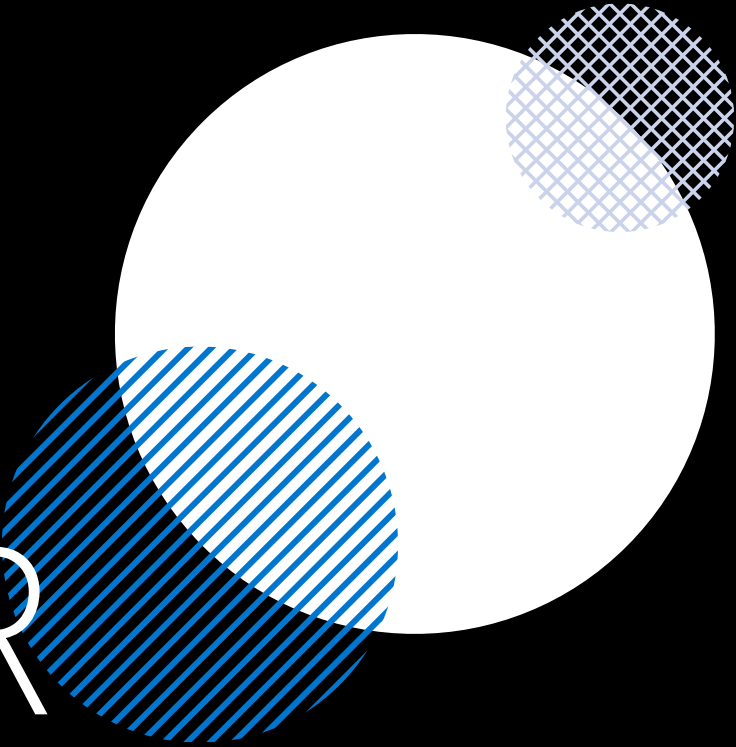
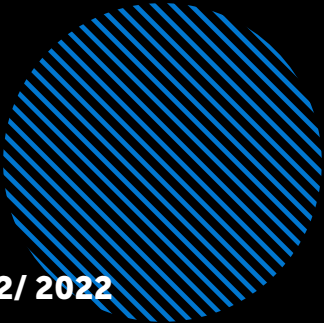




INNER CIRCLE DECEMBER



#12/ 2022

THIS MONTH

The Power of Rewards for Long
Term Motivation

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WELCOME BACK TO THE INNER CIRCLE

This is the final Inner Circle of the year.

Back in January, I promised 30 minutes of Hindi conversation, which I then scaled down to 15 minutes. I used small, measurable, and actionable goals every month to build up to the final yearly goal.

So, if you've been following along, I've introduced many language learning tactics that I'm still using to this day. I hope you've used them, too.

Some of you may remember that my 15 minute goal was reached in November. I thought about stretching to 20 but wound up settling on 18, which I hit this month.

So, how's my Hindi? Well, I can't get into politics or economics, but I can hold basic conversations about what I did, my family, and my interests. There are

still words and idioms I don't know, but I can always ask "What does that mean?" or "What does that word mean?" I'm now using the language to learn more of the language.

Hindi was very tough — as you can tell by the adjusted yearly goal. But learning to adjust a goal so that you can progress is one of the key things to pushing forward and making it a part of your routine. But in hindsight, most goals you set are very reachable or very doable.

When I first started, I was only hitting a minute or 2 minutes of conversation. They were very basic small talk phrases, like "How are you today?" and "What are your plans?"

Longer conversations seemed very far off. But once I started consistently hitting

goals towards the middle of 2022, I wasn't too worried about my yearly goal. I started focusing on reaching the next monthly goal. I was making progress, so I wanted to learn more. The only next step for me was to focus on the next monthly goal. Not the long term goal.

Once I started hitting 8 minutes, 10 minutes, and 12 minutes... the 15-minute goal seemed a lot more realistic.

And there's one technique I haven't spoken about yet. Rewards.



HOW I KEPT GOING...OR THE POWER OF REWARDS FOR LONG-TERM MOTIVATION

INNER CIRCLE 3

Does that mean I've been buying myself gifts after every month?

Well, I'll explain in a second.

But first, rewards are important for two main reasons:

1) Building good habits

2) Maintaining motivation

In order to keep going with my monthly goals, I needed to get into the habit of sitting down and studying. To create that habit, you need a cue, a routine, and a reward.

The cue, in my case, was the time I set aside to learn Hindi. If you remember our Inner Circle episode on creating habits, time and location are powerful cues. So, I had weeknights at nine p.m. in the living room. There was the morning commute where I studied on the app. And there were my weekly lessons. So, the cues prompted me to start

the routine - or start learning, whether I was with a tutor or by myself.

Then I would reward myself. The reward is necessary to help your brain remember this cue, routine, reward loop for the future.

Each month I hit my goal, I took a little bit of money and added it to an envelope. And as the money accumulated in the envelope, I would go to an art gallery that had Indian-themed art. So I constantly looked and found art that I liked. The first time that I hit my three-month goal, I bought a piece of art and hung it on the wall. And then it was really interesting; it really reinforced my study habit. I wanted more of this art, but seeing the art every day also kept me focused on reaching the goal.

It helped my motivation a lot, but it also caused some chaos in the house since we didn't have a lot of wall space.

But I think that's how I kept it going for so long. Every time I reached a monthly goal, I'd put money into the envelope... and work towards that next piece I wanted to add to the wall. And the art was almost like scouting badges or stripes on a martial arts belt. It's reflective of the progress that I made.

Was there a reward for the yearly goal?

Normally, when I reach a long term goal, I like to try to go to that country and speak the language. However, I didn't reach my original 30-minute goal, so I'm not scheduling a trip to India just yet. But if I do reach that 30-minute milestone in the future, that's when I'll give myself that long-term reward. I will book a trip to India.

So, rewards play a role in my learning process, but...

Most people don't really think about rewards.

See, it's very easy to *start* learning a language and put in the time and work.

Everyone does it, especially at the start of a new year — as a

New Year's Resolution. Then, they fall off. There are many reasons for falling off... but a lack of rewards is definitely one of them.

If you don't add a reward to the process, you will struggle to keep that routine because it's all work. Just speaking more isn't always enough to motivate us.

The reward doesn't need to be big or expensive, but it must be there. In the case of my art, they weren't auctioned pieces; they're from a local gallery. So, there are creative ways and inexpensive ways to reward yourself. It could be going to a restaurant, a coffee shop, or buying yourself something small.

But again, having that reward creates that loop — cue, routine, reward — that keeps you going.

It's also important to get a reward that can be tied back to your goal.

For me, the art was nice because it was something tangible that I got for my effort. Kind of like when you're a kid, you get a trophy or a patch or a badge for competing, something

physically tangible to reflect everything you put in. It also serves as positive reinforcement. I see it daily. And daily, I'm reminded that I was able to learn and speak some Hindi. Plus, it reminds me that if I can hit this goal, I can hit other goals.

Some things I used in the past were going to a restaurant serving that country's food, or going to a coffee shop, or buying a book by an author from the country whose language I was learning. The book was nice because it reminded me of all of the time I put in.

But those of you who aren't new to the Inner Circle will remember that I didn't always reach my goals. I had failures this year, too.



MISSING A MONTHLY GOAL BUT REACHING A YEARLY GOAL

Looking at 2022, I only missed my target in January, March and August.

That's a 75% success rate. And despite those three off months, I still kept at it and hit my "adjusted" goal.

It led me to an important point: just because you miss a small monthly goal, it doesn't mean you will fail at the big picture goal.

You just have to learn how to adapt. And you can learn from having to adapt.

First, you learn that the first goal was not realistic, and you have to adjust it or extend it.

If you've taken on any project - whether in your work or in your personal life - you'll quickly learn that some things end up taking longer than you had expected. That's just the way it goes sometimes. You can try to speed things up,

but some parts are outside of your control... so you have to adjust your goals and expectations.

Second, as long as you persist, you will meet your goal eventually. Even if you miss a monthly goal, you're still making progress. I missed my goal three times, but I didn't give up in those months. I was still making progress and keeping up with my schedule, just not enough to reach the promised total.

Even if I promised 10 minutes of Hindi conversation and only got 9, I still made some progress. I never stopped learning. As long as you're learning, you'll get there.

So, how about you? Did you reach your yearly goal? Be sure to let us know.

If you didn't, don't worry too much. It may only be an extra month or two away. The important thing is that you don't stop learning.

In January 2023, I'll be letting you know what my next language is. And I'll be moving away from this conversation-based goal and towards a standardized test that will actually be able to look at my points. So this is going to be a lot more pressure for me.

I'm looking forward to a new challenge in the New Year.

See you in 2023!

Email us at inner.circle@innovativelanguage.com, and stay tuned for the next Inner Circle.