CHAPTER 12

Key Catalyst: Commit Yourself

Make a commitment: follow your vision without wavering; stay the course. Do whatever it takes.

What You’ll Discover in This Chapter:

• The real reason why committed people seem so fortunate
• Why commitment has the power to change the world
One of our facilitators tells a terrific audience-participation story to illustrate the difference commitment makes. “Let’s say you decide to be a high-dive champion,” he tells his audience. “You run right out and you buy a body suit tailor-made for high diving and all the equipment and accessories. Is that commitment?”

The group shouts back, “No!”

“Next, you enroll in high-diving classes and you learn all about high diving. Are you committed now?”

“No!” the group shouts.

“Okay, you enroll in your first competition. You climb the ladder and step out onto the board. Committed now?”

“No!”

“You dive off the board. You’re in mid-air. Now are you committed?”

The audience shouts, “YES!”

Commitment is all about that moment when there’s no turning back—the magic that results when you’re truly committed. It’s a mind-set: there are no other options. There are no more debates, no mind games, no procrastination. There is only action, single-minded, focused, and pure. That commitment wields a mighty power and brings with it an intense joy.

We call it WIT: Doing Whatever It Takes.

During a vision day, I did an activity called “Who’s on the Bus?” The bus symbolized the commitment our staffers had made to the company’s vision. I had a pop-up bus that several people could get in as a prop. I also set up chairs in rows to look like bus seats.
One by one, staff members came up to me, looked me in the eyes, made a commitment to be on the bus, and took a seat. Later that year, a staff member told me that a company had been trying to hire her away from us, offering her more money and benefits. She told me that whenever she was tempted, what went through her mind was that she had made a commitment to be on the bus. She understood clearly that being with us fulfilled her purpose, where the other position was simply a job for money.

When you realize that every dream worth pursuing involves challenges, you discover that commitment is an absolute necessity. It’s what makes the difference between giving up and going on.

Commitment alone has the power to change the world.

Midnight, Lake Michigan, 1927

One dark winter night, a man stood on the shore of Lake Michigan, preparing to swim out into the icy waters and drown. This man considered himself a total failure: He’d been expelled from Harvard twice. He’d lost more jobs than he could count, and had lost his infant daughter to a horrible disease. He was in so much pain that he actually took comfort in the prospect of sinking through the icy waters into oblivion. Before he stepped into the lake, he paused to review his life. He discovered, to his surprise, that it was rich with experiences and knowledge. A thought struck him: what if he used his storehouse of information to help people? What could he lose? If it didn’t work, the lake would always be here.

He decided to see what would happen if he looked at his life differently; he called it an experiment in “making the world work.” He committed himself to examining every aspect of his life and pledging it to the service of humankind. His experiment resulted in some of the greatest achievements of the twentieth century.
Within his lifetime, Buckminster Fuller held twenty-seven patents, received forty-seven honorary degrees, wrote more than twenty books, was heralded as a poet, educator, engineer, mathematician, artist, and more. He was called the Leonardo DaVinci of our time. And it was all due to the commitment he made back in 1927 on the icy midnight shore of Lake Michigan.

Why Commitment?

Let me sketch for you what your quest looks like without commitment. Then let’s look at the difference commitment makes.

Let’s say you’re going after something extremely difficult. You don’t need commitment to achieve the easy. You want to publish your novel? Join the ranks of thousands of new would-be novelists who try and fail each year. You plan to make the Olympic swim team next year? You’re seeking entry into a group so elite that only a handful of excellent swimmers ever make it. You want to become CEO of a wildly successful company? Join the melee of highly qualified candidates, some of whom will stop at nothing to one-up you. Whatever your dream, let’s assume it’s something extremely challenging—and extremely worthwhile.

Let’s say you get up enough courage to go for it, but you haven’t really made a commitment. You tell yourself, “Well, I’ll try.” You’re not committed to doing whatever it takes to succeed. In fact, you’ve given yourself an out. Now, when you fall short of the mark, you can say, “Well, I tried.”

Trying doesn’t work. When you’re not committed, you leave a crack open for hesitation. Hesitation leaks energy. Energy leaks reduce the chance of Quantum Success.

Without commitment, you stay focused on what is rather than what could be. You don’t see how to achieve the impossible because it still looks impossible. You don’t see the tiny path up
the mountainside that will get you over the top because you’re too busy staring at the mountain in its enormity.

Now let’s look at the same scenario when you’re committed.

Commitment allows you to switch your focus to what’s possible. You become like Alice going through the looking glass. One minute, you’re looking at yourself, just as you are; the next, you’re looking at a whole new world that you couldn’t see a moment before. And all because you took a single step forward. That one step was all it took to punch through from the limited “what is” to the unlimited “what can be.” The force that propelled the step: commitment.

Let’s say you win the job of your dreams, but after two days at work you realize the workload is far beyond your skill. Without commitment, all you see is yourself in your present form: inadequate. You’re certain you’ll mess up, disgrace yourself, and get fired, so you quit to avoid the pain of failure.

If you went into the new job with the commitment to give it all you’ve got, whether you believed you could do it or not, your mind’s eye would see the competent employee that you could be a month from now, with the proper training and some practice, boldly reaching and exceeding the company’s expectations. That vision would become reality for you, and all your efforts would go into making it happen.

Commitment is the ultimate expression of free will. Without it, things look impossible, and you give in to appearances. With it, you’re able to keep on moving forward, in spite of discouraging circumstances.

**Why Power and Good Fortune Follow Commitment**

A friend told me of a beloved piano teacher from childhood who used to fly into a passion when anybody would say, “Gee, it must be nice to be so talented, to have the gift of playing so
well.” These people, the pianist complained, seemed to think her musical ability just descended on her like a magic spell: One minute she was all thumbs; the next, she was breezily pouring Prokofiev onto the keys. They didn’t see the long hours of boring scales, the Saturday outings traded away for more practice time, the fingers so sore that they had to be soaked in warm water. All they saw were the results, which looked effortless. I do believe that there’s such a thing as natural talent, but the world is full of talented people who don’t accomplish much. It takes commitment to develop what’s there.

To the uncommitted, the committed look strangely fortunate. Happy circumstances just seem to land in their laps. They seem, almost uncannily, to meet the people they need to know and find the opportunities they need to find. They see solutions where others only see obstacles. But the committed will tell you it’s not because they view things differently than the non-committed; it’s because they never stop looking for a way to make their dreams happen.

That’s the primary characteristic of committed people: they’re driven by their dreams. Odds are, you’ve known—and possibly been driven crazy by—people like this. But they’re infinitely rewarding to know.

A quantum difference exists between finding that passion and merely giving your word. Committed people behave like people in love—commitment is much like a love affair. Haven’t you known people who were indifferent to marriage until they fell head over heels in love? It’s a passion. The cynical might even call it an obsession. But there are things in this world that can only be accomplished within the blast furnace of obsession.
Some things that are worth doing take an extraordinary amount of fire. I would never have been able to turn SuperCamp into a reality without a quantum passion. I held onto my intention to make it happen, throughout all the challenging times. Giving up was never an option in my mind. I held the intention so firmly that it created a mass of energy, a vision that others could see, touch, hold, and believe in.

**Throw Yourself Into Your Vision**

This is how you harness the power of commitment: you find out what you love passionately enough to give it all you’ve got, then you give it.

Commitment can spring from anything that inspires strong feeling. It can be motivated by a deeply felt desire, a strongly held principle, or the desire to make a difference in people’s lives.

It comes down to a simple moment of decision: will you, or will you not, do whatever it takes?

Once you’ve made the vow to follow your passion no matter what, your commitment carries you through. It’s the “no matter what” part that holds all the power. You’re locked into staying the course. You may feel discouraged, even hopeless. You may lose all your confidence in yourself. It doesn’t matter. None of it matters. You’ve vowed to go on trying *no matter what*. Circumstances become irrelevant in the face of commitment.

No matter what inspires you, no matter how you approach it, in order to harness the titanic strength of commitment, let your passion take over. Give yourself permission to lose yourself utterly in what you love. You’ll have no choice but to commit.
Commitment Has the Power to Change the World

• Commitment is the desire to do *whatever it takes* to make your vision happen.
• Commitment carries you through when all your other reserves have failed.
• Commitment calls forth help from unexpected sources.