



Why Most People Never Test Their Power to Change Things

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Why Most People Do Not Test Their Agency

A lot of outcomes sit there, unclaimed, because we do not test for them. We assume the rules are fixed. We accept “that is how things work.” Then we internalize the results as fate. The pattern is simple: self-doubt, a few rejections, a soft landing into resignation. This feels safe. The cost is enormous.

Here is the shift: treat willfulness as a trainable stance, not a rare gene. Agency grows with use. You do not need bravado. You need a simple operating system for thought, an everyday way to decide, ask, and keep going. This is cognitive design, not personality worship. You can build the habit of testing the world.

Most people never even try to ask directly for what they want. When they do, they stop after the first “no.” The rejection hurts. The response feels personal. But the difference between polite compliance and quiet insistence is massive. The world bends more than you expect when you push, and when you keep pushing.

The Agency Stack: Optimism, Willfulness, Persistence

Think in layers, structured thinking you can run under pressure:

- **Optimism (Foundation):** not rose-colored. A grounded belief that better is possible and reachable from here. Without this, you will not start, you will not ask, and you will not last. This is the cognitive substrate that keeps the system powered.
- **Willfulness (Intent):** the decision to shape conditions, not wait for them. “I am going to keep going until this works, and I will figure out the challenges.”



That promise changes your posture. You move differently.

- **Persistence (Action):** the practice of staying with something long enough for probability to work in your favor. Most outcomes require exposure time. Persistence increases your luck surface area, more trials, more doors, more chances for something to break open.

Optimism keeps you from self-canceling. Willfulness points you at the door. Persistence knocks on the door until it opens, or you find the one that will.

This stack is an operating system for thought you can install. Beliefs that control behavior, behavior that compounds into outcomes.

Asking as a High-Variance Tool

“Ask for what you want” sounds simple. The execution is not. Asking is a high-variance move. You will hear “no.” The rejection will sting. But when a “yes” lands, the upside is often disproportionate to the effort. A single permission, introduction, or early customer can reset your trajectory.

How to make asking practical without turning it into theater:

- **Be specific:** “Can we pilot this with your team next week?” beats “What do you think?”
- **Set a quota:** commit to a weekly number of direct asks. Small numbers compound.
- **Expect rejection:** build a short recovery ritual (walk, note the lesson, send the next ask). Keep moving.
- **Track attempts:** measuring attempts prevents mood from masquerading as data.
- **Calibrate by feedback:** if you get silence, change the channel (timing, medium, clarity). If you get a “not now,” ask for the condition that would make it a “yes.”

This approach is not manipulation. This is simple agency: you articulate a need, you test reality, you learn. The emotional cost is the tuition. The occasional win is the payoff that covers the course.



Survive Long Enough for Luck to Matter

Persistence is not romance; persistence is math. If a worthwhile outcome usually takes many cycles, quitting early guarantees failure. Staying increases your exposure to luck, timing, a partner, a policy shift, a customer who finally shows up.

A common pattern in outlier stories is survival. The Airbnb example is vivid: things were dire, uncomfortable tradeoffs, repeated rejections, conflict with entrenched interests. They did not stop. They lasted long enough for luck to move in their direction. You do not need the theatrics to learn the principle: extend your runway, psychological and practical, so effort has time to work.

Practical ways to extend the runway and widen your luck surface area:

- **Reduce the cost of each cycle:** shorter experiments, faster feedback, smaller stakes per iteration.
- **Define the next proof:** the smallest credible win that unlocks the next step.
- **Tell the story often:** more people knowing what you are trying to do increases collision with help.
- **Keep a steady cadence:** consistency compounds; irregular bursts burn energy and trust.
- **Protect the core:** sleep, basic health, simple routines. You are building durability, not drama.

This is structured cognition under pressure. You are not hoping harder; you are designing your environment so persistence becomes probable, not heroic.

Calibrate Willfulness: Constraints, Bias, and Care

There are hard edges to this model. Important ones.

- **Systemic constraints are real.** Not every door opens with effort. Context matters. Willfulness cannot erase unfairness, but it can clarify where to press, where to route around, and when to pick a different hill.
- **Survivorship bias is a trap.** For every extreme success, many tried just as hard and did not make it. Let the lesson be about process (ask, persist,



calibrate), not a guarantee of outcomes.

- **Uncalibrated willfulness becomes denial.** If the market is telling you something, listen. Stubbornness without feedback is waste.
- **Burnout is the hidden bill.** Constant rejection taxes your mind. You need recovery built into the plan.

Calibration tools that keep willfulness intelligent:

- **Define disconfirming signals:** before you start, write the conditions that would make you pivot. Metacognitive guardrails reduce self-deception in the heat of the moment.
- **Time-boxed sprints:** commit to a period of hard push with a scheduled review. At the review, decide: persist, adapt, or exit.
- **Two-loop feedback:** one loop for the work (what changed, what to try next), one loop for the person (energy, stress, motivation). Protect the operator.
- **Ask for reality:** when rejected, ask, “What is the decisive reason this is a ‘no’?” Gold lives there.
- **Reversible vs. irreversible:** push hard on moves you can undo; slow down when the downside is permanent.

If you remember one thing, make it this: willfulness aims, persistence advances, but calibration preserves you.

A Simple Practice to Start Today

Put this operating system for thought on the ground. Keep it ordinary.

- **Morning:** name one focused push for the day. Small, concrete, direct.
- **Midday:** make one ask that scares you a little. Keep it specific. Send it.
- **Evening:** log attempts and outcomes; note one lesson. What did you learn? What changes tomorrow? Sleep.

This is the quiet discipline that compounds. The approach is not loud. The method is not a slogan. This is structured thinking applied to your own agency, your ability to make things happen. Most people never test that ability. You can. And when you do, expect the pattern: many “no’s,” a few painful misses, and, sometimes, a yes that changes the arc. Persist long enough for that yes to find you. Protect yourself so you are still around when it arrives.



To translate this into action, here's a prompt you can run with an AI assistant or in your own journal.

Try this...

Today, make one ask that scares you a little. Keep it specific and direct. When you get an answer, note what you learned and send the next ask tomorrow.