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A Charmed World Good Luck Symbolism From All Corners of the Globe

St. Patrick's Day was not always about beer-guzzling revelry and dyeing the Chicago River green. Americans have transformed the religious celebration of Saint Patrick and the appreciation of Irish culture into a celebration of fortune and good luck, and the green four-leaf clover symbol is integral to the holiday's branding.

Some superstitious symbols are so commonplace today that we don't even question their origins. Items like the dreamcatcher, the horseshoe, and the rabbit's foot are all charms we have appropriated. But since the dawn of civilization, people all over the world have used good luck symbols to represent the fulfillment of common needs, protection against injury or death, or the promise of money and wealth.

In Australia, Aboriginal people saw the frog as a symbol of good fortune, because they believed the amphibian brought rain and thunder to the land. Other choice animals, and their choice parts, are associated with luck in many cultures as well. One of these "charms" in Africa is the vulture head, believed

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to possess powers to predict the future due to the bird's incredible sight.

The "beckoning cat" is a good luck symbol you might be more familiar with. Known in Japan as the maneki-neko, this paw-waving cat is often seen in storefront windows, and is meant to attract wealth. In India, a cat's eye gemstone is meant to bring good luck and is said to shield you from misfortune in business and money matters.

Other good luck charms include tiny handmade worry dolls of Northern Guatemala, which are placed under one's pillow at night to bring solutions to everyday woes. Acorns have been associated with power since the Norman Conquest, when the English carried them as protection from harm. And if you're ever in China and spot someone who has a mole with an impressively long hair sprouting from it, don't be alarmed! Moles are a sign of good luck, too.



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.REAL ESTATE INSIDER.

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POWERFUL REAL ESTATE TIPS & STRATEGIES YOU CAN USE

BEWARE THE SLIPPERY SLOPE!



"Every exception a person makes brings him closer to a life where the exception becomes the rule, until life itself becomes one big exception." ~ Robert Ringer

We've all been there ... you're trying to eat healthier, but that delicious piece of candy is crying out to you, "Eat me! Eat me!" So what do you do? Chalk it up as a mistake and jump back onto the healthy food wagon? NO! Most people rationalize with something like, "Well, since I've already slipped, I may as well enjoy my mistake, right? How bad could it be?" Before you know it, you're knee-deep in empty ice cream buckets and pizza boxes after a weekend of binge eating.

This trend toward exception unfortunately not only applies to eating, but also to the rest of your life and your real estate business. "I'll follow up on those leads later," you think (or tomorrow, or next week/month etc.). Anyway, I think you get where I'm going here. The problem is that willpower doesn't have an on/off switch. It's like a muscle. It can be strengthened, but it can also wear out and get fatigued.

The key is to do your best not to take the first step in the wrong direction and, if and when you do (believe me, you will ... I certainly do), to get your ass back up and get going in the right direction as soon as possible! The longer you linger, the harder it will be to right the ship. Don't let a minor slip turn into an avalanche where you slide backward over the cliff. Everyone experiences some form of habit regression

periodically — so what? No big deal. Don't dilly dally, get back on course as soon as possible, and you'll be fine!

Onward and upward!

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Gerald Lucas

GERALD LUCAS
Real Estate Expert & Best-Selling Author



MANAGING TIME MANAGEMENT

Are Productivity Apps Worth Your Time?

You're always looking for new ways to stay organized and to squeeze every ounce of productivity out of your day. You've downloaded time management and productivity apps onto your smartphone. You jump from email to projects to clients to other internal issues like clockwork.

Or you intend to.

There are thousands of apps for nearly every device on the market aimed at improving productivity and organizing our lives. While some of these apps make for wonderful assistants when used with consistent effort, are they really useful?

Dozens of companies and even more individuals have poured countless hours and dollars into apps aimed at making your life easier. They're hoping their app will solve all of your productivity woes.

Regardless of how many productivity issues you struggle with, these apps are useless unless you

change your current behavior and organization methods to follow the construct of the ones you've chosen.

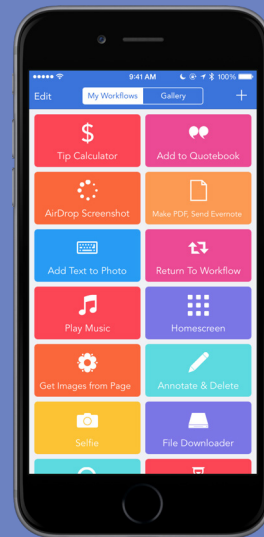
What app developers don't tell you is making that kind of change is tough to do. Downloading a nifty app is one thing. Developing the habits and self-discipline to implement these tools is an entirely different beast. How can you make the change toward improved time management and streamlined productivity?

Apps cannot change your behavior, but you can. Changing your behavior and habits is key to managing your time and becoming more productive. Your first step is to identify where you fall short. What areas of your work need improvement? Email organization? Productivity in meetings? Avoiding distractions?

When you identify the behaviors you need to improve, you can begin to build new habits. For example, if you're bad about remembering appointments, a number of apps can help you "remember," but only a proactive response on

your part will determine whether or not the app is a success.

So, are all these productivity apps really useful? If you try to use a productivity app without the appropriate behaviors to supplement it, then probably not. Using apps like Evernote, Dropbox, Workflow, Outlook, or even a basic calendar takes effort. You need to have certain habits in place in order to get the most out of any productivity-based app. Otherwise, you're just collecting icons to clutter up your smartphone.



ASK GERALD a Real Estate Question

Q: Gerald, I have a property under contract to buy. I looked at all the numbers, and I'm confident that it's a good deal, but I'm not sure whether I should wholesale the property for a quick profit, or if I should rehab and then sell the property. How would you decide whether to wholesale or rehab a property?

Billy, Columbus, Ohio

A: That's a great question, Billy — this is something that I grapple with all the time myself as a full-time investor. Should I flip a property as-is or take the time and money to rehab it and ideally make a bigger profit?

When I make that decision, here are three factors I consider:

- 1) The time of year
- 2) How many other rehab projects I have going on
- 3) How much more money I expect to make rehabbing the property versus the rehab costs

The time of year is important because rehabs usually take longer to complete during the winter in colder places — that's not to say that I would never do a rehab in the winter, it's just that I would require a higher expected profit before I committed to doing a winter rehab. The number of other rehab projects I currently have is another important factor I consider, because you never want to overextend yourself — this can be dangerous financially. The more rehab projects I'm currently working on, the more likely I'll be to wholesale the next property I find; the fewer rehab projects I'm doing, the more likely I am to consider spending the additional time, money, and effort to renovate. This leads me to the third and most important factor, which is how much more money you expect to make rehabbing a property versus wholesale flipping the property. The general rule of thumb I use is that my additional rehab profit should be at least twice as much as the cost of the renovation. So, for example, if I can make a \$20K profit wholesaling a property and I'm deciding whether to do a \$25K rehab on the property, I'd want the additional profit after the rehab to be at least \$50K. Now, there are other factors I'd consider, like how long the rehab will take. For example, I may rehab a property that only needs a \$15K roof to make an additional \$25K because it doesn't take that long to get a roof done, whereas other renovations often take much more time, but hopefully you get the idea — time is money. If you spend more time and effort to do a rehab, it needs to be worth it to you financially. Thanks for your question Billy, and good luck. For more real estate tips and information, visit my blog at www.geraldalucas.com.

Learning to Fail Better

"Try again. Fail again. Fail better." The title of Anjali Sastry and Kara Penn's book, "Fail Better," comes from that quote by Samuel Beckett. Not that the authors recommend trying to flop. Intelligent business owners generally don't hang signs that say, "Bob's Diner: We aim to fail."

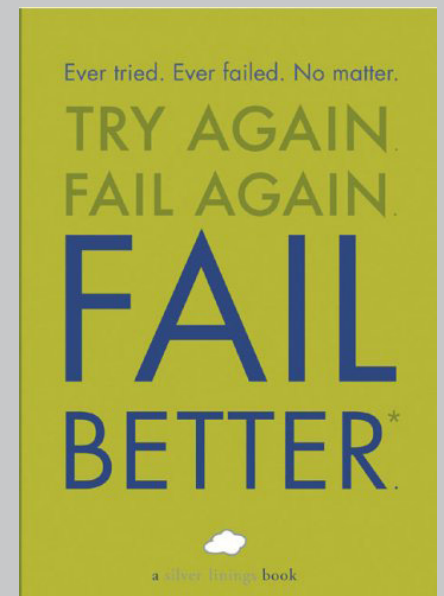
On the other hand, if failure isn't a possibility, chances are you aren't thinking enough. And there is value, Sastry and Penn say, in accepting failure's inevitability. Acceptance allows you to minimize failure's effects and maximize its usefulness when it does happen. Essentially, Sastry and Penn's method is about controlling your response to failure. Their plan is actually designed so that "small failures enable discovery and learning" rather than bringing your entire project to a standstill.

"Too often," the authors say, "potentially valuable failures go to waste because extracting their lessons is fiendishly difficult in practice." Fortunately, the "Fail Better" method lends flexibility and speed to the lumbering giant that is business.

Step one is launching projects with the right logic. That means making sure you're heading in the right direction at the project's outset. Step two involves "chunking" a project into iterations, which keeps potential

failures on a smaller scale, allowing them to become learning opportunities instead of disasters. Step three, embedding the learning, makes the first two steps worthwhile by applying lessons learned from failed iterations. Without this step, it's far too easy to fail repeatedly without ever failing better.

Looking for ways to maximize your success? You may be surprised to find your answer in failure, or at least in learning to fail better.



Real Estate Insights

- Although short-term rentals can produce higher income for property owners, they normally result in higher management, maintenance, and advertising costs for owners than long-term property rentals.
- Riparian rights are the rights of landowners bordering waterways that relate to the water and its use.
- Land does not depreciate for tax purposes because it is considered to have an infinite useful life. Land improvements like buildings, furnishings, equipment, etc. have limited useful lives and can be depreciated.
- A real estate variance is a request to deviate from current zoning requirements. If granted, it permits the owner to use the land in a manner not otherwise permitted by the zoning ordinance. It is not a change in the zoning law. Instead, it is a specific waiver of requirements of the zoning ordinance.



1. Never loan money on a property you wouldn't mind owning yourself.
2. Good tenants are worth keeping. Keep rents for good tenants slightly below market — this limits service calls and reduces your property management and maintenance costs over time.
3. Never lend more money on a property than you would be willing to pay for the property yourself.
4. Never sign a purchase contract as a buyer with an inspection contingency period of less than seven days.