



HOW TO BE  
**NUMBER  
ONE**  
IN YOUR FIELD

**Daniel Milstein**

# It is my belief that 97 percent of the people work for the three percent of people who never gave up.

To keep going takes ambition, guts, resilience, and fortitude, but anyone can cultivate these qualities in themselves and climb up the ladder to success. Self-motivation and hard work drive your success. I've done it. Others have done it. Do you want to be in that three percent, too?

As CEO and founder of four thriving businesses, I haven't always been successful. My journey started when I was a 16-year-old immigrant from the Soviet Union, with no knowledge of English and only 17 cents in my pocket. I worked hard because I had to, sandwiching school in between a full-time shift at McDonald's. From there I got a job at a bank, started my own mortgage business and became the number one mortgage lender in the country out of 550,000 lending industry professionals. But it wasn't easy. I had to work smart, deal with failure, and overcome obstacles to reach my goals.

Because of that I have a mentor's heart, and I will never buy into the excuses you may be using for giving up. I want to help you identify and address whatever is blocking your own success and give you tools so that you, too, can be in that top three percent. Your challenges may be lesser or greater than what I have faced, but one thing is for certain: you can learn from everything I have experienced and from everyone who has inspired me.



# It's Time to Pay the Rent

One of my favorite sayings is “Success is never owned. It is rented and the rent is due every day!” Every day you must prove yourself in one way or another, reaching for your goals until you have them. Every morning you have two choices: you can continue to sleep with your dreams, or you can wake up and chase them. Every day you have to renew your desire to succeed. There is no secret to obtaining success. Success means working hard every day and making the necessary sacrifices to accomplish often-challenging goals. It means doing today what others won't do, so that tomorrow you can do what others can't.

Everybody has a goal, and while you can't do everything (some people can't sing or draw or downhill ski) most of your dreams, like finding a job you love and making a living doing it—are realistic goals that you can attain. I believe you can do what you set your mind out to do. And I believe you should have goals so big that you are uncomfortable telling your friends about them.

These are the lessons that I use to persevere, and I use them every day. Let's get started!

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# Keep Your Eyes on the Prize

Lack of focus is one of the major stumbling blocks to success. Too often, people rush into something without being fully prepared. Maybe you have an exciting idea, but haven't thought it all the way through.

You need a clear direction.

*A man without a vision for his future always returns to his past.*

Early in my career, I took a few missteps. I definitely had the desire to succeed, and even worked hard, but I lacked focus. I had to determine exactly what it was I wanted, and clearly define my purpose. I wrote my goals down where I could see them every day.

Now, whenever I talk to my employees worldwide, or our celebrity and sports agency clients, I ask them what their short- and long-term goals are. Then I encourage them to write them down and re-read them every few days. Don't let naysayers discourage you. Not everyone will understand your journey—they don't need to. It's your journey.

Start by outlining your basic plan and list how you will reach those ambitious goals and dreams. You don't have to detail every step—just the main elements. Write down what specific actions are required for you to get from your current situation to your desired new place. Don't forget the timetable; you must establish some deadlines to meet the various stages of your end goals. Be willing to make some major adjustments; you won't get "there" without a few sacrifices.

This will be the foundation upon which you'll build the next phase of your life—for the next day, the next week, the next year, and beyond. The best way to predict the future is to create it.

# Do It Now—Stop Procrastinating.

“Someday” is not a date. Don’t put your goals off until tomorrow, or until you “get more time” or are forced to make a change. Decisiveness and immediacy enable us to get more accomplished—faster.

One night I was relaxing at a bar with some friends when a call came across my cell. It was 2:15 a.m. My friends urged me to let it go to voicemail, but there’s no time like the present, so I took the call. It was a pilot who had just got off of his shift and was calling to leave a message. He had been thinking about a potential home purchase and was anxious to talk about his desired home loan. I quickly took his application information and was able to process his loan the following morning. There is always time to start or finish a job.

Having a sense of urgency is what will separate you from 97% of the people who “have a plan” but don’t follow through. A sense of urgency generates action.

*One year from now you’ll wish you had started today.*

Opportunities will come at you 24/7. You need to be ready to act. Begin today. Begin now. There are plenty of people out there who say, “I could do that,” but few who are able to say, “I did it.” Be one of the few.

# Failure Is Your Best Teacher

In order to succeed, you must be willing to fail, especially if you have large goals or big ambitions. Failure in itself isn't bad, unless you let it defeat you. Think of it as a lesson on what not to do the next time.

Most people don't plan to fail. You don't start off a new job, or a new venture, thinking it will end badly. But sometimes things don't work out, and you need to be able to dust off your boots and try again. Most successful people have failed on their way to achieving great success. Pavel Datsyuk could have given up after being passed over 657 times in the National Hockey League drafts, but his dream was to be a great hockey player. He worked hard, didn't give up, was finally picked by the Detroit Red Wings and went on to help them win two Stanley Cups. One day he will be inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame. Looking for a better light bulb filament, Thomas Edison tested thousands of different substances from all over the world before he found one that worked. He could have given up after thousands of failed attempts to create the first commercially viable, long-burning incandescent light bulb, but he kept going, problem solving along the way. Eventually Edison succeeded in creating the first practical light bulb, cementing his place in history.

*Being challenged in life is inevitable; being defeated is optional.*

Failure is not falling down but refusing to get up. Most successful people have failed on their way to achieving their dreams, but their resilient nature and dogged determination to succeed set them apart from the quitters. You need to persevere in the face of disappointment, learn from your failures, and move on. Your best teacher is your last mistake.

Most people are so afraid to fail that they don't even try. Don't be most people. Winners are not the people who never fail. They are the people who never quit.

# There's No Room for Complainers

Whiners and complainers spread negativity like the flu, which if untreated, can become a serious disease that can damage an individual's and a company's success. You need to avoid it at all costs, starting with yourself. If you focus on your problems, you will have more problems. If you focus on solutions, you will have more opportunities.

I had sufficient cause to complain as a teenager. My work hours were long. I'd begin my day very early, work until it was time to go to high school, where I was struggling to learn the English language, and as a result had to deal with some bullying. Then I'd go back to McDonald's and work until close. That left little time for homework and I was often exhausted. But early on I learned that a can-do attitude beat a negative one, and I believe that has a lot to do with my long-term success.

Minnesota Twins baseball player Jim Eisenreich had a can-do attitude. He was forced to retire in the 1980s because he was battling with Tourette syndrome. Instead of complaining or giving up, Eisenreich sought treatment and returned to baseball for another decade, helping to lead the Florida Marlins to the World Series in 1997. Eisenreich was the first recipient of the Tony Conigliaro Award, given to a player who overcomes a major obstacle.

Negativity—whether your own or that of others'—will drain your energy and hinder your progress. Your own attitude is something you can change, but others' you cannot. Rather than trying to change the people around you, change the people you choose to be around. You cannot expect to lead a positive life if you surround yourself with negative people.

And, if you are ever having a bad day, just remember that in 1976 Ronald Wayne sold his 10% stake in Apple for \$2,300. It's now worth \$70 billion.

# Never Give In, Never Give Up.

Every mountaintop is within your reach if you just keep climbing. We all have the ability to leap at greater opportunity, and to work hard to achieve our dreams.

If you're sabotaging your success by telling yourself that life has passed you by, or that you don't have enough time left to truly make your mark, you may want to spend a little time familiarizing yourself with Ray Kroc, who in his lifetime worked his uncle's soda fountain, sold everything from lemonade and paper cups to real estate, ran a radio station, drove an ambulance, and was 52 years old and in poor health the day he drove to California to find out why a little burger joint would need five of the milkshake Multi-Mixers he was selling at the time. What he found were two brothers, Richard and Maurice McDonald, whose restaurant was a smash hit with the locals.

People couldn't get enough of the quickly prepared, inexpensive burgers, fries, and shakes, and flocked from ten counties to eat there. As Ray watched the line of cars wrap around the parking lot and cause traffic jams in the street, he smiled and imagined hundreds of these restaurants causing traffic jams all over the country. Ray Kroc launched his dream at a time when most people are thinking of retiring. He became the McDonald brothers' managing partner, and turned their restaurant into the world's most successful restaurant chain.

As a youth, Winston Churchill struggled in school and didn't seem destined to be a world leader. He later faced a number of political failures, but then at the age of 62, he was elected Prime Minister of the United Kingdom—serving his country during World War II. Churchill even went on to win the Nobel Prize in literature after being ousted from that office after the war.

Colonel Harland Sanders first started cooking chicken in his roadside stand in 1930, when he was 40 years old. During the next decade, he worked on his "Secret Recipe" and cooking



method for his famous fried chicken, which he sold from various locations. However, in the 1950s, the interstate highway came through the Kentucky town and diverted road traffic from the Colonel's restaurant. He closed his business and retired, disappointed that he hadn't been successful with the fried chicken recipe. But he wasn't done yet. Sanders began asking restaurants to franchise his chicken recipe. Many turned him down before he finally found his first partner and began building his fried chicken empire.

I could have quit many times in my career, but I kept going.

*I am coming for everything they said I couldn't have.*

You can too. I know you have it in you to realize your dreams. If things aren't working out, don't downgrade your dream to fit your reality. Upgrade your conviction to match your destiny.

Every mountaintop is within your reach if you just keep climbing. We all have the ability to leap at greater opportunity, and to work hard to achieve our dreams.

# Pay the Rent

These are the lessons that have helped me make it to the top three percent and stay there. You can do it, too. Remember: Focus, stop procrastinating, embrace failure, don't complain, and never—ever—give up.

*“Twenty years from now you’ll be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than by the ones you did.” — Mark Twain*

If you’ve not yet taken the time to chart a course for your dreams, you must begin this process now. It will be the most important reality check you’ll ever make.

You and you alone hold the keys, tools, and passion you’ll need to create your own success. Everything you need to become number one lies within you. I certainly don’t mean to imply it will be easy. In fact, I guarantee it won’t be easy. I do, however, promise you it will be worth it.

**Let’s get started. It’s time to pay the rent! 📌**



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# Info



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### About the author

Daniel Milstein is the CEO and founder of the Gold Star Family of Companies, operating in over 40 offices worldwide, specializing in financial services, sports management, publishing, and film production. Under Dan's visionary leadership, Gold Star has been named among Inc. magazine's 500 Fastest Growing Companies in America. He is a best-selling author and shares his other strategies for success in his new book *Rule #1 Don't Be #2: You Get What You Work For, Not What You Wish For*. Learn more at [DanMilstein.com](http://DanMilstein.com).



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