

# ACHIEVING THE EXTRAORDINARY IN AN ORDINARY WORLD

By Danny Cox

You leave school to go out and slay a dragon and save the world but soon you find out there are no dragons, at least in your neighborhood, so you campaign against an occasional lizard. Bring on the dragons!

Ten years of my life were spent flying progressively faster, high tech fighters for the Air Force. Each time I was assigned to a new, faster bird elation engulfed me until I slid down into the cockpit, the supersonic office, of the monster. Half the instruments I didn't recognize and the other half were in the wrong place! My first thought was that this was one dragon I wouldn't be able to handle. About this time the instructor cheered me on by saying, "If you try to fly this one with the same techniques you used in the last one, you're gonna get yourself seriously killed!"

Obviously that didn't happen but it was a warning that helped me through the transition and saved my business career later on.

Upon leaving the Air Force I joined a large organization as a sales person and at the end of the first year promoted to manager of a little ne'er do well office. After a year of so-called management, the company saw fit to make me the manager of their top office in their 36 office chain. It was the same office where I'd been a new salesperson two years before. What was their reaction to my plan to turn everybody into a copy of me? To fly it just like the last one?

Production plummeted. We went from #1 to #36 in three months' time!

It was not a surprise when my supervisor paid me a visit and delivered these terse words. "Obviously I made a mistake and am now looking for your replacement." I looked him straight in the eye and stated, "That's the shortest and best motivational seminar I've ever attended and I'm going to learn how to do this."

I went to work on me, not my team members, hoping production would start back up before they found my replacement, and it did!

Here is the lesson I learned in the ensuing turnaround: employees get better right after the manager does. Once I started coaching their strengths, instead of trying to give them mine, things quickly improved.

Four months later we were back to #1 and stayed at that level. The same level as when I took over the office. Everyone, including the high producers, was back to the limits of their self-imposed barriers.

I started thinking about the concept of self-imposed barriers and came up with the following definition: A self-imposed barrier (SIB) is not a wall around my life but simply the margin of my life (my potential) where I haven't written anything ... yet.

And therein lies the problem! I look at the perimeter of my developed potential as if it's a wall. Once I stop developing my potential, I see a wall. No one else can see my wall but they can see the results.

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After this breakthrough on SIB's I shared the concept with my team members. I suggested to them that they not worry about breaking anyone else's records but just commit to breaking their own personal records on a daily, weekly, quarterly and yearly basis. This became a way of each person seeing instant progress because they were competing against their own records whether they were low, medium or high.

To aid them in their record breaking quest I taught them the system I've written about in my book, *Seize the Day: Seven Steps to Achieving the Extraordinary in an Ordinary World*. (Career Press) The seven steps are:

1. Select the goals that make the effort expended in achieving them go virtually unnoticed.
2. Determine and develop the inner strengths that become the tools used in achieving the goals.
3. Layout a plan that makes the most efficient use of the strengths available.
4. Anticipate the anxiety that will surface when the new plan is launched.
5. Prepare to solve new problems as a result of putting the plan into action.
6. Keep your morale high in spite of the "growing pains."
7. Reapply this system when new self-imposed barriers appear -- and they will.

The results of committing to this system were extraordinary. We broke office, company and industry records. Using the same system later on with a district of offices we achieved an 800% increase in production in a five year period that included two recession years.

The ultimate thrill was to see my team member's personal lives improve as they crossed their barriers. One woman who never made more on commission than she earned as a secretary broke through her barrier and now has a net worth of over \$3,000,000. Another salesperson told me he'd never had any more money in the bank than his struggling father had. He subconsciously controlled his monthly commissions until I asked him if that was the same role model he was currently setting for his own children. He broke his barrier with a bang and became a bright super star with our company. Why? Because he wanted to be a dragon slayer to his kids, not someone who fiddles with lizards.

As this next century approaches, we need dragon slayers in our corporations, associations, schools and families. We need ordinary people, with extraordinary goals, who will see their self-imposed barriers for what they really are, step across them and say, "Bring on the dragons!"

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