

Experiment for Success

By Leonard Lang, Ph.D

Trying new things, experimenting, even with the ridiculous can sometimes give you new insights and perspective. With that in mind, I tried this goofy little experiment from internet marketing guru Mark Joyner who includes it at the beginning of his success program.

The goal is to take a sip of water. Or you could say, to discover the best and fastest way to get water from a glass into your mouth. He offers a number of methods, including:

- Coaxing the water with kind words and thoughts.
- Bullying the water, demanding it go into your mouth.
- Generating positive feelings and thoughts, confidently knowing the water will enter your mouth.
- Picking up the glass of water and sipping from it

Is Joyner just making fun of mental techniques or even religious beliefs? Not so. He writes, “Regardless of your faith or your belief, you cannot escape the necessity of having to take action yourself. Chances are, your religious beliefs probably support this fact - they don’t contradict it.”

In short, he just wants you to act directly to achieve your goals. And indeed, the results of my experiment were....well, you know the results. But as silly as it seems to actually do the experiment (which he strongly advises), I found it not only made me laugh, it made me think of times where I have tried to achieve something-- while **not doing the one most obvious thing needed**. Of course at the time that one thing didn’t seem so obvious. I thought I needed more information first. I told myself I needed more resources first. I imagined I needed some additional experience. But often, I really just needed to start doing what I wanted to do.

Yet taking action isn’t always the next step. For me, the point of this little experiment is actually a broader lesson in **not getting stuck**. Not getting stuck for some of us definitely means **start acting**. Do something directly related to your goal. For others, the lesson may be the **opposite—planning, visualizing, dreaming, or praying first** before rushing off to act. In other words, the first step may be to make sure you **don’t act until** you figure out the appropriate goal or problem to tackle and the best way to tackle it.

In fact, determining the appropriate goal or question is the very first thing to do in creative problem solving. Or as Einstein is reputed to have said, if he had 60 minutes to figure out how to save his life, he’d spend the first 55 minutes determining the right question to ask, and the last 5 answering it (and presumably performing some action).

As obvious as it sounds, I think it’s good to remind ourselves to be open and **willing to do what works, not what should work**, not what you would **like** to work, not what someone tells you is how things **must** work, and not just **waiting and hoping** for things to work. Instead, experiment, determine your goal, set your mind, heart, and spirit on the task, and yes, do get out and act.

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