

# Do you shoot from the hip?



"WINGING IT IS  
NOTHING MORE  
THAN A GAMBLE."

– FRANK SONNENBERG

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*From our guest contributor, Frank Sonnenberg.*

All too often, people who shoot from the hip, and succeed, are greeted with admiration. Their success is viewed as a magical ability to ignore hard work, hope for the best, and still come out on top. To them, winging it is a way of life.

Winging it is a form of shooting craps. You gamble that, prepared or not, you'll be able to handle whatever comes up in life – sevens or snake eyes. But even veteran gamblers recognize that the odds are stacked against them. Taking a calculated risk is not the same as gambling. One is taking a risk after considered judgment; the other is leaving everything to the roll of the dice.

Originally, the term "winging it" was used to describe actors who relied on prompters in the wings because they never took the time to learn their lines. Winging it, or bluffing, certainly didn't enhance the reputation of the actor who was performing without adequate preparation. And it won't help you.

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You may have confidence in your ability to make off-the-cuff decisions; indeed, winging it may even be a habit, one you have little desire to break because it hasn't created a major problem for you – yet.

The fact is, it's impossible to substitute winging it for planning, preparation, and practice. When people wing it, they hope everything will work out, but they don't know that it will. As a result of laziness or a tendency to operate on automatic pilot, they forget that making things work takes work. As Jascha Heifetz, the renowned violinist, said, “If I don't practice one day, I know it; two days, the critics know it; three days, the public knows it.”

Practicing the basics, being prepared, and following up on details is a small price to pay for success. Crisis management – putting out fires all day long – is more expensive and it's exhausting. Winging it wastes valuable time and energy, leads to a loss of credibility, and can damage even the most promising career.

Of course, there will always be unpleasant surprises to deal with because the world isn't perfect. But you can reduce the number of crises that plague you (and the stress they cause) by maintaining discipline in areas that are controllable.

How do you stop this runaway freight train and gain control of your life? The answer is as simple as an old Chinese proverb: “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

Since winging it has much in common with gambling, the first step is to follow the precept that Gamblers Anonymous requires

of new members: Admit that you're a gambler. Once you see yourself as a gambler (rather than an astute, risk-taking person), you've taken that first important step. When you've convinced yourself that you must break out of your winging-it, shoot-from-the-hip, flip-a-coin mentality, you'll have a new lease on life. Once you incorporate some planning and preparation into your life, I'm sure you'll find that the investment leads to better, more reliable outcomes. Is it worth the effort? You bet!

For more resources about how to be successful through responsible planning, [click here!](#)

This is adapted from *BOOKSMART: Hundreds of real-world lessons for success and happiness* by Frank Sonnenberg released November 2016.



Frank is an award-winning author. He has written six books and over 300 articles. Frank was recently named one of "America's Top 100 Thought Leaders" and one of America's Most Influential Small Business Experts. Frank has served on several boards and has consulted to some of the largest and most respected companies in the world. Additionally, *FrankSonnenbergOnline* was named among the "Best 21st Century Leadership Blogs," among the "Top 100 Socially-Shared Leadership Blogs," and one of the "Best Inspirational Blogs On the Planet." Frank's new book, *BookSmart: Hundreds of real-world lessons for success and happiness* was released November 2016. © 2018 Frank Sonnenberg. All rights reserved.