THOMPSON HINE

TURNING THE PAGES

A Book Review by Jake Denham

Our New Ventures clients are rarely short on ambition.

We love hearing about the big ideas, the audacious goals, and the moonshot outcomes.

However, ambition alone often fades as chaos takes over. Founders and fund managers need something reliable to maintain momentum amid the unpredictable nature of the venture and startup lifecycle.

That's why I recommend *Atomic Habits* for anyone building a company, launching a fund, or doing anything that requires consistent effort. While it seems to focus on small habits, the book actually highlights how to build long-term success amid uncertainty, which is a key skill for new ventures. A basic example is a founder who launched a small startup. In the beginning, they implemented a small daily marketing outreach of three potential clients per day. Eventually, this led to a huge client base, proving that small "atomic" habits can indeed translate to not-so-small outcomes.

The Founder Myth: Big Wins Come from Big Moves

Founders sometimes think success comes from one giant leap.

- Raise the round
- Land the whale customer
- Ship the killer feature
- Hire the perfect exec

Those moments are actually lagging indicators, meaning they are outcomes of other actions.

James Clear's core insight is that it's not outcomes but repeated systems and habits, even under pressure, that drive behavior.

That distinction is critical for our clients because most failures don't stem from a single catastrophic mistake. They stem from compounding negative habits, such as inconsistent customer outreach, last-minute fundraising prep, poor LP communication, delayed documentation, or taking action without talking to counsel.

None of these feels fatal in the moment. But, just like positive habits, they have a massive effect when compounded over time.

Compounding Isn't Just Financial—It's Operational

Everyone in venture understands compounding in capital. *Atomic Habits* focuses on how it applies to behavior.

Miss a few days of discipline, and it's easy for those days to turn into weeks. Miss a few weeks, and suddenly the system you thought you had…doesn't exist.

Clear's thesis: small daily actions outperform great, sporadic efforts. Founders make progress through steady consistency, not occasional breakneck sprints.

If you planned an hour of fundraising outreach this week but the company catches fire elsewhere, the solution isn't abandoning the habit. A better way to keep the habit alive is by shrinking it. This could be: sending one email instead of emptying your inbox, updating a single pitch slide instead of revising the whole deck, or reviewing one key metric instead of attacking your whole dashboard.

These all help drive the book's main idea: Momentum beats intensity.

Systems Over Goals (Especially in Uncertain Markets)

The book's overarching takeaway is that goals give direction, but building the right systems and habits is what actually enables execution.

If your execution relies on perfect conditions, it's fragile. If it relies on repeatable habits (a system), it's resilient.

That's why the most successful founders narrow their focus, take it one day at a time, and obsess over what they can control daily.

That mindset mirrors *Atomic Habits* almost exactly.

The Real Lesson

Atomic Habits is about building systems that keep you moving forward when there is no certainty, which is most of the time in startups and venture capital.

In New Ventures, luck plays a part, but consistent, manageable habits raise your odds. How does the book recommend doing this? Choose habits you can sustain and repeat them daily.

I recommend picking up *Atomic Habits*. It is a small read that could have a massive impact on your new venture.