

In College, Small Improvements Mean Greater Success

by Bob Roth
The "College & Career Success" Coach

When I was in college, I took a class in Industrial Psychology. In it, we studied the concept of Just Noticeable Differences. As we conducted experiments with weights, light, speed and sound, we found that it took a difference of approximately 15% before we noticed the change. However, in college and in life, much smaller changes can make a big difference.

You know that the difference between a "C" and an "B" is generally ten percent. That is the system we grew up with. However, the difference between a "B-" and an "B" is far less, sometimes as little as two or three points. And yet, some employers use these tiny differences in their employment decisions.

When a recruiter visits your campus and tells the Career Services office that they will only interview students with at least a 3.0 GPA, that means that students with less than a 3.0 GPA will not be interviewed. The fact that you have a 2.9 GPA becomes irrelevant. That's why small differences and small improvements can be so important.

Successful people regularly strengthen and improve their position by doing the small things that others don't bother to do. Here are a few examples of what they (and you can) do.

- Strive for quality
- Focus on the things that are the most important and urgent
- Recognize that it usually pays to do more than required
- Do what they say they will do, when they say they will do it
- Treat others with respect
- Anticipate, prevent and solve problems
- Know what they stand for and what they won't stand for
- Meet or beat deadlines
- Accept responsibility for their performance and outcomes
- Do the right thing even when nobody else is watching

Successful students

- Recognize and value the importance of preparation
- Study a bit harder and smarter than most other students
- Make certain that they understand the most difficult or complex concepts
- Practice classroom presentations until they are solid
- Do an exceptional job with papers - research, style, citations, quotations & layout
- Carefully look over their work before it is turned in - tests, papers, assignments
- Add something extra to impress Professors
- Contribute to classroom discussions and activities
- Volunteer to help instructors and other students
- Put college success ahead of short term wants
- Constantly improve communication, people and leadership skills
- Build a list of impressive accomplishments

When you take advantage of small improvements and perform consistently, over a long period of time, you will earn you something very valuable. You will earn the "benefit of a doubt." People will trust you and believe in you. They will accept your momentary failures and shortcomings because they know that you will bounce back and keep moving in the right direction. They know that they can count on you.

Importantly, you should also understand that these small changes and improvements:

- Are cumulative.
- Benefit your reputation.
- Lead to new and additional opportunities.
- Positively affect your self-confidence.
- Allow you to be more influential
- Change the way others see you and think of you
- Enable you to achieve greater success

In most cases, success comes to people who are willing to constantly adjust and improve, those who do the little things. Since all degrees of progress and success are separated by small, even tiny, differences, this point should never be forgotten or ignored.

Think of it this way. In any class, activity or job, someone or some group always stands out from the others. It is rarely a fluke when their performance is more effective or impressive. They are usually the ones who recognize and consciously take advantage of the small differences that lead to big results.

"What we think, or what we know, or what we believe is, in the end, of little consequence. The only consequence is what we do." -- John Ruskin

Every college student can raise his/her grades by 2, 3 or 4 points, simply by paying close attention to the small, yet important, differences that will add up. Are you one of the people who is making the small improvements that will lead to greater success?

Visit Bob's web site: www.The4Realities.com. Bob Roth is the author of The 4 Realities Of Success During and After College -and- The College Student's Guide To Landing A Great Job.