

Changing for the better... *by Bob Salvus*

As much as I hate to admit it, I have never been a consistent user of seatbelts in a moving vehicle. Sure, I understand the obvious safety benefit and for all intents and purposes it is illogical **not** to wear them. Laws have even been passed that make driving without a seatbelt a punishable offense. So if there is an obvious benefit to wearing them and legal consequences by not wearing them, why did I only end up wearing a seatbelt less than half the time that I was driving in a car?

The answer was simply that it was not important enough to me to remember to put them on. Wearing a seatbelt was not a part of who I was.

In some talks I have given (and things I have written) about goals, I stress that goals will not be fully realized if they are not congruent with who you are. You have to be the kind of person who achieves a particular goal before you can easily achieve (and maintain) that goal. You basically then have three ways that you can do this:

- 1- Set goals that align with who you already are. If you love playing the piano and have a goal to play for an audience, you are more likely to succeed because your love for playing will carry you through all the times that you are too tired to practice or too frustrated to continue.
- 2- Set goals that others can help you with. In business, for example, if you are a terrific baker and a lousy accountant open a bakery but hire someone else to do your bookkeeping.
- 3- Set goals that you believe you can aspire to and then work on changing the person that you are. Change like this does not always come naturally. It is not quite as easy as 'fake it until you make it' though there is a lot of merit to doing that. People read about the law of attraction or do meditation or pray or go to counseling or hire a coach or focus on self-discipline. All good approaches and each person will respond differently...but all roads should eventually lead to some sort of action.

Let's take a look at my issue with the seatbelts:

About two months ago, I purchased a new car (Honda Civic, very nice). It had been about seven years since I bought a new (or newer) vehicle. Cars today incorporate technology the way many consumer products do. One of the features of my new car was an annoying beeping sound that would continue to go off periodically while I was driving my car without the seatbelt in place. It did not take me long to make the conscious effort to put the belt on prior to driving off in order to avoid the beeping harassment. A few times I would forget and pull over when 'reminded' that I did not have them on. What happened? Well, over time, the self-correcting action of putting on the seatbelt became a habit.



Yesterday when I borrowed my wife's car, I instinctively got in and put on the seatbelt. And my wife's car does **not** have the annoying beeping sound that my car has. As I drove away, it hit me that I had put on the seatbelt without even thinking about it. It is similar to the way I brush my teeth or shave or do other mundane but necessary things in life. If we push ourselves to repeat and repeat and repeat, eventually the action we are taking will become a habit- good or bad, it is true. Sometimes the action we start repeating comes about because of things changing in our lives or our surroundings. The man who has a heart attack starts eating differently each day because he wants to live and ends up preferring the healthy food. A person takes a different route to work to avoid the construction and continues to take that route even after the construction project is finished. And I start to wear my seatbelt in order to avoid the 'beeping' and now I wear them in any vehicle I travel in.

So how can you change? I cannot say what the best path is for you. But I can say that at some point you will need to take action and whatever action you decide to take, do it consistently and over time you will develop the habit you need to change who you are and by so doing, what you can achieve.

These words (author unknown) capture the power of this self-transformation:

**“Watch your thoughts, for they become words.
Watch your words, for they become actions.
Watch your actions, for they become habits.
Watch your habits, for they become character.
Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.”**

Bob Salvas is a marketing consultant and owner of Success Mail Inc. He is also an account advisor at the Cathedral Corporation. He has been consulting small businesses for 23 years. Bob can be reached at bob@successmail.net.