

Stretching ...



**By Stan
Pohmer**

"Standing still" and "Breaking" are two polar opposites. It's easy to visualize each end of the axis, whatever the activity.

In between is stretching.

Stretching is growth, Extending our reach. Becoming more resilient, limber and powerful. Stretching hurts a bit, and maybe leaves us just a little sore.

But then, tomorrow, we can stretch further than we did yesterday. Because stretching compounds.

If you're afraid of breaking, the answer isn't to stay still. No, if you're afraid of breaking, the answer is to dedicate yourself to stretching,

— Seth Godin

You've seen me mention Seth Godin in prior columns; he's an entrepreneur, best-selling author, speaker, motivator, teacher and business guru who has the unique ability to boil down complex subjects into short, concise and meaningful insights.

His free daily blog (<https://seths.blog/>) is always informative and enjoyable, and sometimes his comments really hit home and make me think deeper, not only to better understand the gist of his message, but also how I can apply them to both my personal and business lives. This blog on "stretching" is one of them.

Let's start with a reality check; I think it's safe to say that in today's ultra-competitive and fast-paced world, standing still and maintaining the status quo is not an option for personal and business success or survival. Simply stated, if you're not moving forward, you're falling behind!

But while many of us understand the need to move forward, too few of us are able to achieve this goal. For some it's because we haven't identified the finite goal we're aiming for. For others, it's because we attempted to go from a standing start to 100 miles per hour, not pacing ourselves and quickly becoming disenchanted because we couldn't immediately reach our target. And for others, it's because there wasn't a clear path for success. Bottom line, we hadn't learned how to stretch!

Stretching is applicable on so many levels ...

Physical Stretching

Ever watch someone try yoga for the first time? It's an awkward and almost comical experience. Sure, part of the challenge is that the individual isn't familiar with all of the poses and positions, which can be learned

over time, but an equally important challenge is that the individual's body is not limber and flexible enough to perform the various moves.

But over time, and with continuous repetition, the body parts stretch and, day by day, the range of motion, the flexibility and the limberness all improve. The physical power of stretching ...

Mental Stretching

It is said that learning is a combination of innate talent, a willingness to open one's mind to new concepts and things unknown, and the ability to apply this newly acquired knowledge. I vividly recall my high school math teacher challenging me to "Expand your mind!" when I was having a problem comprehending a new math concept.

Staying open and willing to face the unknown are keys to success in expanding one's mind and mental stretching

What he was really telling me to do was to use what I already knew as the foundation, the springboard, to build upon and then be open to taking that knowledge to another level.

It's like a game of connecting the dots of the known facts, and then attempting to visualize the next steps until you gain enough perspective to be able to finally comprehend the bigger picture. Staying open and willing to face the unknown are keys to success in expanding one's mind and mental stretching ...

When I was a retail buyer, I was tasked to develop realistic financial forecasts every year that my boss used to roll up into his divisional plan. This realistic plan was what I was expected to meet. However, my boss also challenged me to present an "achievable stretch" plan, a plan where, if the stars, moon, sun and planets all aligned properly, we could manage to exceptional performance.

The philosophy behind this way of thinking was that if I didn't challenge myself to shoot for the stars and only aimed for the realistic goal there likely wouldn't be any incentive to aim higher, to stretch my abilities,

to motivate my team to work toward our potential and go beyond our "safe" zone ...

Team Stretching

Change is the lifeblood of organizations today, whether it's establishing a new presence in social media, shifting from a transactional relationship with your customer to experiential relationships, or embracing a lean flow operational focus, among other opportunities for change. But we all know that human nature abhors, or, at a minimum, resists and fights change, so how does one manage or champion successful change?

Start with small, relatively innocuous projects or concepts that the entire team can understand and support. This provides a small taste of success, providing a sense of both confidence and accomplishment that can be used as the basis for more challenging and meaningful change activities. Success breeds success — the more momentum you build, the faster you can expand or stretch your change opportunities ...

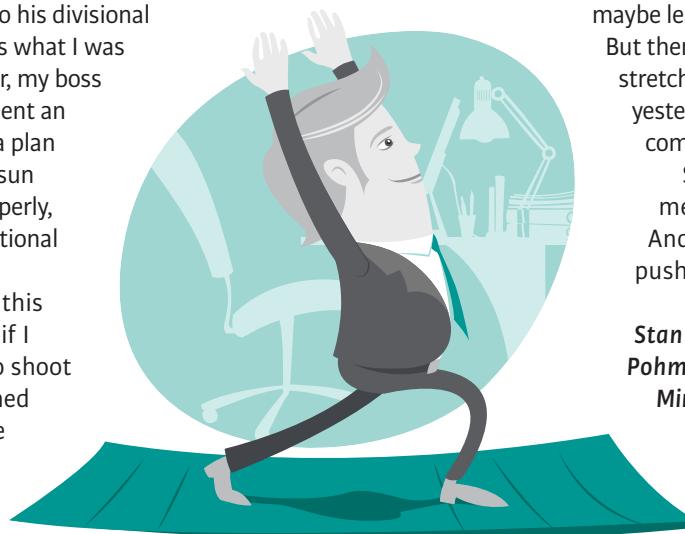
Stretching Your Customer

Unless you bring new customers into your store, the only opportunities to drive growth are to raise retail or to find ways to encourage your existing customers to purchase more per visit, and to visit more frequently. The old adage of "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" is very true, so your immediate opportunity is your existing customers.

Finding ways to build their confidence, their sense of success and accomplishment, to take on more elaborate and involved gardening projects, to build upon and stretch their belief in their abilities are essential to cultivating growth with your existing customers. So, yes, the power of stretching also applies to your customers...

As Godin said, "Stretching is growth, Extending our reach. Becoming more resilient, limber and powerful. Stretching hurts a bit, and maybe leaves us just a little sore. But then, tomorrow, we can stretch further than we did yesterday. Because stretching compounds."

Stretching is physical, it's mental, it's a business tool. And it works, but only if you push yourself ...



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