*, James Clear provides a framework to achieve this. He advocates for the one percent rule, which states that "if you get one percent, better each day for a year, you will end the year 37 times better." This simple concept underscores the power of small, consistent improvements over time.

The work is clear: our task is to identify our one percent improvements and build systems that embed them into our daily routines. I believe this can be achieved through three interconnected steps: reflection, refinement, and reinforcement.

The first step is reflection—examining what brought us our wins in the first place.

> Our task is to identify our 1% improvements.



Small wins do not occur by accident; they are the compounded result of decisions, behaviours, and habits established over weeks and months. To sustain success, we must maintain the practices that produced those results and deliberately build upon them. Small wins are not isolated events; they are a trajectory. Reflecting on the specific actions or behaviours that led to these results is, therefore, essential. During this stage, asking the right questions is crucial: What did I personally do that contributed to these outcomes? Which routines or rhythms were most effective? Listening carefully to the answers can reveal the strategies that became your competitive advantage, and capturing these insights ensures they are not lost.

After reflection comes refinement. This stage is about taking what works and making it even better. Once we have identified the habits, routines, or strategies that yielded results, the next step is to optimize them. James Clear reminds us that "every action we take is a vote for the type of leader we are becoming." The compound effect of our small wins does more than deliver results—it shapes the kind of people and leaders we become. The improvements we commit to not only enhance our performance but also cultivate qualities like discipline, resilience, and vision, which compound indefinitely. Refinement is the deliberate act of building on strengths and adjusting weaknesses to ensure continued growth.

The third step is reinforcement. To make our small wins sustainable, we must create systems and structures that make good habits effortless. This involves identifying environmental factors that support success and removing distractions that impede focus. Questions to consider include: What conditions allowed this win to happen? How can I structure my environment to encourage consistent action? Answers to these questions help us design routines, workflows, and support systems that guide future behaviour. Reinforcement ensures that victories are not one-off occurrences but part of a self-perpetuating cycle of improvement.

Finally, to compound our small wins, we must protect the momentum we have created. John Maxwell reminds us that "momentum is a leader's best friend." Small, consistent actions generate movement that accelerates growth—but momentum is fragile. Remaining intentional, disciplined, and focused allows us to multiply our successes over time. Each win contributes to the next, creating a ripple effect that extends far beyond individual achievements.

As we step into this new year, a question to ponder is simple yet powerful: How will you improve your systems, habits, and behaviours to ensure your wins continue to compound? Reflection, refinement, and reinforcement are the tools; your daily choices and commitment are the fuel. Small improvements, consistently applied, have the power not just to change outcomes, but to transform the leader you are becoming.

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