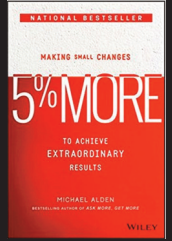


# 5% More

## Making Small Changes to Achieve Extraordinary Results

Book by Michael Alden

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### Synopsis

Would your life change if you exerted just 5% more effort? You might be surprised! Most of us are tired of self-help books that ask for a lot in order to make even small changes. For example, they ask for a 21-day commitment to permanently change a habit or an hour of meditation every morning. Instead, consider adding just 5% more effort to all that you do.

**5% More** (Wiley, © 2016) breaks the self-help mold by creating realistic expectations. Anyone can give 5% more. That additional effort is where the magic happens. Perhaps it's a mental shift in simply believing you're giving more than you did yesterday. Or perhaps it creates a surge in energy that wasn't there before.

However, if you arrive at the office 24 minutes earlier, that's 5% earlier in an 8-hour day. So, ask yourself, *What can I do today to make that additional effort?*



The key concepts of **5% More** can be distilled into the following practices:

#### Have a Plan

In order to give 5% more, you need to have a plan for achieving your goals. Sit down and write down your action plan. This alone, for many, is giving 5% more effort.

#### Go Beyond Busy Work

In your plan, be sure that your actions aren't just "busy work" or "easy wins." Create effective action items to which you dedicate your extra efforts.

#### Set Achievable Goals

Giving yourself achievable goals and then meeting them helps you visualize and realize success. Extra action steps make a tangible difference in your bottom line when they help you achieve your goals.

#### Set a Goal to Earn 5% More

No matter how much money you make, 5% additional revenue is relative. Set the goal of earning 5% more every month or every year.

#### Pay 5% More

We get back what we give out. If you're a business owner, consider giving employees 5% raises.

**"If you are doing nothing with your life, if you are sitting home watching television waiting for something to happen but realizing you will not achieve anything by continuing this behavior, start by taking 5 percent of your day and work toward a goal."**

Based on *5% More: Making Small Changes to Achieve Extraordinary Results* by Michael Alden, we discuss how a 5% increase in effort can change your life dramatically. We share our interpretations of these strategies in the following pages.

## Define Success for Yourself

Everybody has his or her own definition of success. What might be success to one person is just scratching the surface for another. In many cases, it's the level of success that we define for ourselves that becomes our goal. Regardless of our manager or sales quota or income, whether consciously or subconsciously, we set our own personal goals. Typically, these goals are based on our level of belief in ourselves and our ability to achieve. If you and your team members increase that belief by just 5%, you will see your margins increase. Define your new level of success and share it with your team.

### Look Between the Dream and the Destination

Your dreams might involve working from a lounge chair on a beach in Tahiti. It might involve a corner office in a Manhattan skyscraper. It might involve a video camera and an RV traveling around the country. Whatever your dream or another person's dream is, what sets apart those who make it and those who don't is *filling in the details* that get you from your living room couch to the beach in Tahiti, the Manhattan skyscraper, or the RV.

The difference in those who *do* and those who *want to do* is understanding the *how*. All businesses need customers and clients to be successful, and focusing on *how* to land them is critical.

It's the *details* that derive from your plan that make or break your business. Do your research, make your plan, and understand what and how to make that critical sale or bring in that crucial client. Then, look at your plan with fresh eyes and figure out how to add an extra 5% of effort to it.

### Turn Your Dream into Success

Most young people have dreams of what they want to be, do, or have as they morph into adulthood. Whatever stage you're at in life, you're likely always dreaming about the next one. You may have moved on from earlier dreams because your vision for achieving them changed or fizzled. Perhaps you tried to achieve those dreams and failed or gave up. Or, maybe you've built earlier dreams into a reality and are on to the next ones.

Dreams should excite you. If yours don't, then perhaps a re-evaluation is in order. To turn a dream into success, it has to grow beyond a concept or idea and into an effective plan. The strength of your vision and the quality of (and thought behind) your business plan will determine your success. For example, Steve Jobs had a vision to make computers available in everyone's home. He turned his dream into success by giving more than an extra 5%—by putting computers not just in people's homes, but in their pockets and in their hands.

Ask yourself...are you reaching out to the right people to help? Do you have the funds and resources you need? Too many people get more caught up in the vision of the dream than the *plan of action*. Don't let this be you. Take your extra 5% of time and effort and put it toward quality development.

## Applying the 5% Extra Effort

As a leader, it's one thing to commit to giving 5% more; it's another to get your team on board. When you commit to this process, decide what the team's action steps will be and who is going to take them. Whether the additional effort comes from management or team members, or ideally both, it will show up in your bottom line. This is especially true if the extra effort is spent on more than busy work or "low-hanging fruit." Ensure that the extra effort is effective and efficient to see optimal results. Seeing the impact will more often than not inspire further action and more positive results.

### Become More Aware

Making the types of changes the author refers to does not necessarily mean doing 5% more of what you're already doing. What if what you're doing is *ineffective*? It wouldn't help to do more of it!

Now, turn that around. What if the 5% extra effort went into trying new approaches or learning new methods? The idea is not to confuse busy work with concerted effort. It doesn't mean tossing on a few additional social media posts if the posts you've been using aren't creating more business. Instead, open yourself up to becoming more aware of your company and what is and isn't working. Allocate your additional 5% to becoming aware and then to making those changes.

The most effective leaders are those who are aware of what is and isn't working in their business. There is a definition of insanity that we're all familiar with, so don't create more of it by continuing to do more of what doesn't work. Don't waste your 5% on it. Spend it on the commitment to change and do better.

### Set Goals and Be Accountable

For some people, actually taking the time to set goals might be their 5% additional effort. If this is you, great! Create realistic goals that you can hold yourself and your team accountable for achieving. Goals are especially trackable for salespeople. Sales quotas are usually measured on a quarterly and annual basis. Some sales targets, like in retail or telephone sales, are measured on a daily or monthly basis. If every employee increased his or her sales quota by just 5%, how would that impact your company? Sit down with your team members and evaluate your goals. Discuss what it would look like to dedicate 5% extra effort to achieving the goals. What can they do to make that difference? Decide, then hold yourselves accountable.

### Lead Your Team to an Additional 5% Effort

A travel agent sends one more couple on a honeymoon because he or she made that extra call. An IT tech stays an extra hour to solve an issue. A salesperson makes one more phone call and closes the deal. These are the small, extra efforts from your team members that, when you lead them, can make an extraordinary difference. When you inspire your team to make that extra effort, their results will soar, and your company will see the difference. Encourage them to take those extra few steps that make the difference. No matter how successful they were that day, or how tired they might be, when those extra few steps are taken anyway, the rewards will follow.

## Make Slight Increases to Have Big Impacts

If you want to make it to a million-dollar income, \$950,000 won't cut it, but an additional 5% will. That extra \$50,000 might seem like a lot to most people, but when you are on track to earn a million, it can be what keeps you from crossing the finish line. For those who are on track to earn \$50,000, the 5% difference that keeps you from crossing the finish line is \$2,500. It's a matter of perspective, and no matter what level of income you are at, slight changes to your efforts can close the gap and bring you to your goal.

The same difference can be found in other areas: meeting a sales goal to earn a bonus, for example. If the sales goal is \$100,000, then \$95,000 is 5% short of the goal and 100% short of the bonus. So, while 5% seems like a small amount, it really can make a big impact on results.

## Evaluate Your Business and Competition

If you're new to your business or simply not the best in your business, it's time to evaluate your business and your competition. One powerful way to become as successful as your competitors is to do 5% more than they do until you're as good or better than they are. Each industry will be different. Online sales, retail sales, consulting, services—these business models all have different ways of reaching their customers. If you take the time to understand how your competition is thriving and then look at your own business model, you should see opportunities to add in an extra 5%. Consider what is working for your company and do more of it. Then, look at what isn't working for your company and remodel it.

## Tip the Scale

Too many entrepreneurs don't see that the finish line is right in front of them. In fact, they might even give up just shy of crossing it. They are too inexperienced to recognize that the scale may have been about to tip in their favor. Yet, if they gave an extra 5%, they could have tipped that scale. It may sound simple, but many entrepreneurs who do succeed credit the fact that they gave more effort and focus to the right part of their business, and they suddenly skyrocketed their dream into business reality. Thoughtful allocation of extra effort made the difference.

It might take a tweak in marketing or a boost in production, but unless that short step over the finish line is taken, the company may always be on the brink of success rather than on the other side of it.

## Seek Help from Professionals

Entrepreneurs tend to have an independent spirit. It's why they want to have their clients be the ones they answer to rather than a manager or CEO. They are the ultimate dreamers because their vision means everything to them and they are willing to go for it. If they are willing to reach out to those who have done what they want to do, to ask for the help they need, they could soon be on their way to having a profitable business and a growing client base.

Established companies often seek help as well. This could very well be the extra step or effort that needs to be taken to meet your competition's level of success. Bringing in consultants, branding experts, or social media gurus can all change your bottom line. The outsider's fresh pair of eyes can be that 5% that catapults your business to the next level.

### Be of Help to Others

Giving 5% more to others is one of the most powerful ways to help yourself, your team, and your business. Just as it's important to seek professional help, it's important to be the one who helps others. One reason this is so valuable is that we often learn more about ourselves when we are of assistance to others. Giving is always a two-way street when done correctly. You can not only help others succeed, but you can learn from their mistakes, help them correct those mistakes, and avoid making similar mistakes yourself. When you use that extra 5% toward helping another, it can come back to you with increased sales, more clients, and greater brand recognition and loyalty.

This extra level of help may also apply to your own employees. Giving back to those who show up for your company on a daily basis and give their talents to your dreams is worthy of reward beyond regular pay. How you decide to give back or be of assistance is up to you, but if you gave 5% additional resources to employee benefits, you would likely see many times that reflected in their efforts. That means higher production and commitment levels, which benefits the employees, you, and the company.

### Persevere to Create Lasting Habits for Your Business

As you go through the process of giving 5% more, decide what angles and efforts work and what new habits are being created that make you more effective. Integrate these new habits into your daily processes and you will be giving more to your company, your revenue, your employees, your customers, and yourself. When you persevere, you build a new path—a new way of being, doing, and having what you want. Implement these methods to create lasting habits so that they become part of your company's daily routine or work environment.

## Insights—Make the Additional Effort Work

### Decide to Apply the Extra Effort

Commit yourself and your team to giving 5% additional effort for one day. Pick an area where you can allocate the extra effort and go for it. Choose what the action steps will be and who is going to take charge of each. Demonstrate to your team members that you are giving 5% more, too, so they are assured you are on board with them. Then, do it again the next day.

### Use a Success Model That Works

Success can be gauged in many different ways across different industries. Sit down with your team and set team goals. Then, meet with individual team members and help them craft personal goals. Finally, think about how to add 5% to those goals. Whether they're sales quotas, call rates, promotional emails, or customer satisfaction scores, determine your new level of success and go for it.

### Bring Your Company to the Next Level

Evaluate your business and how it compares to your competition. Take time to research why your competition is flourishing. Analyze your own business model and enhance what is working. Reconsider what isn't working and how you can do things differently to raise the bar. Adding that extra effort to your day-to-day activities can make a big difference in a week, month, and year.

### Make the 5% Extra a Permanent Fixture

Creating new, healthy business habits takes persistence and consistent effort. As you notice what's working, make those changes a part of your new workplace. Down the line, give 5% effort in other areas in order to keep growing and improving. As you discover new ways of approaching your business, giving 5% extra effort should become your new normal.

## Conclusion

*5% More: Making Small Changes to Achieve Extraordinary Results* is the ideal guide for coming up with small extra efforts in order to improve exponentially. It addresses many ways and areas where any company can exert just 5% additional effort. The first step is to make sure the 5% more isn't doing more of the same, but doing something different to create change and growth. Avoid doing extra busy work just for the sake of saying you did more; instead come up with compelling changes that will make rippling differences across the company.

“Trying to go from mid-level manager to CEO by taking extreme and unreasonable action is foolhardy and a recipe for failure. I want you to get to the next level, and I want you to do more than others, but getting there doesn't take unreasonable action. It just takes doing a little bit more than others, with consistency.”

If you've enjoyed our insights on Michael Alden's *5% More: Making Small Changes to Achieve Extraordinary Results*, we encourage you to access the other *5% More* assets in the Skillsoft library or purchase the hardcopy.

## About the Author



**MICHAEL ALDEN** founded Blue Vase Marketing, LLC, a Direct Response Marketing firm, in 2009 and is the CEO. His company has been recognized on the Inc. 5000 list of America's fastest growing private companies for three years in a row.

Michael is a graduate of Springfield College with a degree in Political Sciences. Additionally, he holds his law degree from Suffolk Law School.

### Also by Michael Alden

- *Ask More Get More: How to Earn More, Save More, and Live More... Just by Asking*, John Wiley & Sons, © 2016, ISBN 978-1937110604.