

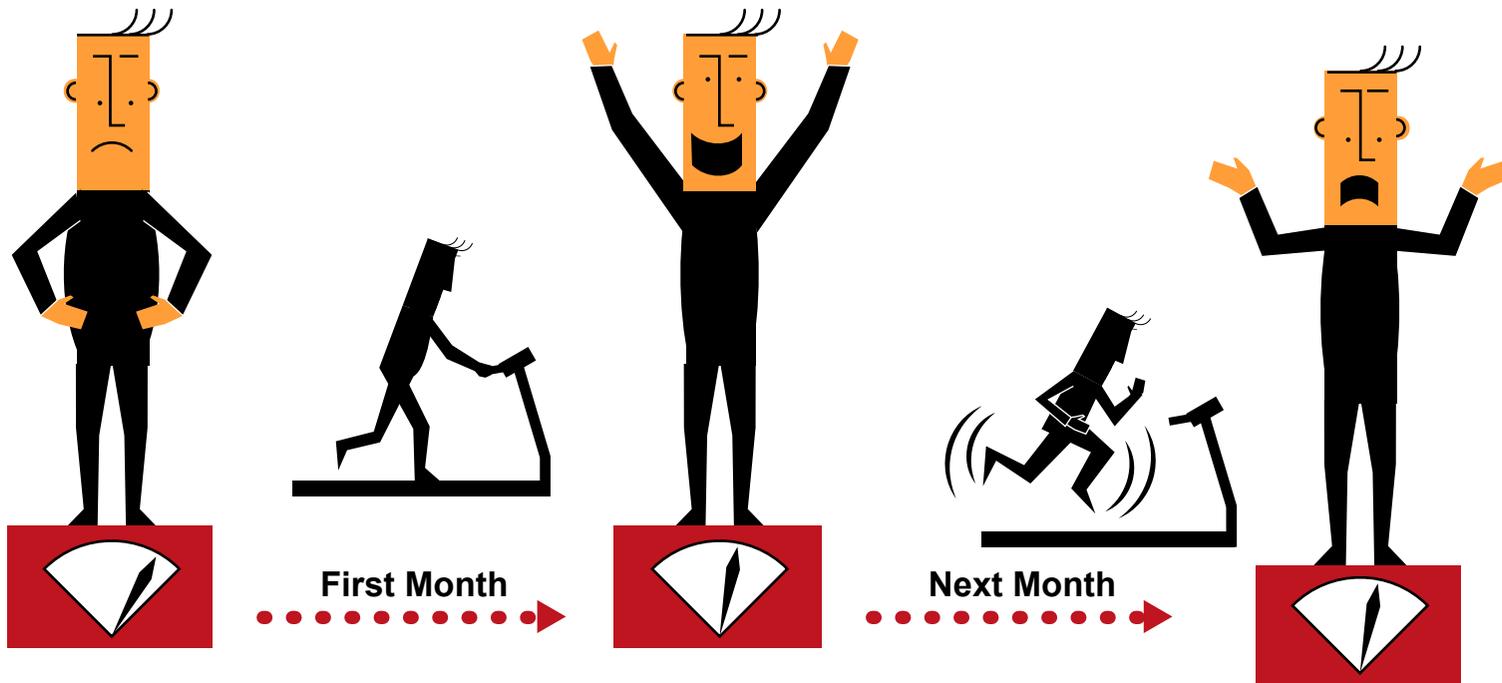
the
PLATEAU
EFFECT

Getting from
STUCK *to* SUCCESS



BOB SULLIVAN
----- and -----
HUGH THOMPSON

Why People Get Stuck...and How to Break Through



What do you do when formerly effective measure ceases to cause further change?

When doing more doesn't get you more?

Definition of Plateau Effect



The Plateau Effect is a law of nature, as real and as impactful as gravity or friction. It's built directly into the genetic code of our bodies, and into the planet we inhabit.

A real plateau means you have stopped growing. It means your mind and senses are being dulled by sameness, by a routine which sucks the life and soul out of you, by getting less and less out of life while doing more and more.

Understanding this force, and tapping into it, will let you get more from less effort, and feel more in tune with the reasons you were put on this planet.

Common Elements of the Plateau Effect

**What is causing
your plateau ?**



PLATEAU

Perfectionism

Failing Slowly

Distraction

Distorted Data

Flow Issues

Bad Timing

Greedy Algorithm

Immunity

Element 1

Immunity

People, relationships, businesses and even physical processes become immune to the same techniques, the same approaches, the same solutions.

Immunity can be frustrating – what worked so well yesterday just won't work today.



Solvent: Diversity

Immunity's Kryptonite is diversity. You've got to shake things up and be radical. Trying different approaches, techniques or procedures can shake you out of an immunity plateau.

Element 2

The Greedy Algorithm

The greedy algorithm is a concept borrowed from the field of mathematics. Here's how it works: you always pick the best short-term solution and ignore the long-term outcome.

**As it is in mathematics, and in life
the best short-term solution hardly ever leads to the best long-term outcome**

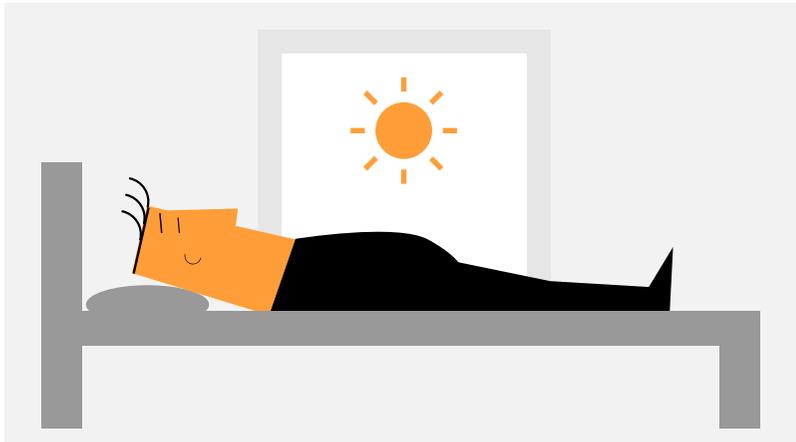
Solvent: Extend your gratification horizon

To get beyond the greedy algorithm, you need to think about solutions on a bigger timescale.

Element 3

Bad Timing

If you're working hard but you're stuck in a plateau, maybe it's as simple as taking a break.

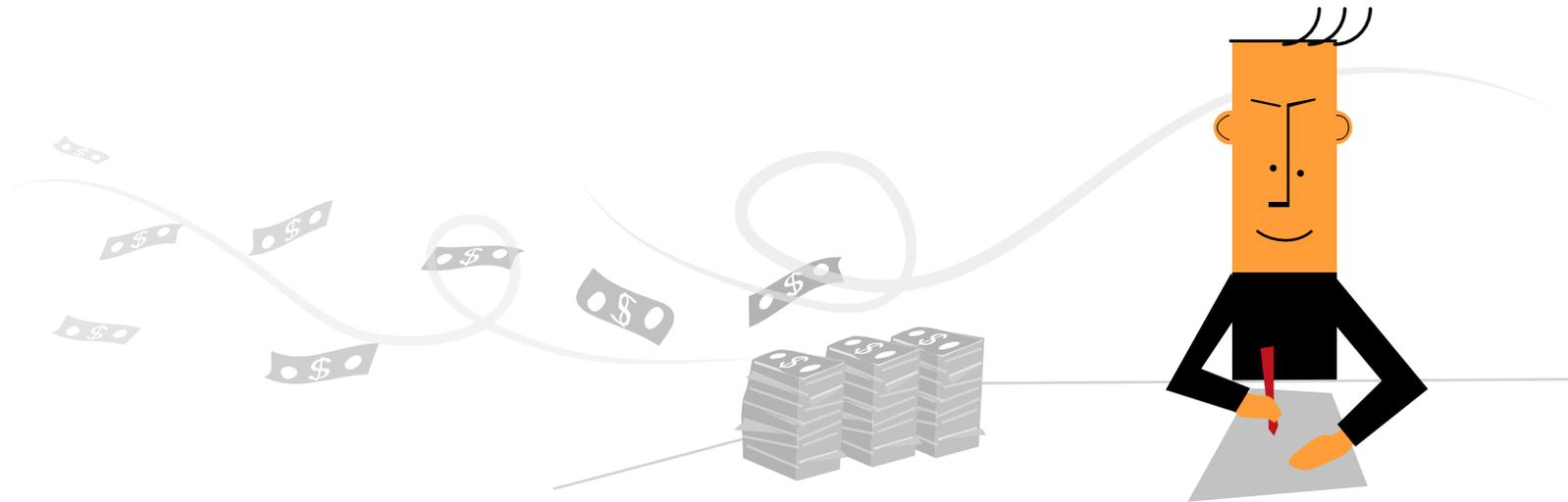


Solvent: Wait

If bad timing has you stuck in a plateau, remember, the periods of rest and inactivity are just as important as the periods of great effort, just as silence between the notes is part of the music. If you use time as a tool, you can literally wait your way out of a plateau.

Element 4 Flow Issues

Erosion: Sometimes we deplete the resources that we need to be successful. Maybe we run out of capital, or time, or skilled workers. When you hit an erosion plateau, progress tends to degrade slowly as some critical resource is gobbled up over time.



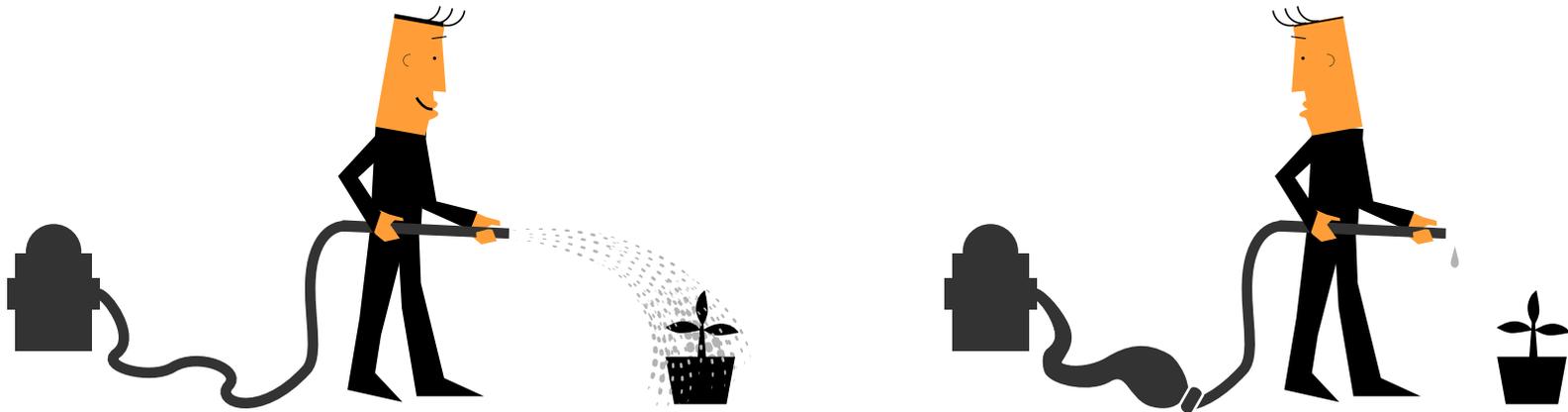
Solvent: Find a counterbalance, something that replaces the resource you consume. If you can't find a counterbalance, you might not be in a plateau at all. You may have reached a terminal point.

Step Function: Sometimes you want to add just a little more of something, but that thing is only available in bundles. The result is a jump in cost, effort, or benefit. We call these things “step functions.”



Solvent: Try to smooth out your step function. Sometimes this can be done by identifying some other person or business that has complementary peaks to your own. If you can pool your resources, you can share the cost of the step and make it look more like a comfortable ramp.

Choke Points: A choke point is the part of the system that breaks first and slows everything else down. Failing to identify a chokepoint can bring a gushing flow to an unexpected trickle.

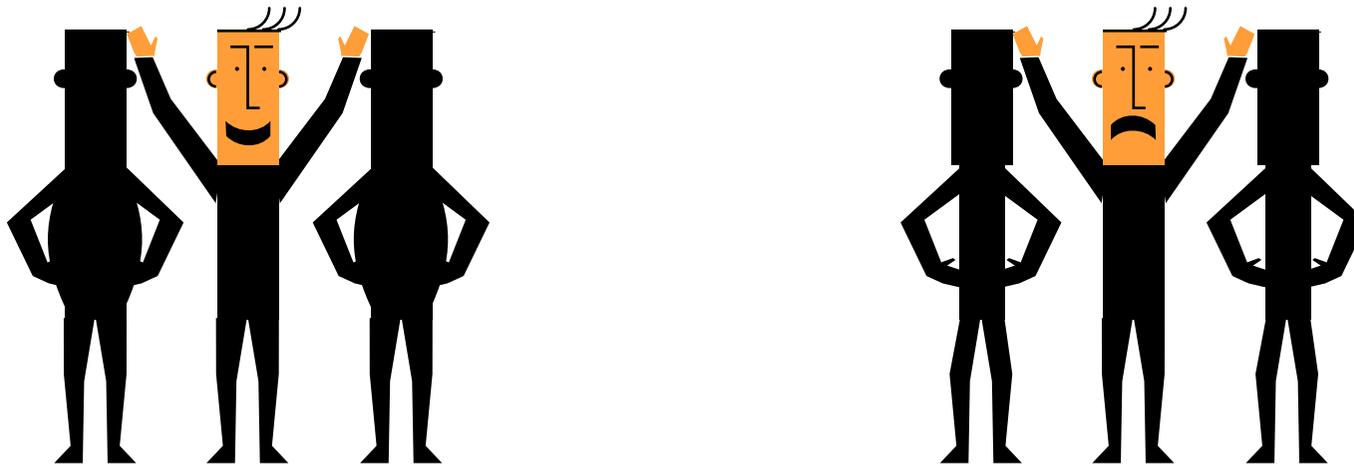


Solvent: The trick is to find out where the choke point is and creatively route your way around it.

Element 5

Distorted Data

We often react based on distorted data. Sometimes we measure the wrong things or inappropriately assess risk.

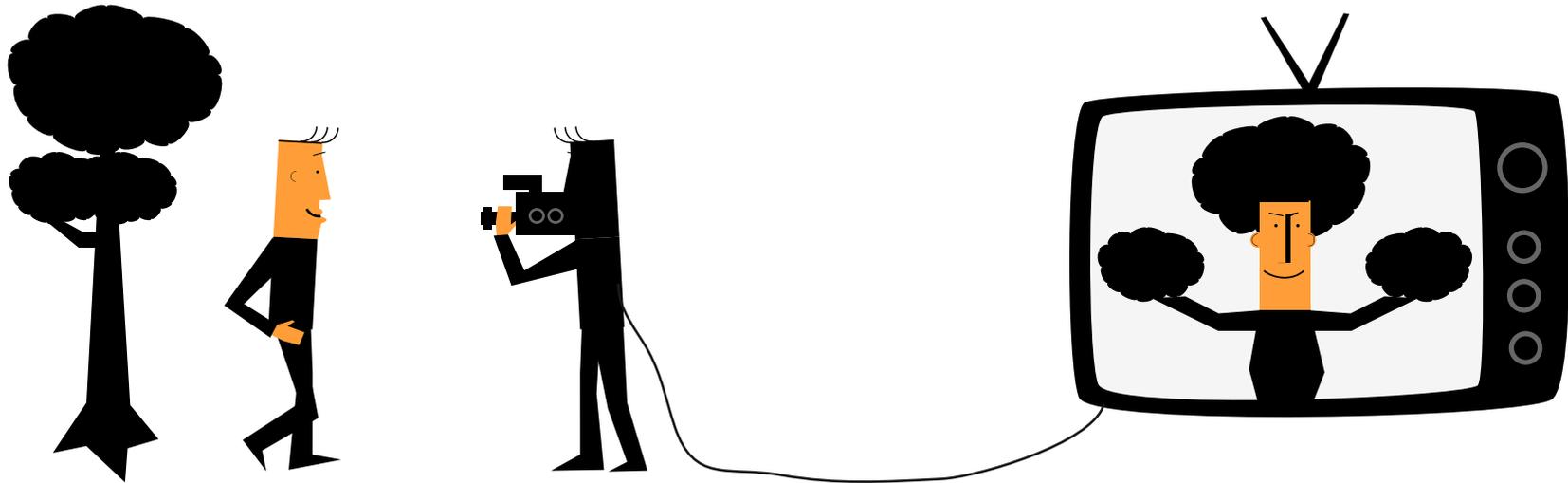


Solvent: Ignore the noise, recognize the signal

The key is to boil out the impurities of data and recognize that you are looking through a lens that might be deceptive.

Element 6 Distraction

Distraction is the enemy of adaptation and can lead you straight towards a plateau. How do we know when and what we need to change to live in a world of unrelenting distraction?



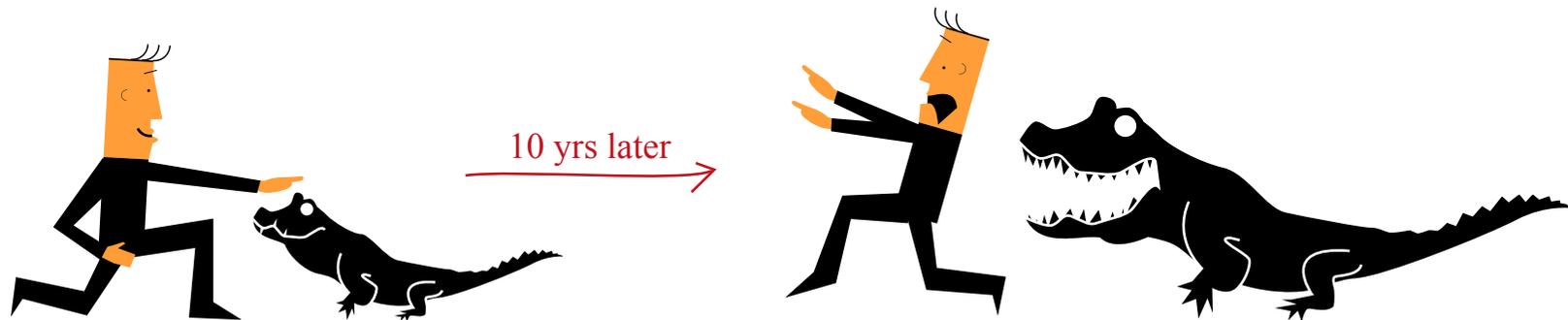
Solvent: Peak Listening

If you take a page from improv comedy – where you look for the truth in what others are saying and build on it through the “yes....and” strategy – you get to a skill we call radical listening. It’s a mode of active engagement, where you are attuned to your surroundings, listening, and adapting.

Element 7

Failing Slow

Failing slow is natural because it's difficult to tell that a situation is incrementally getting worse. Often the incremental worsening of a situation happens slower than what psychophysicists call the *just noticeable difference*.

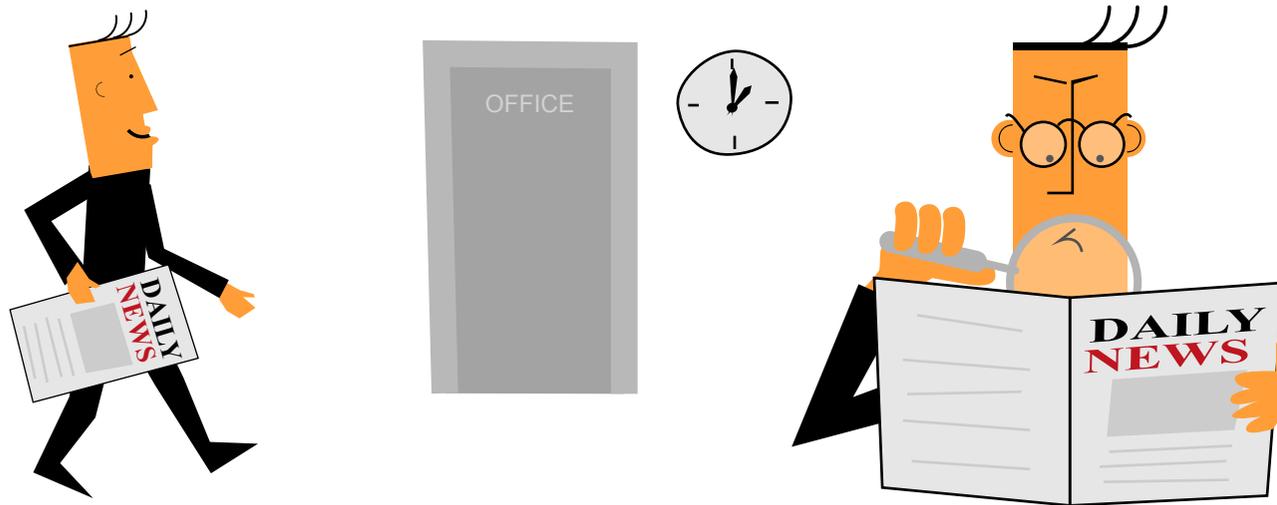


Solvent: Fail Fast

By setting clear markers, you can objectively see how you're progressing, figure out what's working and what's failing, correct it and move on.

Element 8 Perfectionism

Perfect is the enemy of good. The desire for perfection kills beginnings – it's never the right time to start, and even if you do, a task is never complete because it is held up to an impossible standard.

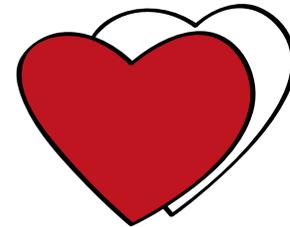
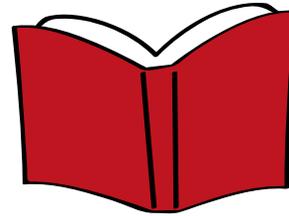
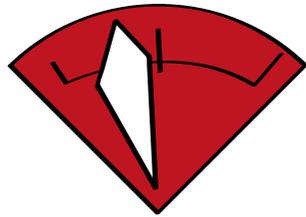


Solvent: First Steps, etc.

Accept that perfection isn't achievable. Focus on taking the first step, and then the next step. There are some tricks that can help, such as structured procrastination and setting hard (but liberating) deadlines.

The Plateau Effect is a powerful law of nature that affects everyone

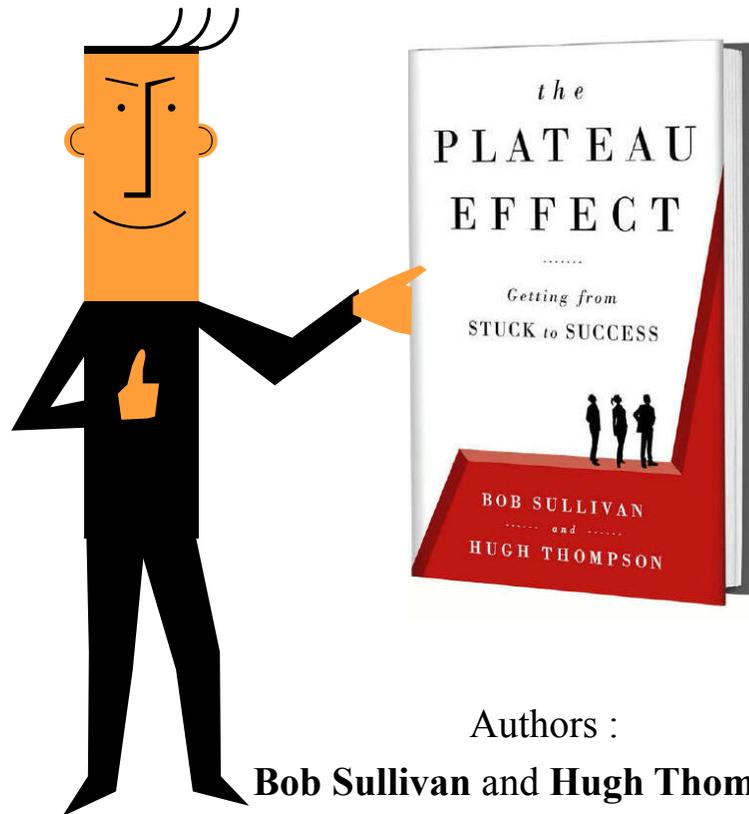
Anything you want to do better



The Plateau Effect shows how athletes, scientists, relationship therapists, companies, and musicians around the world are learning to turn off the forces that cause people to “peak out” or “get used to” things -- and turn on human potential and happiness in ways you probably think impossible.

The Plateau Effect shows you why the world is full of one-hit-wonders, why all good things come to an end, why all trends eventually fall, why most people get less for more, and how you can break through, again and again.

“ Get this book
to break through
your plateau ”



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