

One Percent Better
Article from Sep - Oct 2009 Buckeye Trapper
by Scott Welch

I can remember talking to Gary Armstrong at the NTA convention in Waterloo, Iowa, during the summer of 1992. Mr. Armstrong had photographs with him of some of the very impressive raccoon catches that he is well known for. I was 18 at the time and I remember asking Gary how he managed to catch all of those raccoon. (At that age I was hoping for some secret set or a magic lure or bait.). He just smiled and said, "One at a time." Man, that really made me think and continues to, still today, all these years later. That is a great mindset to have in any area of life. Whether you are Gary Armstrong catching boatloads of raccoon in Illinois, Jim Thome hitting home runs, or Peyton Manning throwing touchdown passes. You get them one at a time. That attitude can really have a positive effect on how you go about things on a day-to-day basis on the trapline. Making sure that every set is operable and capable of catching and holding something. Taking the time to put in a few more sets or hang a few more snares at the end of an already long day. Getting up a little earlier to take advantage of those precious daylight hours. Keeping your gear organized and in good working condition to help increase your efficiency and effectiveness.

I used to play a little golf back during my factory days. The club pros used to tell you that you will make fast, marked improvement early on. After that the improvements became smaller and more gradual. One percent at a time if you will. The big fast improvements are easy. Kind of like losing weight. The first little bit isn't too bad to get rid of, but then things get slower and you have to make a very conscious effort to keep seeing the results you want. Some people even "plateau" when they reach a certain level of achievement and then just kind of level off. It can be difficult at times to keep moving in the right direction. In the business world the saying is, "If you're not growing, you're shrinking." Basketball coach Pat Riley said once, "If you're not getting better, you're getting worse." Continual improvement is important. Even if it is only one percent at a time.

Every year, no matter how I try, I can always see missed opportunities and places where I should have done better. Maybe I should have put in more double or triple sets at places I knew were good locations. Moved some sets when I knew that weather conditions were getting ready to change and could bring high water or heavy snow. Got a few more permission areas lined up during the summer. Brought my headlamp so I could punch in a couple more sets at the end of the day right at dark. Set heavier on nights ahead of a front when I knew the critters would really be moving. There is always more than a few areas where I could have and should have done just a little bit better. The thing is that they don't necessarily have to be big, earth shattering changes. Just one percent here, one percent there. Continued, albeit small, improvement.

It doesn't have to be just the trapping itself. It could be doing some maintenance and up-keep to keep your trapping vehicles to ensure that they are running good and that fuel-efficiency is optimized. Shaving a little weight here or there in your equipment to help keep you running "leaner." Handling your fur in a way that helps it to be marketable and achieves the best possible price. Finding markets for carcass, skulls, and glands to help increase your trapping income. It doesn't take very long to come up with a substantial list of things that can be done to help make you more effective, more efficient, and more profitable. I know I end up with a longer list than I would like at the end of every season!

I shot competitive 3-D archery for a few years when I was younger. I was never really good at it, but the fella's I shot with were. There was a lot of talk about visualization. Closing your eyes and seeing yourself make a "perfect" shot. A smooth draw, controlled breathing, straight torso, and relaxed front shoulder. Good release and follow through. Seeing the arrow hit its mark. No mistakes. Visualize yourself on the trapline, in the fur shed or doing your pre-season work. What things can be done better? Where are the areas for improvement? What skills or knowledge can help you be more effective, to help you reach your goals? There are always things that can be done better, even if it is just one percent. ### Scott Welch, 5054 County Road 50,

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“Well from where I sit, one percent is the magic number. The biggest problem I have... is knowing what to do next. Either I try to do too much at once and get frustrated or I sit immobilized because of the size of the job ahead. The rule of one percent reminds me that all I have to do is to improve by one percent. That I can do. If I improve one percent next week and again the week after that, by the end of the year I’m ahead by more than fifty percent.”

From the book “Raving Fans” by Ken Blanchard and Sheldon Bowles.