

VK Newsletter

🔗 Implementing Atomic Habits in IT

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So I read this book called “Atomic Habits” a few weeks ago, where the core concept is about minor 1% improvements every week compound over time to result in significant improvements.

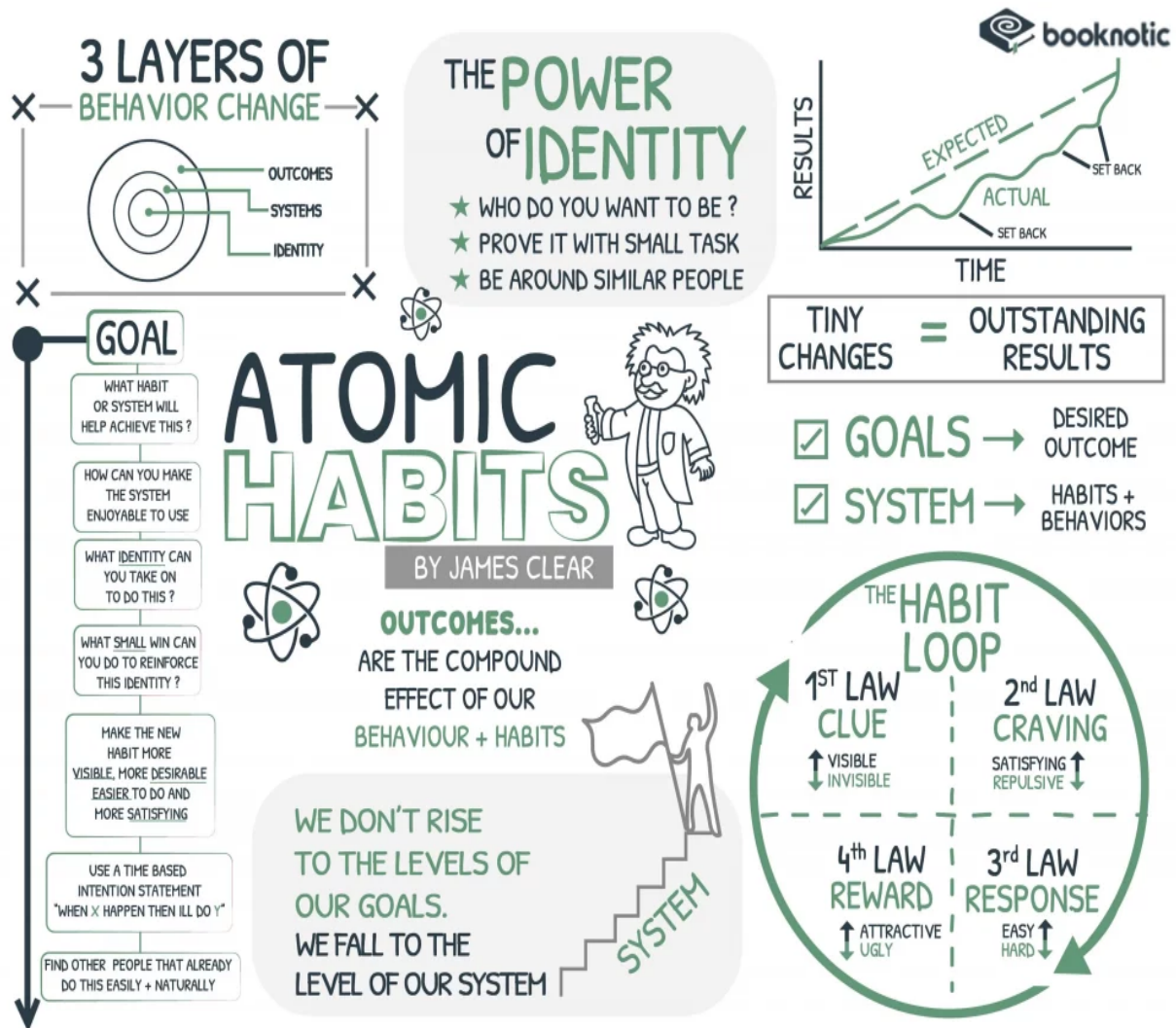
Quick summary of the book

Real change doesn't come from making a single big decision. It's the result of hundreds or even thousands of small choices that add up over time. For example, someone who wants to get in shape might start by taking small steps, like walking daily or packing a healthy lunch to eat at work. Over time, these small changes will compound and lead to significant results, like improved fitness and weight loss.

That's where the 1% improvement is. But it's not enough to have goals of becoming better every week.

To achieve our goals, we need to create systems of single processes and habits that will get us there. By breaking down our goals into smaller steps, we can see the path to achieving them more easily. And by creating a system to track our habits, we can ensure that we are consistently moving forward. Integrating small practices into our existing system is better than doing a 180-degree switch.

Habits are powerful things. They can either help us or hurt us, depending on what they are. Good habits lead to positive changes in our lives, both physically and mentally. Bad habits, like smoking and binge eating, can have negative consequences. But whether they are good or bad, habits compound over time. The more we do them, the more ingrained they become. And eventually, they shape who we are as people. In the end, they will be the ones that make the biggest difference.



Visual summary of the book. Click on Image to view.

I highly recommend reading the book. There are quite a few practical tips that can help you integrate small changes into your life.



How this translates to IT

Let's face it, we are people, and we are not perfect. So many parts of our professional lives will benefit from small incremental improvements over time.

For example, let's say you're in the habit of putting off tasks until the last minute. While this may work for some things, it's not a good strategy for managing your IT systems. You can avoid costly downtime and keep your systems running smoothly by taking a few minutes each day to perform maintenance or make updates.

Or let's say you're in the habit of always saying yes to every feature request. While it's important to be helpful, sometimes saying no is the best thing for you and the person making the request. If you're already stretched thin, taking on additional work can lead to burnout.

If you set up a system for backing up your data once a month, you'll be less likely to lose everything in the event of a system crash. Making small changes to your routine can save you a lot of time and money in the long run.

As you can see, there are many small things that when combined can result in huge change down the road.

What habits I formed

There is no right way to do things in IT, so I'm not going to give you any advice on how to be a good IT professional — I'm going to talk about the habits I have formed that have helped me over the years.

I've learned keyboard shortcuts for the tools that I use most frequently. I started small with CTRL + C and CTRL + V, then it snowballed. Every week I would learn a new one, and eventually, the time I spent with my mouse got low enough that I'm comfortable doing all the daily tasks using only the keyboard.

No more manual scheduling of meetings. When you have a group of 5-10 people where you need to find a slot that fits everyone, it's easier to send them a link for them to select their slots and then automatically see where you can book the meeting instead of back and forth emails on everyone's availability.

I've gotten into the habit of documenting everything I do. If I'm doing something complicated, I'm assuming I'm writing a guide for someone while doing it — deploying a new configuration, setting up a new project, setting up the printer.

The deployment evolved step by step in small increments. Manual Deployment, then some simple script got added, then that script got improved, and bam, after a year or so, you have a system with rollbacks.

One thing that got incrementally better at our digital agency, that's outside of development, but related to it nonetheless — is the standard contracts. Back in the day, we would always do custom offers and contracts for everyone, and boy was it a hassle. It got tedious as you had to repeat all the steps, and write down all the stuff again. Then we started standardizing our offer over time and



implemented standard clauses that eventually ended up being standard contracts, which eventually evolved into separate contracts for different types of work: Maintenance, SLA, Development, Fixed Price, Time&Material etc. But it all started with simple docs that had a few bullet points in it.

We also started integrating habits into our identity — we are developers who write tests. We write for people who will maintain the software two years after us. Being a good developer means having good habits, and identifying as a good developer means taking over the patterns that befit such a developer.

Compound future

We've implemented some small rules that have improved our agency life by 1%, and now looking back at how we operated a few years ago, it's 100% different. Some of these things that we changed are:

1. *Formed a habit of setting up 2FA and SSO authentication everywhere.*
2. *Habit of summary emails after meetings.*
3. *Standard DevOps Configurations.*
4. *Habit of writing transparently in Channels instead of Private Messages.*
5. *Automated Accounting with scanning of incoming and outgoing invoices.*

These might seem small when taken separately, but if you look at all of them as a whole, it's a huge change. And I think that's the core — being just a little bit better every week. Eventually, you cannot recognize yourself as you've become a different person.

Take a look at your routine. How can you be 1% better this week?

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