



## **The One Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results**

*Gary Keller, Jay Papasan*

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*The One Thing* explains the success habit to overcome the six lies that block our success, beat the seven thieves that steal time, and leverage the laws of purpose, priority, and productivity.

## **The One Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results Details**

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# From Reader Review The One Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results for online ebook

## David Huff says

Often, motivational books take a few key points, which could be summarized on an index card, and with varying degrees of agony stretch them to fill a book. "The One Thing" could've fallen into this trap with a significant thud, since it basically is about ... well ... one thing. In a word: Focus.

That said, let me give Gary Keller some credit for taking one simple concept, and doing a consistently good job elaborating on it and keeping his book relevant and interesting all the way through. The concept: in every area of your life, find the most important thing that you need to focus on for maximum results, in each area, and then use time-blocking and other methods to allow yourself to concentrate exclusively on your "one thing" until it's accomplished.

He augments this one concept with lots of actionable tips that are very practical, and easy to understand and implement. If you'd like to find ideas and pointers for prioritizing the things in life that matter to you the most, and getting them done, this is a book from which you will certainly benefit. The key, of course, for any of us, in reading motivational books, is to then put the ideas into action -- by actually doing the "one thing"! A worthwhile read.

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## Dark Matter says

This and more reviews, interviews etc on Dark Matter Zine, an online magazine.

<http://www.darkmatterzine.com>. This review was written by James Kennedy for Dark Matter Zine.

Self-help is fantasy for some people and both genres serve similar purposes for the reader. Both genres stimulate our imaginations and allow us to step into the shoes of someone much more powerful than ourselves. Both genres stimulate creativity and encourage lateral thinking, and both genres are capable of conjuring up idyllic (or dystopian) futures from the author's imagination that can stimulate us (or scare us). The only major difference between the two is that self-help is written literally like an instruction manual whereas the messages in fantasy novels are hidden behind multiple layers of complexity worthy of extended literary analysis.

Admittedly, I usually don't like self-help books. At worst, they can seem preachy and idiosyncratic. They overuse bold, italics and underlining, which makes the insulting assumption that, like those office workers I mentioned previously, I am incapable of focusing on extended prose. Only a tiny minority of self-help books persist with long-term fame (Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus, for example), while the vast majority get thrown out along with each passing fad.

That said, I do like some self-help books. It was an excellent self-help book that encouraged me to start reading back in 2011. I bought David Buzan's Speed Reading from a market stall and used it (along with a blog) as motivation to read hundreds of books in the two years that followed. I lapped it up because I needed it. By applying the same logic, I conclude that the target audience of The One Thing is a sedentary desk-worker overwhelmed with boring, repetitive filing tasks and whose life has no sense of fulfillment. I didn't

gain anything from this book because thankfully, I'm not one of those people. I want you to read this review with an image of the book's target readers in mind.

The One Thing is set in a fantasy world where small-minded, burned-out office workers busy themselves with mundane tasks like organising emails into folders or rearranging staples. People's attention spans have been crushed, creativity has been killed, and people only skim-read because they have no time to pause and reflect. People are cogs in corporate machines and have forgotten how to think for themselves. Their universe is no wider than an office cubicle, and their only 'window' is a glaring computer screen.

The book tried to improve these people's lives with the following mantra: "Focus on one thing at a time". It then spends 240 pages rephrasing this same message repeatedly with bewildering diagrams. Some of these diagrams are so confusing that they look satirical. (I'll be respectful and not post them here.)

The book's biggest downfall is that it lacks ethos, or credibility. There are no historical references (in fact, there are no references at all) and the "exemplary people" mentioned in this book are all either modern-day corporations or billionaires. Predictably, the book mentions how Apple and Bill Gates both succeeded because they focused on their "One Thing", but the logic of this link is tenuous at best. Where the 'good' self-help books make ample references to ancient wisdom and modern-day science and give dozens of inspiring anecdotes and statistics, The One Thing fails to deliver on all those fronts. I have no reason to take anything in The One Thing seriously.

There's no foreword. There's no preface. I therefore start reading chapter one without knowing the authors, without knowing why I should read this book and without knowing what I'm going to gain from it. This is a failing of The One Thing, not of the self-help genre in general. Tony Buzan, to name just one example, puts huge emphasis on the successes of his program before we even start reading. He peppers his writing with inspiring stories that are interesting to share with friends. The One Thing's authors, however, have cut out all the useful parts (including references, which would have made the book somewhat credible) to make room for some more "fat" in the middle chapters. As a result, The One Thing is a book of zero importance.

The book is also bland. Take this quote as an example of its banality:

I ask, "How much money do you want to earn?" I get all kinds of answers, but usually the number is quite high. When I ask, "How did you pick this number?" I frequently get the familiar answer: "Don't know". I then ask, "Can you tell me your definition of a financially wealthy person?" Invariably, I get numbers that start at a million dollars and go up from there. When I ask how they arrived at this, they often say, "It sounds like a lot." My response is, "It is, and it isn't. It all depends on what you'd do with it".

Most of the book is written in this nonsensical language. It hasn't even been proofread properly and grammatical errors are surprisingly regular. Lacks humour throughout. I wish it didn't take itself so seriously!

The One Thing doesn't stand up to the competition. It tells you how to improve your life, but doesn't do nearly as well as Buddhist books like Happiness or Tiny Buddha, which are also classed as 'self-help'. It's so bland that it's not quite bad enough to be cleverly satirical (like Fight Club); and it lacks the depth of science and history that Malcolm Gladwell's Outliers brought to the table in 2008.

As far as "how to improve your life" goes, it's nothing compared with Lin Yutang's The Importance of Living, who wrote at length in beautiful language about the position and placement of objects on your desk, and how to clear your mind before working. Lin Yutang even told us at what times of day we are most

productive.

The One Thing is a failed attempt at enlightenment for people in very boring lines of work. Take chapter 12 for example, which is titled “The Path to Great Questions”. After walking us through a brainstorming technique designed to formulate such “great questions”, the authors give us these four lame examples:

What can I do to increase sales?

What can I do to double sales?

What can I do to double sales in six months?

What can I do to increase my sales by 5 per cent this year?

WHAT? Is that all that’s on the author’s mind? So dull...

My criticisms aren’t all subjective, either. I also found this book internally-contradictory in places. There’s a whole chapter on “don’t be self-disciplined” (which is controversial purely for its own sake). Just ten pages later, the author says we should all be self-disciplined again, and spends three pages describing an experiment that suggested toddlers with more willpower would grow up to be happier, smarter, richer, healthier adults. So should we be self-disciplined or not? Confusing.

Here’s another contradiction: on page 73, he writes, underlined, “A balanced life is a myth”. We then wade through nine pages of jargon and idiosyncratic diagrams before finding the author’s proposed alternative on page 82: “Counterbalance your personal life bucket” (sic). This is another contradiction at worst, or just jargon-juggling at best. He’s certainly not giving useful advice.

I laughed when I reached page 114. Here, the “One Thing” theory collapses when the authors explain that life is full of “One Things” and then asks us to do all of them in balance. (It therefore looks like the “One Thing” theory has been disproven!)

In conclusion, The One Thing is an idiosyncratic, pointlessly antagonistic and self-contradictory book written for people with no time (or for search engines!). It has tiny chapters, is highly visual, and makes heavy use of capitals, italics and underlining. Actually, this book is so repetitive and confusing that I wouldn’t be surprised to learn that it’s been written for search engines rather than people. This might just be the world’s first “search-engine optimised” book! Such poor-quality conveyance of such poor-quality ideas only deserves to be condensed into a one-page article and posted onto LinkedIn so we can all skim past it. It should never have been made into a book.

As a metaphor, this book is like a non-dry hand wash. I walk past it, I press it and I use it just because it’s there. It feels cold and flavourless and drips off my skin rather than sinking in. Even though it has a short-lived positive impact, I will never feel any long term benefits from having picked it up.

Reading this book is like eating plain tofu straight from the fridge. It’s not unhealthy, it’s just very, very bland—and around half-way through, you’ll realise it’s so pointless and tasteless that you’ll be mocking yourself for ever having read it. Aimed at Fight Club’s protagonist. Not recommended for anyone.

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### Taylor Pearson says

Honestly, I hated to love this book. But, love it I did.

Another 250 page business book about a concept that can be summed up in 1 sentence? Yes. Another one.

About 70% into the book I made a note that, "this book just drills. It's attacking one point in space from every possible angle. the one thing of the books is it to teach people the ONE Thing."

Similar to Work the System, the book is short on actionable advice. Why? You don't need it. All you need to do is figure out your One Big Thing and HAMMER ON IT.

In a world with an ever increasing number of options and distractions, the scarcity is attention and focus and the ones that will reap the rewards are the ones that acknowledge and build their lives not around novelty and breadth, but meaning and depth.

That's the takeaway and it was well worth 130 pages of having it drilled into my head. If you sort of believe that but would like to have Gary Keller and Jay Papasan drill it into your head, read the book.

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### **Jorge Fonseca says**

I disliked the book, it's a meshed up version other self help books, like "How to win friends and influence people" from Dale Carnegie; "Think and grow rich" from Napoleon Hill and others alike.

It's a boring read, you get the message 20 pages into the book, and the rest of the book is repetitive.

The reason I give it 2 starts is that at least the main message is interesting, focus in accomplish one thing at a time, forget everything else. That's it, I just gave you the whole book and saved you some money.

How to Win Friends and Influence People  
Think and Grow Rich

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### **Loy Machedo says**

Loy Machedo's Book Review – The One Thing by Gary Keller with Jay Papasan

I like thought provoking books especially those which are easy to read and light in its content. Gary Keller & Jay Papasan's 'The One Thing' fits in beautifully within that framework of being engaging, interesting and substantive.

The Book starts off with a beautiful Russian Quote – If you chase two rabbits, you will not catch either one. And then the content moves on to revolve around one single theme 'The One Thing'.

The First Part address the 6 most popular beliefs and breaks them down to ground reality as to why they are lies and misleading:

1. Everything Matters Equally
2. Multitasking is Good
3. Success Requires a Disciplined Life
4. Willpower is Always on Will-Call
5. A Balanced Life is Required

## 6. Big is Bad

The Second Part of the book focuses on the Truth to Productivity:

1. The Focusing Question – How asking the right questions does wonder for you
2. The Success Habit – Start with the Big Stuff & the A Priority Tasks
3. The Path of Greatness – How to use the Priority Quadrant

Part Three encapsulates how to live ones life to achieve greatness – The Sequence being Purpose, Priority, Productivity and Profits

1. Live with Purpose – Live a life of Fulfillment
2. Live by Priority – Break Down your Goals
3. Live for Productivity – Block Time for A-Tasks
4. The Three Commitments – Mastery + Purpose + Accountability
5. The Four Thieves – Inability to say No, Fear of Chaos, Poor Health Habits and Goal Supported Environment

Finally, the concluding chapter with The Journey

Who is Jay Papsan & Gary Keller?

Jay Papasan is the former editor at HarperCollins Publishers and is the Vice President of Publishing at Keller Williams.

Gary Keller is the Chairman of the Board and Cofounder of Keller Williams Realty, Inc. which holds the #1 Position as the largest real estate company in the US

Moment of Truth

A entertaining and engaging book that gives you the aha-moments where you really sit down and want to reflect on the pieces of advice given to you. I liked the book very much and I would recommend it to others.

Overall Rating

8 out of 10

Loy Machedo

loymachedo dot com

whoisloymachedo dot com

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## Trever says

I find it hard on how to rate this book. I go back and forth on if I should rate it 2 or 4 stars, so I settled in the middle with 3.

It could be worth 4 stars, because it is a great anthology of what motivates us and keeps going towards our ONE thing.

It could be worth 2 stars, because it is really redundant and doesn't really show any great resources or research behind each figure.

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**Ahmad hosseini says**

“Only living big will let you experience true life and work potential.”

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???? ?? ?????? ??? ?? ??? ?? ?????? ?? ???:

1. ?????? ???? ???? ???? (To-Do list)
2. ?????? ???? ?????? ?? ?? ???? ???? (success list)
3. ?????? ?? ?????? ???? ???? ? ???? ???? ???? ???? (The One Thing)

## André Bueno says

This book is really deep. While the title is easily marketable I felt the insight was really profound and one of those books I'll definitely need to reference throughout my journey.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- Extraordinary results are determined by how narrow you can make your focus
- Do fewer things for more effect instead of doing more things with side effects
- Small dominos can topple much larger dominos; stack them right
- Success is built sequentially
- Not everything deserves equal time
- Achievers always work from a clear sense of priority
- Multitasking is a lie and it does not work
- Discipline and habit intersect
- It takes 66 days to create a habit
- Become a person of powerful habits
- Willpower is limited
- Success = Being appropriate in the moments of your life

- Connecting purpose, priority, and productivity determines how high above the rest successful individuals and profitable businesses rise
- Happiness happens on the way to fulfillment
- Purpose without priority is powerless
- Resting is as important as working
- To experience extra ordinary results, be a maker in the morning and a manager in the afternoon (See Paul Graham's article: Maker's Schedule, Manager's Schedule)
- Personal energy mismanagement is a silent thief of productivity
- Your environment must support your goals

### PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- Create a success list as compared to a to-do list
- Say “no” more
- Be like a surgeon and avoid distractions; respect my work
- Ask quality questions
- Determine my “System”
- After you have picked your one thing, your number one priority should be protecting the time you use to work with your ONE thing.
- You should reserve four hours of non-interrupted time from your day only to work with your ONE thing.

### THE FOCUSING QUESTION

“A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.” - Chinese proverb

So too must the journey toward extraordinary results. To determine that first step (and every step thereafter) we have to ask the right question. Keller calls it the Focusing Question:

“What’s the ONE Thing I can do such that by doing it everything else will be easier or unnecessary?”

Once you’re asking the right question, the key is to use it to narrow down all the things that you could do, to the ONE Thing that you SHOULD do. Then it goes like this:

The ONE Thing you should do today feeds into your ONE Thing this week, then this month... and so on. These small steps create the path to your ONE big goal.

“One thing” is in reference to an idea. Everyone should pick one thing and focus completely to the one thing only.

### FAVORITE ANECDOTES

Michael Phelps selected swimming and practiced six hours every day. And he became the most successful swimmer and most decorated Olympian of all time with 22 medals.

Steve Jobs reduced number of Apples products when he rejoined Apple and rest is history we all know.

### MEANINGFUL QUOTES

“Be like a postage stamp— stick to one thing until you get there.” – Josh Billings

“Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least.” – Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

“To do two things at once is to do neither.” – Publilius Syrus

“Success is simple. Do what’s right, the right way, at the right time.” – Arnold H. Glasow

“People do not decide their futures, they decide their habits and their habits decide their futures.” – F. M. Alexander

“Productivity isn’t about being a workhorse, keeping busy or burning the midnight oil. . . . It’s more about priorities, planning, and fiercely protecting your time.” – Margarita Tartakovsky

“Efficiency is doing the thing right. Effectiveness is doing the right thing.” – Peter Drucker

“Surround yourself only with people who are going to lift you higher.” – Oprah Winfrey

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### **Amir Tesla says**

It was a really nice book, very well-written and scientifically backed

Gary Keller argues that you must always focus on one and only one thing, regarding the goal you have that by accomplishing it, next steps towards the same goal becomes easier.

I think this book has a tremendous potential to increase one's productivity and effectiveness if the given pieces of advice are applied.

I really liked the book and would definitely recommend it to those who seek success.

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### **Patrick Hayslett says**

Over 2,600 books have been written about time management. Why? Because they're not working! There's something everyone is missing...

We have books, blogs, apps, pep talks and lots of personal effort. The deck should be stacked in our favor. So how does time end up managing us more than we manage it?

"The One Thing" is the first resource I've come across with an answer that works.

It helps you move forward with purpose instead of being reactive to stay afloat.

The book teaches you to build a big vision, then zoom in to a narrow focus that kills the most birds with one stone. This may not seem impressive, but the way it's presented helps you TRULY understand. It guides you around landmines like productivity lies and productivity killers.

Most importantly, it gives you a plan that's easy to understand and follow. The genius is in the simplicity. Please don't let a craving for sophistication get in the way of forward progress toward awesome goals! Remember: people in the ivory tower tend to stay put.

This book has earned all five stars from my rating, and that's saying a lot. I'm a hard sell. Half way through 2013, it's by far the front runner for my best book of the year.

If you read the reviews on Amazon, \*please\* take note:

- 1) There's controversy over reviews showing up before the release date of the book, leading to accusations that it's just a marketing tactic. Whether it's true or not, ignore it. The results are real.
- 2) Some reviews say it's nothing groundbreaking, that it's good for the beginner only, and so on. They miss the point.

Give this book a chance. It passes my b.s. filter. You'll be re-reading it and taking notes!

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### **Jacob says**

I recently finished reading the book, "The ONE Thing" by Gary Keller and Jay Papasan. As part of my book group I hosted a live call with Jay Papasan and members of the group last week. This book was very insightful. I judge books in this genre based on asking myself, "How much, if at all, will this book change my daily behavior?" Based on that criteria I would have to rank this book very high as it will change my behavior.

The premise of The ONE Thing is that at any given point in time, there is only one thing that you should focus on doing. Your one thing is the thing that moves you the closest or the fastest toward your goal.

Around that theme the authors talk about the major lies that exist in the "productivity" community. These include the idea of multitasking, being disciplined, a balanced life, and others. The core of the book focuses around what the authors call the "Focusing Question," which is, What is the One thing I can do such that by doing it everything else will be easier or unnecessary? The book also talks about 3 commitments to productivity, 4 Thieves of productivity and other helpful insights around time management and time blocking.

I loved this book. Its concept is obviously simple and yet very important. It's easy to apply immediately and it can produce dramatic results fast. One of my favorite ideas from the book is the idea that we must time block our one thing. That means putting it on our schedule and protecting that time. If we lose some of that time (which is inevitable) from distractions or emergencies we must replace it.

Another great insight I took from the book is the idea of aligning the "right now moment" with our long term goals and plans. If my goal is to help people become greater producers then I need to ask, "What is the ONE thing I can do in the next five years to help people become greater producers?" Then ask, what is the one thing I can do this year to achieve my five year goal to help people become greater producers?" Then ask, what is the one thing I can do this month.... and then this week, and then right now; to help me achieve that goal? The questions are stacked and this of course implies that we all have a lot of ONE things but at any given time or moment we really do only have one thing.

I also love the chapter about will power. It reminded me of the sections about will power from "The Power

of Habit" that I read last year and it was a good reminder about how critical it is to do the most important things when you have a full reserve of will power and to build habits out of the important things that currently require a lot of will power to accomplish.

And in case you are wondering why writing this blog post right now is my ONE thing... the answer is this. My ONE thing is to bring out the inner producer in all of us, and right now the ONE thing I can do is to share this book with the greatest number of people within my circle of influence as possible. Enjoy the book.

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## **W. Whalin says**

I read THE ONE THING and it is a well-crafted book. I didn't need to use my yellow highlighter on it because the authors (or some graphic artist) underlined passages throughout on the text—as though the reader did it. The text is well-executed with summary bullet points at the end of each chapter and graphically pleasing with pull quotations.

Here's my reason for giving this book two stars. The authors get commended for their execution but not their content. The contents are little but worn phrases and clichés that anyone who has read a business book in the last ten years has probably already heard. I found little new. You can skip this one in my view.

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## **Manoj Arora says**

My learnings from the book

- (1) If you chase two rabbits, you will not catch either
- (2) Go narrow and deep. Ignore all the things that you could do, and do only the things that you should do
- (3) Not all things matter equally. Find those that matter the most.
- (4) You only have so much time and energy. When you spread yourself out, you end up being thin.
- (5) No one is self made. No one succeeds alone. No one. There are many people, wishes and hundreds of situations that must fall in place for you to succeed.
- (6) The line between passion and skill is often blurred. Passion leads to disproportionate practise leading to higher skills leading to better results, which feeds passion further. This chain reaction spirals to extraordinary results.
- (7) Things that matter most must never be at the mercy of things that don't. Everything does not matter equally. Prioritise.
- (8) Things that are most important do not often scream the loudest.
- (9) Being busy is not enough. So are the ants.
- (10) Multitasking is a myth. A human mind can focus on one task at a time. Only involuntary tasks or automated tasks can happen in parallel.
- (11) Task switching costs us valuable time to reach the same productivity level as we were, before we left the task.
- (12) Select the right task, work consistently on it, make it a habit, and then you are liberated from having to monitor it ever. It is automated in your brain.
- (13) Will power is not available on will. It keeps getting diminished through the day as you use it.
- (14) Do your toughest task in the morning when your will power is at its peak.
- (15) A Balanced life is a myth. The reason why we should not pursue balance is that magic happens, not in

the middle, but in the extremes.

(16) To achieve extraordinary results, you must chose what matters mostand give it all the time it demands. This requires getting extremely out of balance in relation to other work issues. You may infrequently counterbalance to address them.

(17) No one knows their ultimate ceiling for achievement. Giving it a shot is the only way to get an idea.

(18) On the journey to achieving big, you get bigger. Achieving big requires growth, and by the time you arrive, you are big too !

(19) People who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world are the only ones who do.

(20) think big, Aim high, Act bold

(21) Keep your most important appointment with your No. 1 priority..everyday without fail

(22) Until your most important thing of the day is done, everything else is a distraction

(23) Turn off your phone, shutdown your email, close your browser. Your most important work deserves 100% of your attention

(24) Focus is about deciding what things you are not going to do.

(25) When you strive for greatness, clutter is bound to show up because of your extreme focus on one thing. If a cluttered desk is an indicator of a cluttered mind, what, then represents an empty desk?

(26) It is only when you can visualise a bigger life, can you hope of living one.

(27) Whenever you look back at your life, the things that might cause you the biggest regrets are the things that you did not do. Your actions may be stupid, but it is your inaction that will cause you the regret.

(28) When you dont know what matters most, anything makes sense. The best lives aren't lead this way.

**Zoubir says**

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## Perry says

BY CAPTAIN OBVIOUS

The book's big secret: concentrate on ONE thing at a time.

How does it take 140 pages to get ONE Firm Grasp of ONE concept?

State it ONE Hundred different ways.

**SAVE YOUR MONEY!**

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