



JIM HARSHAW JR.

Revealing Failure as the Path to Success

Success Through Failure Podcast

Action Plan Episode #343

Gregory McKeown

Greg McKeown has dedicated his career to discovering why some people and teams break through to the next level—and others don't.

The definitive treatment of this issue is addressed in Greg's New York Times and Wall Street Journal bestseller, *"Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less."* This book challenges core assumptions about achievement to get to the essence of what really drives success.

Last year, Greg released another New York Times bestselling book, *"Effortless: Make It Easier to Do What Matters Most"*—an empowering guide to achieving your goals that starts with a simple principle: not everything has to be so hard.

Aside from being a prolific writer, Greg is also the CEO of McKeown Inc., a leadership and strategy design agency headquartered in Silicon Valley. Their clients include Adobe, Apple, Google, Facebook, Pixar, Twitter, and Yahoo!.

I last interviewed Greg back in 2016 where we went on a deep dive into the practice of essentialism. This time, we delve into the mindset of effortlessness: why easy doesn't mean lazy, how to overcome the inertia to get started, and more. Tune in now!

Top Quotes From This Episode

"There really are two paths to any execution, to anything you're trying to accomplish: there is the heavier, more burdensome, more complicated path, and then there's an easier, simpler, better way."

"Easy does not equal lazy."

"When the insecure overachiever overexerts, they actually make it more likely that they'll underperform."

"The idea of just figuring out what the actually obvious, tiny, first, physical step you can take is more powerful than worrying about the 78th step, and not taking the first one."

"Your primary learning in life is from mistakes, from errors."

Show Notes

This episode touches on the following key topics and ideas:

- **A life full of essential things (3:33):** Greg gives an update on his life following the success of his New York Times bestselling book, "Essentialism"
- **The two paths (6:02):** The backstory that led Greg to write his second book, "Effortless"
- **How could this be easy? (7:02):** The "10x Dilemma" and the [Productive Pause](#) questions to get you to the next level without burning out
- **What it means to be "effortless" (11:27):** Unlearn what's keeping you stuck to give space to learn something new
- **The challenge of getting started (13:07):** How to overcome the inertia that's stalling you
- **Without particular effort (20:54):** A lesson from Robert Falcon Scott and Roald Amundsen's quest to be the first men to reach the South Pole
- **Live life in crescendo (26:55):** "*Live with our greatest contribution lying ahead of us, not behind us.*"
- **Success through failure moment (28:56):** Insecure overachievers don't overachieve, they underperform
- **How to approach learning (33:00):** Greg believes, "*Designing your life for making learning-sized mistakes is critical for high performance.*"
- **"There's no mastery without mistakes." (37:12):** Greg talks about the two kinds of failure and how to get over them
- **Radical gratitude (39:56):** On being grateful for everything even for the mistakes and failures

What's an action item the listener can take in the next 24-48 hours? (41:58)

1. Create a "Done for the Day" list
2. Don't do more today than you can completely recover from by tomorrow
3. Say one thing that you're thankful for at the end of the day
4. Ask: "How can this thing be effortless?"
5. Take a nap

List of Resources Mentioned in the Episode

Greg McKeown's books:

["Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less"](#) and
["Effortless: Make It Easier to Do What Matters Most"](#)

Watch ["Seinfeld"](#)

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Other Episodes Referenced

[#68 The Disciplined Pursuit of Less with NYT Bestselling Author Greg McKeown \(Essentialism\)](#)

Guest Website and Social

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["What's Essential" podcast](#)