

I did Dry January and it helped my career

[Jeremy Veitch](#)

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Ok, I need to get this out here right up front. My name's Jeremy and I'm not an alcoholic. In fact, I'm not even a particularly heavy drinker — some might argue with that, but hey everything's relative right? I needed to clearly state this because my amateur research amongst friends and colleagues indicated a perception that a self-inflicted, personal prohibition was tantamount to an admission of a problem. Nevertheless, I did do Dry January.

"You just stopped for a while to prove that you can, which means you're not actually sure you can," said one, enigmatically.

"People do Dry January because they think that then they can drink like a cabbage for the rest of the year and be fine," said another. The latter

statement wounded, laced as it was with the bitter tang of authenticity. Although, I'm still trying to work out the correlation between an especially tasteless vegetable and gratuitous over-consumption. So, why did I choose Dry January over the usual Dry Gin? Well, curiosity, I suppose.

How did it start?

Dry January was only started in 2013 by [Alcohol Concern in the UK](#), which became [alcoholchange.org.uk](#) the following year.

In a few short years, it has already become something of a tradition. An accepted, almost ritual cleansing of the body after weeks of greedy excess. In [the UK, last year, an estimated 4.2 million people attempted Dry Jan](#), and a recent poll suggested that [23% of Americans were doing Dry Jan](#).

So, if it's taken off with that many people, something is obviously working. This is probably a good time to talk through the obvious question many of you may be thinking. Why are we discussing the benefits of Dry Jan. for careers when January has been and gone?

Simple. What's true about the benefits of a time out from alcohol remains true for the rest of the year. Not by being teetotal, but by implementing a smart balance to your lifestyle.

The work and life reboot

What I realized early on about Dry Jan. is that it isn't about not waking up with a mild hangover, but rather, the effects are far-reaching. It's about allowing your body, mind, and spirit to rejuvenate in ways that will genuinely reboot you to your uncorrupted, factory settings.

Firstly, let's talk about sleep. We all think that a couple of drinks in the evening helps us to sleep. Wrong. True, you may lapse into unconsciousness sooner, but you won't fully experience the deep, deep sleep that fully recharges us.

After a few nights of alcohol-free shuteye, I found I woke earlier and was much less inclined to grumble ungratefully at the bright light of day as I pulled back the curtains. I was more alert, and I took that alertness with me to work. What I thought and said wasn't necessarily any different, but quicker responses and a lighter vibe were noticed. Favorably.

Not drinking at all and getting the right kind of rest had an immediate knock-on effect. Getting up a bit earlier and feeling fully awake, I found that I had not only the time to go to the gym but the desire.

I realized that giving up alcohol wasn't an end in itself; it was a gateway to all sorts of ways of being a better me. Even after just a few days of morning gym, I felt new levels of energy charging through my body. It's an energy that powers the mind, translating into more passion and proficiency at work. And a greater sense of achievement when something works out just the way I planned, (and more to the point just the way the boss planned).

Alcohol is so jam-packed with calories you may as well be digesting just that. Huge sugary spoonful's of fat creating jam. I was amazed by how effortlessly I started shedding weight in January, just from skipping the alcohol and going to the gym.

But there's another dimension to the weight loss that's also related to booze. Alcohol does strange things to your liver and to your blood sugar levels. Your body starts to crave salty or greasy or sugary or starchy foods. With no alcohol in my system, I found myself choosing an avocado salad over a cardiac burger every time. And while being slimmer doesn't necessarily make you better at your job, I found that I was less sluggish at work, particularly in the afternoons. Less likely to knock-off at a reasonable time, more likely to push through and finish something that could have waited till the next day.

There's another, less obvious — at least to you — benefit of abstinence. You look better. Alcohol dehydrates you. It makes you look tired. It makes you look older. It depletes the vitamins that are essential for healthy-looking skin.

I hadn't even considered this unexpected bonus until waiting with a colleague for a meeting, she said: 'You're looking great, what are you doing?' I mumbled something glib like 'just living the dream' or something, but inside I felt rewarded.

Career boost?

So, Dry January helped me concentrate more, gave me more energy, put me in a more positive mood about, well, everything. It helped me lose weight and turned me into a vision of masculine good looks. Sigh, ok maybe not the last one, but my skin does have a healthier glow. Did all this translate into a more successful career? I'd like to say that I've just been offered the Global Chief Creative Officer role. I'd like to. But I can't. This isn't about fairy tales, it's about [real improvements to my work and opportunities](#).

I can only say that I feel trusted more, respected more, and noticed more. And those are actively helping my career. And I have more self-confidence. As an advertising copywriter, although good at what I do, I sometimes wish I could swap, just for a bit, some pithy words about the best-tinned tomatoes in town with something a little more journalistic in content. New year's champers behind me, I resolved, with a clearer focus than I might normally have had, to submit some articles to various channels for consideration. So, I did.