



The Habit of Action

This week's essay was inspired by a group of vibrant young Millennials under the leadership of Pastors John and Opeyemi Eweje of the National Headquarters Church of the Foursquare Gospel in Nigeria. Their representative had engaged me by asking: Sir, we have just had a splendid session on Goal Setting facilitated by the youthful Oribi Charles. Now sir, what next? We want you to come and encourage us. Following is the prose excerpt of the slides I prepared as my response weeks before the meeting.

Before the late Stephen R. Covey in 2004 wrote *The 8th Habit – From Effectiveness to Greatness*, a sequel of sort to the classical *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, I have had the privilege of internalised it and got number three – ‘First Things First’. Covey himself developed this habit written with Roger Merrill. All those who have passed testify to my addiction to letters. My love for putting devising my own eighth habit – *The Habit of Action*, just before Dr. Covey's book hit the market. This was circa 2001. We have even coined various un-dictionary vocabularies for Action, words such as ‘actioning’ or ‘actionate’.



This development stemmed from my passion and hunger for my audience to step up to the next level of doing and not just hearing, performing and not just learning, giving and reaching out and not just receiving like the Dead Sea. In other words, it is not just enough to know your ‘First Things’ – the three or four things that matter most to you in life, they could be spiritual, family, career, or even making money – but of great importance is what action are you taking on each of them having been able to identify them which in itself is not an easy task. Are you giving your ‘First Things’ the needed attention, care and concern? This is the action part.

We would always open our class discussions on this topic with one slide thus: “The key to success in life, in business and in career is Action. In T. S. Elliot's *The Hollow Men*, it

is written - between the conception and the creation falls the shadow. It is also known as the knowing-doing gap - a 'crime' of knowing too much and doing too little. I have also seen that the world is full of men, women and young people with an A.T.A.N.A – all-talk-and-no-action attitude”.

Most often, after heated discussions on this slide with various group and individual postulations on why no action, heaping blames ranging from inept leadership, systemic collapse of our education system, parental indulgence, deceased breadwinners, polygamous parentage, economic woes, etc we invariably come to one inescapable conclusion – the self. Have you really tried making action your habit? Have you made substantial commitment to action?

In the next few moments, I would like to share with you on how over the years in the various teams I have worked and still working with we have been able to overcome inertia and have taken results-oriented actions.

First and foremost, taking action is a matter of going the extra mile either in our thought process or in our commitment. A teacher once told me, it is just one extra degree. He said at two hundred and eleven degree Fahrenheit, water is hot. However, at two hundred and twelve degree, it boils, producing steam strong enough to power an Ocean Liner. The one degree extra step or extra effort energises you, resulting in action which takes you the extra mile. One good thing about this is that at the extra mile there are no traffic jams because only a few dare go that far. Are you one of those few or aspiring to be one?

The extra mile is to continue to study when others have gone to bed. It is going a step further even before you are told to. It is not giving up on being a solution provider where others have been smitten by the virus I chose to call '*debilitating excucitis*'. It must be avoided at



all cost. George Carver Washington said ninety percent of failures come from people who have the habit of making excuses.

Going the extra mile helps in growing a mindset that resists, and maybe flee from the danger signals of seductive counterfeits as they keep pushing at you. Excuses are seductive counterfeits with their companions such as unproductive activity, motion

without movement, procrastination, efforts, trying, and mere sweating. Trying is just a noisy way of not doing something.

Next, ask what is effectiveness and why effectiveness? Effectiveness is getting results, providing solutions, exceeding expectations, and accomplishing and probably exceeding the goal we have set for ourselves. It is instructive to note how close this definition is to the definition of integrity which is broadly defined as doing what we say we would do. Having this perspective banishes *excucitis* and energises you to take action and accomplish the goals you have before you.

One recent demonstration of effectiveness is the winning of the African Nations' cup in football by the Super Eagles of Nigeria. It was reported that the target set for the coaching crew and the players was a semi final berth. They exceeded that and caused happiness and joy throughout the land. When you take correct (or what some refer to as affirmative) action, there would be a reciprocal happiness and sense of fulfilment all around you.

Indulging extensively thinking goes a long action mode. Good and it is a hard thing practice it over and captured the thinking is the is the probable reason a very few engage in it.



in the profitable habit of way in putting one in the thinking is good business to do. You've got to over again. Henry Ford hardest work there is, which

Manage your thought process. A load of those thoughts are insulting - always screaming things like 'You can't do it', 'This one is too tough for you', 'Maths? Forget it' 'You are too sickly to indulge in exercise', 'Fasting would cause ulcer', etc. I have good news for you. Some of us have gone spiritual about insulting thoughts. After all, the Holy Book says they that know their God would do exploits. When those unhelpful thoughts come in torrents, my response is 'The Lord rebuke thee' (read the Bible in Jude verse 9 KJV).

Enjoy. Till next week...

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