

Celebrate Your Victories

Based on my experiences as a screenwriter in Hollywood, there are many things I can advise you to do that are not particularly enjoyable...

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I harangue you to read scripts.

I push you to come up with story concepts daily to help you generate a great one.

I advise you to learn about who the players are at the studios.

I force you to track spec script sales so you know what the studios are buying.

I tell you to study movie marketing campaigns.

I implore you to analyze movies by breaking down their narrative and character structure.

I fling screenwriter interview after interview at you to expose you to different ideas about writing.

Basically, I am just one big pain in the ass in reminding you again and again:

Your competition is not your friends, your writing group, or that online screenwriting forum you recently joined.

Your competition is professional screenwriters. And if you want to have any chance of competing with that select group, you must do everything you can to act and write like a professional.

With that as a frame for today's post, I can provide a tip I am sure you will enjoy. And it's something you can start doing right now, even if you're not living in the Hollywood Hills and just signed an overall deal with Warner Bros.

Celebrate your victories.



In all honesty, I have not done enough of this in my career. Through the weird combo plate of my own personal DNA, growing up as a military brat, and being raised as a southern Baptist, I have a work ethic that while enormously helpful in getting things done, flat out resists me enjoying myself when I land a gig, score a coup, or hit it big.

Don't you make the same mistake.

There are plenty of tough times in the writing trade. Frankly, a majority of them. Rejections, criticisms, critiques, questions as to your sanity, your talent, your creativity.

And that's just you dealing with yourself before anybody else reads your material!

Speaking from the experience of those handful of times where I indulged myself and celebrated a victory — okay, most of them were hoisted upon me by agents, producers, and studio execs related to specific deals — I actually enjoyed it. It is an uplifting, positive experience to sit among people who have read a script you wrote or heard your pitch that sold. They say nice things about you. And I confess there have been entire moments where I have allowed their words to soak into my consciousness.

I'm not going to be so bold as to suggest what you do to celebrate. Other than cracking open a bottle of Veuve Clicquot, I don't really have much to contribute on that front. However, I do have a few moments in a writer's life which you should celebrate. Here is that list:

- When you generate an absolutely great story concept
- When you have a fantastically fruitful day brainstorming your story
- When you prep your story to the point you are ready to type FADE IN
- When you finish your first draft

- When you finish your final draft
- When you sign with an agent and/or manager
- When you get your first meeting with a producer or studio executive
- When you land your first OWA
- When you sell a spec script
- When your movie opens as the #1 film at the box office
- When you get your very first residual check
- When you kiss your day job goodbye
- When your parents acknowledge, "You're actually making a living at this?"

Now take a good look at that list. You will notice big moments. And little moments. Monetary moments. And creative moments.

Each of them is worthy of celebration. Maybe not taking off a month to go lie on the beach in Fiji. But certainly inviting a few friends over to grill some burgers (or a vegan alternative), enjoy a glass of *pinot noir*, and share the news with them.

Why celebrate your victories? So you don't become your typical slump-shouldered, pasty-faced, sour-puss [cynical screenwriter](#). I can't swear to this because, as I've noted, I don't have a good track record on this front, but if you do take the time to celebrate your victories, I imagine you'll not only be a much more enjoyable person to be around, you will also have a better time doing what you do — writing.