

“When you neglect your small wins it can feel like you’re not making progress even when you are. Like hiking up a mountain but feeling like the summit is no closer at lunchtime than when you set out.”

— MAY BUSCH

THE power OF small wins

Doing a little at a time is the best way to reach your big ambitious goals

BY MAY BUSCH

We often associate “big wins” like closing an important deal for your company or a job promotion you’ve been working toward with career success and satisfaction.

But as you focus on the big wins, it’s easy to lose sight of the small wins along the way that mark your progress toward achieving those big wins. And that’s a mistake.

Big wins take time and hard work, so when you neglect your small wins it can feel like you’re not making progress even when you

are. Like hiking up a mountain but feeling like the summit is no closer at lunchtime than when you set out.

Not only is this discouraging, it can even derail your progress toward those bigger goals.

Winning as progress

Instead of waiting until the big win to celebrate, why not reframe “winning” to mean progress?

This means looking for milestones that represent progress toward your big win. Celebrating each progress step as a “small win” builds positive momentum, the kind that keeps you (and your team) motivated to move forward.

Small wins are everywhere once you learn to spot them. Like finally getting a call back from a client that you’ve been calling and



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calling, getting a compliment from your department head, or beating the traffic to get to the office in time for an important meeting.

The beauty of “small wins” is they can lead to bigger impact and broader implications later on. Celebrating small wins as significant steps toward your larger goals helps you focus on the path or the process rather than the endpoint alone. This in turn changes how you feel and perform ... for the better.

How to create small wins in your career

Many small wins will be things you're already doing without

giving yourself credit, like finishing a presentation deck on time or helping a new colleague navigate office politics. Start celebrating them!

Other small wins will be the kind you create by investing in your development, which stacks the deck in your favor. Instead of just speaking up at a meeting, you could develop the skill of speaking with impact. And rather than run from meeting to meeting without time to think, you could learn strategies for getting a grip on your calendar and finally feel productive.

It all comes down to what you aspire to in terms of the “big wins” in your career and life. Is it a job promotion? Growing your business? Or something else entirely?

Whatever those future “big wins” look like for you, start focusing on the path by asking yourself:

- What are the “small wins” I can celebrate?
- What investments can I make in my development along the way?

The best way to create more small wins (that lead to big wins) is to make your career development part of your normal day. Don't wait until “later” when you have “more time” to work on your big ambitious goals because we all know that time never comes.

Take a moment to ask yourself, “What small win will I celebrate today?” ■



Mentors give back through network

Tara Boucher, '99 MS in technology, signed up to be a mentor after establishing her career working with the Starbucks corporate office, Visa and USAA because she loves ASU and working with students. She says the impact is felt on both sides of the mentoring relationship.

“The feeling of giving back is great,” she says.

Boucher, who lives in San Antonio, connects with students and alumni remotely.

Boucher says her own career has benefitted from mentorship and she has noticed that students she's met tend to not know their own potential, so she enjoys encouraging mentees to get on-the-job experience and persist beyond rejection. Boucher says it's important for people to have someone to bounce ideas off of.

“It doesn't always seem appropriate at work to open up and seek advice, so it's great to be able to offer that to someone,” she says.

Apply to become a mentor at mentorship.asu.edu.

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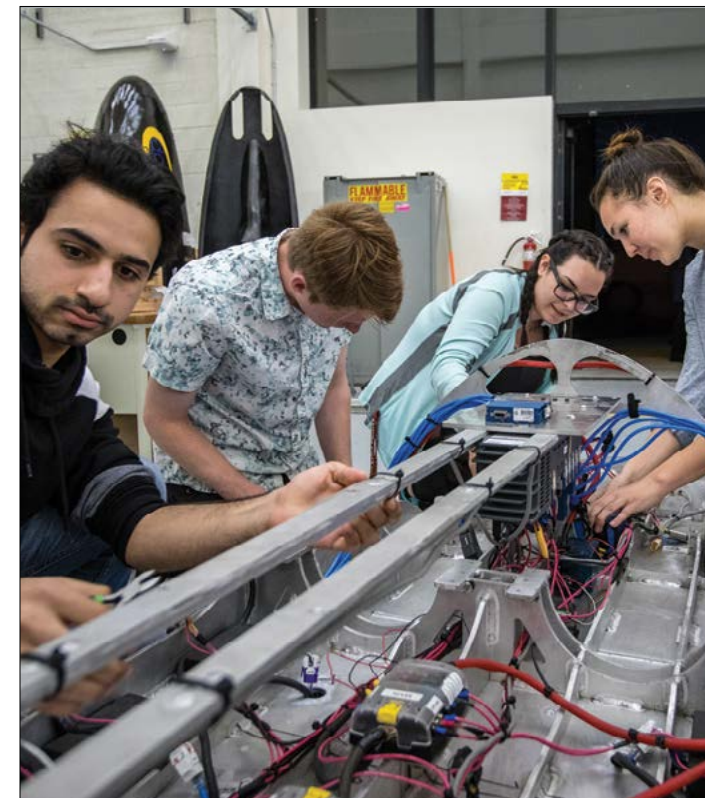
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