

From the authors of *The Power of Nice*
LINDA KAPLAN THALER & ROBIN KOVAL

The

POWER

of



SMALL

Why Little Things Make All the Difference

'Small is no big deal, until now ... reinvent your life and rock your world one small step at a time.'

GENE SIMMONS, Rock star legend and founder of Kiss

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Because bigger isn't always better.

In a follow-up to their US bestseller, *The Power of Nice* authors Linda Kaplan Thaler and Robin Koval once again tackle conventional wisdom with a provocative and counterintuitive book on the importance of sweating the small stuff in our lives and in our careers.

Going that extra inch - whether with a client, customer, family member or friend - speaks volumes to others about who we are. Our smallest actions and gestures often have an impact on our biggest goals.

Get more of what you want, with surprisingly less than you'd imagine. Harness *The Power of Small* to improve and reinvent your life.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

LINDA KAPLAN THALER is the CEO and Chief Creative Officer and ROBIN KOVAL is the President of The Kaplan Thaler Group. The company is ranked as one of the fastest-growing advertising agencies in the United States. Kaplan Thaler and Koval are the co-authors of the US bestselling titles *Bang!* and *The Power of Nice*. Together they have been featured in *USA Today*, the *New York Times* and *Business Week*. Kaplan Thaler and Koval both live in New York.

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The

of

SMALL

Why Little Things Make All the Difference

LINDA KAPLAN THALER & ROBIN KOVAL



For Emily and Michael—
from your first small steps,
you have made my heart leap.
—Linda Kaplan Thaler

For Kenny and Melissa and the belief
in miracles large and small.
—Robin Koval

Foreword

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Before we get going here, you probably want to know why I'm writing the foreword to this book. Well, first, I'm a small man. It would have made no sense for Shaquille O'Neal to write it. Second, and let's face it, I'm funnier.

In my line of work, small things make a big difference. If you're a half-beat off, the joke goes over like pork rinds at a bar mitzvah. One off-color comment at a corporate gig, and you'll find yourself on the unemployment line. And that's true in other professions as well. On the other hand, the right one-liner delivered at the right time can solve world hunger and bring peace to the Middle East.

Okay, maybe that's a stretch. But small things really do make an enormous difference. I know. When Robin and Linda's agency created the Aflac Duck, they turned my small talent for quacking into one of the most successful advertising campaigns in history.

Thinking small is even more important in times like these. Let's face it, between global warming, the financial meltdown, and twittering, we don't know what we're facing next. I feel overwhelmed just trying to change a light-bulb. Imagine trying to fix the world. So why not spend a bit more time on the little gestures that can improve our lives

and the lives of others? Write a note to thank someone for doing you a favor; tell your kids that you love them; walk a senior citizen across the street. Then, when we're all foraging for food in the post-apocalyptic economy, that person you held the door for at the pharmacy may share some of their gruel with you.

So read on. Find out why paying attention to the small things can pay major dividends. It's not a long book. Just read one chapter at a time. Or one page at a time. After all, it's the small things that make a difference. Just ask any of my former girlfriends.

Gilbert Gottfried

Introduction

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In a world in which we are urged to see the big picture and grab the brass ring, where the world seems to constantly accelerate with every new website and technological tool, it too often feels as if we don't have the time to sweat the small stuff. The details get lost in a flood of digital data, e-mails, and YouTube videos. We have become a nation of skimmers, our attention limited to sound bites, live video clips, and headlines. Too often, we live our lives as a series of Spark Notes. As a result, the small cues, the simple gestures, the random acts of kindness that give life texture and meaning are too often overlooked or ignored. We feel too pressured to notice the nuances of human behavior, or to bother with the small personal efforts that may, ultimately, win us more attention than our grand acts or intentions. The fact is, no one gets ahead, wins the promotion, or saves the guy or girl, without noticing, sweating over, and taking care of the small stuff.

True, we cannot allow ourselves to become tethered to useless trivia that can overwhelm what is important and prevent us from achieving our goals. We are huge fans of the bestseller *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff*. But at heart Richard Carlson was arguing something different—that in terms of our life journey, we often get caught up in things

that really *aren't* all that important, blowing them out of proportion. He focuses more on our spiritual and psychological well-being. What we are arguing is that a lot of “small stuff” at work, and in our personal lives, gets overlooked, or is brushed aside, when it shouldn't be, because it really *does* matter. Taking the time to give a compliment, or being attuned to a colleague or customer's subtle body cues, are not inconsequential actions. They tell a story. They are the details that make or break a relationship, or crack the case, for all you James Patterson or *Law & Order* junkies. It is our small behaviors that so often define us and create an imprint of who we are.

The response to our previous book, *The Power of Nice*, has been overwhelming. Of the countless people who wrote in about the positive power of nice in their lives, from smiling at a cranky co-worker to giving up their bus seat to a stranger, the stories all shared one common thread: the biggest rewards were almost always rooted in the smallest gestures. Yet in our desperate attempt to navigate through the dense forest of endless stimuli, we often forget to notice the trees—or, more important, the leaves on the trees. But it is in those leaves, in their tiny, almost imperceptible shadings, shapes, and scents, that we discover what is real, what is beautiful, and what has meaning.

Believing that it is the small things that make the greatest difference is not just an ideology—it is also timely and pragmatic advice born out of the economically challenged world we live in. Saving for the future is a daunting task, but saving penny by penny is easily done. And it offers rich rewards to those willing to think small. It is a philosophy that can help people reach even the most daunting goals. And if President Obama's presidential campaign has taught us anything, it's that there are no limits to how far each of us can go. We just need to be

willing to walk a little bit farther, reach a little bit higher, day after day.

In writing *The Power of Small*, our own lives have been enriched in ways we could never have imagined. We began to notice firsthand how our smallest actions had a positive impact on our business and personal relationships. We became more sensitive to giving praise for a job well done, to taking the extra five minutes to go that extra step, to making that extra call or effort, to adding a simple “I love you” at the end of a phone call with a partner or spouse. We hope this book enriches your life as well, and encourages you to appreciate every wondrous moment of it.

Linda and Robin

Chapter I

The Power of Small



We can do no great things—only small things
with great love.
—Mother Teresa

Larry was a computer programmer in the sales division of a major San Francisco apparel company. He was the guy who dealt with the data, fixed people's computer problems, and spent long hours creating new ways to slice and dice the numbers. In short, Larry was a self-proclaimed computer nerd.

He would watch the men and women of the sales department and admire their outgoing natures, their easy conversational skills, the way they looked so sophisticated and stylish. Larry often thought to himself, "I can do that. I want to do that." But he had no idea how to go about changing his career path, and he wasn't sure he had the confidence to try. Should he quit his job and go to business school? Should he work nights getting sales experience at a smaller company? Did he need a career coach? He didn't know where to begin. The idea of changing the direction of his life seemed daunting.

Then one day, he strolled into Patricia Fripp's men's hair salon. Patricia was a pioneer in her field, one of the first to

coax men out of utilitarian barbershops and into hip salons. Patricia approached her job with a unique zeal and passion. She strove to give every client a haircut that would say something special about him. Often she changed only the slightest detail—the angle of the part or the length of the sideburns—but she was a master. She sat Larry down in her chair and went to work.

Larry emerged a half hour later with a new look. He showed up at work and all the women cooed, “Larr-y! You look great.” At home that night his wife said, “Hon-ey, you look so handsome.” Even the young woman at the corner deli where Larry bought his coffee each morning noticed, saying “Mr. L., there’s something different about you.”

Larry’s new haircut and the way it changed his self-perception started a chain reaction within him. It dawned on him that taking even small steps could have a real impact on his life. He bought some new clothes. He started going to the gym more often. He made an effort to smile more. Once he began to think of himself in a different light, others saw him differently as well. When he became friendly with some of the sales managers at work, he confided his desire to switch careers. Soon the head of the sales department offered him a junior position.

Larry not only rose to the challenge, he became the best performer the department ever had. They cut the size of his territory five times and he still outsold everyone else. Before long he was the chief sales executive of the company.

It’s obvious that Larry had a natural talent for the business, and he put a lot of hard work into understanding every detail about the merchandise and his customers. His computer wizardry with a spreadsheet didn’t hurt, either. But if you ask Larry what changed his life, he’ll smile and say that truth be told, he owes his success to one great haircut.