



# myths BUSTED

## PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD

Achieving goals and positively contributing to work require one to be the best version of themselves, at all times. Leo Bottary, author of *What Anyone Can Do* and co-author of *The Power of Peers*, tells us why we should surround ourselves with the right people to boost our chance for success.

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if you want it done  
right, do it yourself

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most people know what  
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things, you do not  
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### 01 if you want it done right, do it yourself

That is because our limited understanding of what is right and what is possible keeps us from doing our very best and raising our standards of excellence. My time at Boston-based advertising agency MullenLowe offers an excellent example of what can happen when a diverse, talented team, is focused on creating the best advertising in the world.

The creative director would typically gather a group of 20 to 25 people to develop a new advertising campaign. Once everyone shows up, the ideas start flying. They all have their boxing gloves on—not to fight against one another, but to work as a team to fight for the best idea. Eventually, the bones of a campaign are displayed on a board at the front of the room. People look at one another and collectively celebrate their genius—only briefly, of course, because they know it is time to start from scratch and come up with another campaign. The group will repeat the process several times in a relentless pursuit of what former National Geographic photographer Dewitt Jones calls ‘another right answer’.

Here is the best part: on all the occasions I ever participated in that exercise, the first campaign—which everyone celebrated with such great enthusiasm—did not make the cut to show the client. It is what happens when you have a team, whose members trust and respect one another, go to battle for the best idea. If you want it done right, then you assemble the right team.

### 02 most people know what they want

False. One of my podcast guests, Laura Goodrich, who wrote a terrific book called *Seeing Red Cars*, finds that when you ask most people what they want, they are often clear about what they do not want, but unable to express what they do want. Goodrich also asserts that because we tend to get more of what we focus on, that once we take note of the red car, we start seeing them everywhere.

So, why is identifying and expressing what we want so difficult? Management consultant Robert Fritz argues that most of us hold two contrary beliefs—powerlessness and unworthiness—that limit our ability to identify and create what we really want. Fritz said he has only met a handful of individuals who are not limited by one or the other.

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Once you decide what you do want, you can surround yourself with people who share your goal and/or who have already accomplished it. These are the people who will encourage you, share experiences, provide advice, and help you stick to your daily schedule.

### 03 keep your eye on the prize

This is not as good an idea as you might think. Here is a case in point:

More than fifteen years ago, my teenaged daughters asked me if we could climb Mount Baldy in Crested Butte, Colorado. Of course, standing on the peak is one thing, getting there is quite another. I talked to them about what it would take to prepare for the climb, and a few weeks later we embarked on our vertical journey.

As we began the climb, the girls were quite enthusiastic. Now, if you have ever climbed a mountain, you know that in addition to the physical challenge, there is a psychological one. Because of the tendency to fix your eyes on the peak (or the prize if you will), it is easy to climb for twenty or thirty minutes and feel as if you are not making any progress. Fixating on any goal, especially in the early stages, that continues to look unattainable can be very discouraging. So after about ninety minutes, the girls were ready to turn back.

But before we did, I suggested that rather than stare at the summit, they take note of where we were, climb for fifteen more minutes, and reassess. If they wanted to quit then, they could. They reluctantly agreed. After fifteen minutes, the summit did not look any closer, but when I asked them to locate the bush we used to mark our start

position, they could not believe how far away it was. They were astonished at their progress. So much so, that they felt a surge in their mental and physical energy. After eventually reaching the summit (12,805 ft.), they realized that there is nothing quite like the view from the top.

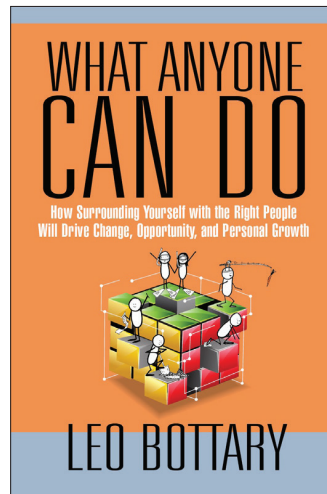
To this day, my daughters continue to draw upon this experience. Whenever they are faced with a tough challenge, they remember what they did that day. Taking your eye off the prize to celebrate small wins can be quite beneficial.

#### 04 avoid conversations about politics and religion

Have you ever been told to avoid conversations about politics and religion? Most of us received this advice from our parents. While they may have meant well, (socially speaking and to avoid people challenging their children's nascent views), this directive did more harm than good. For starters, such a prohibition assumes that these topics are fodder for hostile debate rather than productive dialogue. It assumes that when we engage in a conversation about our political views or our faith, an argument is sure to ensue, and that we cannot simply ask questions to get to the core of why someone is liberal rather than conservative or how faith plays a role in one's life.

Imagine what we could learn if we were equipped to have thoughtful conversations about everything. Consider how less divided the world might be if we were taught

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to listen and learn rather than argue and judge. Unfortunately, because the notion that we should avoid controversial subjects was so embedded into our psyches as kids, we, as adults, often lack the ability to have respectful conversations about anything without letting emotions run wild. As a result, we talk about comfortable topics and surround ourselves with people like ourselves—hardly a recipe for learning and growth.

#### 05 in the scheme of things, you do not matter that much

One of my podcast guests, founder of Choose2Matter, Angela Maiers begs to differ. She explains it this way: “Five-

year-olds believe they were born to make an impact. They wake up every day believing that until an adult in their world says, ‘You’re not good enough to make that impact.’ We weren’t born to embrace limitations. That is taught. Average is something that we choose. Maybe not explicitly, but subtly, we’re taught to cover up, to hide and hold in our genius because it’s not comfortable for the other people around us. We’ve got to stop that.”

Maiers adds, “You are a genius, and the world needs your contribution. I watch as I say that line to five-year-olds all the way up to CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, and it is at about eight- to nine-years-old that I start seeing the first signs of people holding back. That is absolutely something we should urgently be concerned about, because the moment that our passionate people get quiet, the moment that the most brilliant ideas start being held back, the moment we don’t start taking risks with one another, everyone loses.”

If you are part of any group or team, then your presence and active participation matters. Not unlike a jazz ensemble, if you start taking away instruments, then the ensemble will invariably sound different. You matter. ■