

Three Keys to Your Highest Future

Framework for Success

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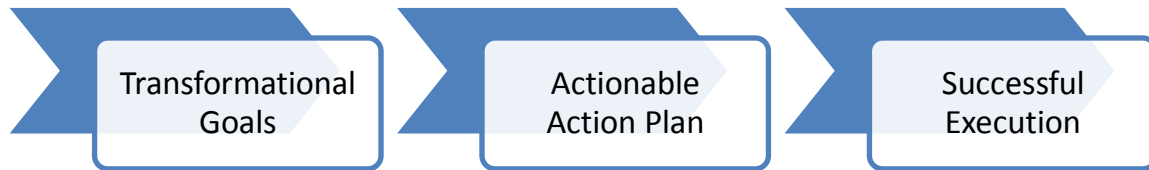
Framework for Success

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Framework for achieving Goals



Why are some people better at achieving their goals than others? Why have you been successful at achieving some of your goals and not others? Why do most New Year's resolutions fail? Many times we assume success comes because of who we are; how talented, smart, or lucky we are. Decades of research on motivation and achievement suggests that success in achieving personal and professional goals is not so much because of who you are, rather it is because of what you do. Therefore, success in achieving goals can be boiled down to three critical steps: 1) Setting the right kind of goals, 2) Creating an actionable action plan, 3) Effective execution. I have taken these three keys and created an easy to follow framework.

There is nothing in this framework that you have not heard or seen before in some form or another. Yet many people never put this information all together in an explicit and logical format and consequently do not experience the success they desire, whether personal or professional. Success, however you define it, to a large degree depends on what you do consistently, day after day, year after year. That means deciding what you really want to accomplish, figuring out what you need to do, and then doing it.

Key # 1: Setting Transformational Goals

In my opinion, the most critical step in setting goals is to make sure the goal is something you really want to accomplish, you have the intention of doing, and you have the ability to get it done. What is the point of setting a goal that you are not completely committed to accomplishing? I realize that in the world of work you don't always get to choose your goals but you still have to make up your mind to achieve the goal, make a plan and do it. When it comes to personal improvement goals, however, choose something you feel is worthy of your time and energy.

Most people have heard of the acronym of SMART goals. I have modified that to fit this framework and focus on SMILE goals. Here is what it means:

S – Specific

M – Measureable

I – Intentional

L – Linked

E – Excited

Let's review the definitions for each letter.

Specific: First, when you set a goal it is important to be as specific as possible. There are thousands of studies that show that getting specific is one of the most critical and often overlooked steps for reaching any goal. You need to be more concrete than goals like "I want to lose weight" or "make more money". Ask yourself "what will success actually look like"? How much weight or what size jeans do you want to fit into? How much more money do you intend to make? Once you decide exactly what you want to accomplish then write it down. Writing it down, preferably in your own handwriting, makes it real. Then you can also post it somewhere you will see it and remind yourself daily of what you want to accomplish.

Measurable: Once you have determined what success looks like you have already made it measurable. This will allow you to not only know you have achieved what you set out to do, it also allows you to determine milestones and monitor your progress. We will come back to this point later.

Intentional:The intentional part of this formula is a reminder to stop and ask yourself two important questions. The first is what is your intent or purpose for setting this goal? Is it something that is really important to you? How will your life change when you reach your goal? The second question is do you really intend to do what it takes? This is a gut check right up front. If you don't intend to do what it takes you won't succeed. However, if you can visualize exactly why this goal is important and you are willing to do whatever it takes then nothing can stop you.

Linked:This speaks to the issue of alignment. Is your goal linked to your strengths and motivations? Is it linked to your values? Being linked to your strengths, motivations, and values gives you the best chance of success. That, of course, assumes that you know what those are. If you have failed to follow through on goals in the past it may be an indication of a lack of self-knowledge. It is always a good investment to spend the time and resources needed to know yourself on a deeper level.

Some self-improvement goals may be focused on something that is not an area of strength, something that is holding you back, or is a flaw you need to neutralize. Even if that is the case, you will be more successful if you use your strengths and internal motivations to overcome your weaknesses.

Excited: Is this a goal you feel excited about? When you visualize achieving your goal, if you don't feel excited then why bother? On the other hand, if it does excite you then capitalize on that energy and funnel it into your plan for execution.

All worthwhile goals will present some challenges. Before developing your action plan, take some time to write down two positive things that will result from achieving your goal. Then think about two obstacles that may get in the way. Write a few sentences about both the positive aspects of your goal and the potential obstacles. Again check in with how you are feeling. If you are still excited and determined to achieve your goal then you will need a plan to overcome the obstacles and make it happen.

Key # 2: Creating an Actionable Action Plan

Once you have your smile goal established the next step is to develop the psychological and behavioral structure you need to make it happen. There is a specific technique I like to use called ***If-Then*** planning, described by Heidi Grant Halvorson in her book ***Succeed: How We Can Reach Our Goals***. According to Dr. Halvorson, there are over a hundred behavioral health studies that show that deciding in advance **when and where** you will take specific actions to reach your goal can double or triple your chances of success.

If-Then planning looks like this: If **X** happens, Then I will do **Y**.

Here are some examples:

If it is Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday, then I will work out for 30 minutes right after work.

If something comes up and I have to miss a workout, then I will make it up on Saturday morning before I leave the house.

If it is Tuesday or Thursday, then I will call on 10 clients before I leave the office.

If I'm not able to reach 10 clients by 5 pm, then I will make the remaining calls first thing the next morning.

This type of goal planning is so effective because it sets up contingencies that are easy for you to remember and act on. This allows your brain to scan for the things that trigger action. Without having to always think about it, your plan will prompt you to act even when you get pre-occupied with other things, for example, "Oh its 4:30 and I still have two more calls to make. I better do it now"!

Making your If-Then Plans:

1. Decide on a critical action you need to take to achieve your goal.
2. Decide when and where you should take this action.
3. Write it down as an If-Then equation.
4. Think about any obstacle that might get in the way. This could be a temptation, a distraction, or anything else that you predict could come up.
5. How will you handle this obstacle? What will you do instead?
6. Put it all together. Write it down and memorize your plan.

Monitor your progress:

Once you have determined the critical actions you must take to accomplish your goal, predicted the obstacles that may come up and created your If-Then plan, the next critical piece is making a plan for how you will measure and monitor your progress. You need frequent feedback to keep track of the progress you are making or not making. This provides motivation and the ability to make the necessary adjustments.

1. How you measure progress and how often to monitor yourself depends on the goal. Some goals, like increasing your income are easy to quantify. If your goal is to improve your relationship with your spouse, you will need to agree on what that looks like and what the standards are. This goes back to making your goals specific enough. If you are having trouble determining milestones of progress then try making your goal more specific.
2. How often to monitor progress also depends on your goal. In general, more frequent feedback is better, especially for short term goals. Long term goals require a way to focus on progress as you go, such as getting your college degree by checking off one class at a time.
3. Create a system to remind yourself to stay focused on your goal and measure your progress. This can be as simple as putting it on your calendar or using post-it notes to stay on track. It is often helpful to enlist the help of others to give you reminders and feedback.

Key # 3: Successful Execution

The best laid plans are worthless without execution. You increase your odds of success by doing the work on the first two steps. Here are some additional ideas to reach your goals.

1. Keep a positive attitude. Be realistic and remember that anything worth doing is usually not easy, but you must believe you can succeed. Remind yourself that you have succeeded in the past on many things and that you will succeed again.
2. Focus on getting better and continuous progress. Even if progress is slower than expected you can stay motivated as long as you know you are headed in the right direction.
3. Get support. Use the experience, expertise, and encouragement of those you know to mentor you or just listen when you need a boost.
4. Along with support it is often helpful to have someone you are accountable to. Accountability starts with yourself, of course, but who else cares about your goals? Who will benefit from achieving your goals and who will be hurt if you fail? Find someone or a group of people who will agree to ask you about your progress on a regular basis. Simply knowing you have to report to someone often is enough to keep you going.
5. Make adjustments. A missile hits its target by making continuous small course corrections. One of the reasons you need to monitor your progress is to know when to change tactics. What do you need to do more of or less of? Can you ramp up your intensity? You may need to get some input or do more research to find a new way to attack your goal. Try something new and move forward. You may want to go back and adapt your If-Then plan as well. For example, if you have a bad day, then you will acknowledge it, discuss it, and get back on track.
6. Identify and neutralize competing agendas or commitments. If you find that in spite of your commitment to achieve your goal that your actual behavior often does not support or actually works against your goal, then you may have an unconscious competing commitment or commitments. For example, if your goal is to make \$200,000 per year, but unconsciously you fear that will make your father feel less important, then you may be sabotaging yourself in order to avoid upsetting your father. That may not seem logical, but perhaps there is a hidden assumption that you are not supposed to exceed a certain income level. Such beliefs or assumptions must be brought to light and consciously let go before you will be able to succeed. This concept is fully described in a book called **Immunity to Change** by Robert Kegan and Lisa LaskowLahey. I have included a worksheet below to help you think this through.
7. Don't give up. You may hit bumps in the road and get discouraged but keep going. You don't always know how close you are to a big breakthrough. Water doesn't boil until it gets to 212 degrees. You may be at 211 degrees and just need to turn up the heat a little more. Persistence pays off!

Templates

SMILE Goals:

S – Specific – What will success look like?

M – Measureable – How will you measure and monitor your progress?

I – Intentional – What is the intent or purpose of this goal? Do you really intend to accomplish it?

L – Linked – How is this linked to your strengths, motivations, and values?

E – Excited – Is this a goal you feel excited about?

My SMILE Goal: _____

Two positive outcomes of this goal:

1. _____

2. _____

Two possible obstacles:

1. _____

2. _____

Actionable Action Plan

What specific actions do you need to take to achieve your goal?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Create your If-Then plan for each action step. This should tell you when and where you will take this action and what will prompt you to act.

If _____

Then _____

Think about any obstacles or temptations that may through you off track. Write out an If-Then plan for each one.

If _____

Then _____

Monitor your progress

How, specifically will you measure your progress?

How often will you monitor? Daily? Weekly?

How will you remind yourself to stay on track?

Create a chart

You may want to use a chart to set up your daily action plan. If you are working on more than one goal, use a different chart for each goal. Make a check mark or note to indicate when you have completed each action step. This helps you to remember and monitor your progress. Give yourself credit for your success and then focus on what's next. Make as many charts as you need to keep yourself track and achieve the outcomes you desire.

SMILE Goal: _____

If-then actions:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	My progress

Successful Execution

1. Remember to keep a **positive and realistic attitude** about your goal. What will you do to keep the right attitude? Examples may be using affirmations, visualization, prayer, meditation, pep talks, reading something inspirational, or talking to a friend. **Keep your focus on getting better.** This is a journey and you cannot be any further along right now than you are. You can only take the next step forward.

To maintain the proper attitude I will:

2. What are your **sources of support**? Identify specific individuals, groups, or other resources – real and personal or virtual.

How will you use the sources you identified? Remember to ask people to support you and tell them how you want to be supported.

3. Who will you ask to hold you **accountable**? _____

How often and how do you want this person to check in with you?

4. As you monitor your progress you will notice that you need to make **periodic adjustments** to keep you on track.

What tactics do you need to change?

Do you need to do more research?

Do you need to increase your intensity to push yourself to the next level? What will that look like?

Do you need to hire some professional help?

Do you need to modify your goal? If so, how?

5. **Competing commitments.** If you find yourself stuck or continuously undermining your own progress then you may need to do some reflection to identify and neutralize any hidden agenda or competing commitments. Use the table below to help you think this through. You may need the perspective of a friend, spouse, or a professional to help you see yourself accurately.

SMILE Goal	Behaviors that undermine my goal. What do I do or not do that stops me?	Invisible competing commitments I may have?	Core belief that supports this competing commitment. What big assumption am I making?

Action steps

If you have identified a competing commitment bring it out into the light and give it a voice. This may be an internal dialogue or it may help to write it down as a conversation. Ask yourself:

- Is this belief or assumption 100% true? _____
- What is the fear connected to this competing commitment? _____

- What is the purpose of keeping this commitment alive? _____

- Is there a way to honor this commitment directly and reduce the fear? _____

- How can you change your belief so that it is more accurate for you today? _____

- Will you release your fear or move forward through your fear? _____
- Can you create an If-Then plan for this competing commitment?
 - If this behavior or fear shows up....
 - Then I will_____

6. Remember to be **persistent**. Success depends on taking the right actions consistently over time. If it is important enough to you then never give up!

Your Highest Potential Future

There is an exciting future that is waiting to emerge through you; a future that is connected to your deepest purpose and desire, and in concert with a larger whole.

This future can only emerge to the extent that you are willing and able to let go of the persona you have created, let go of the pain and the illusions of the past, let go of the desire to control, and the fear that holds you back, and then let this future come. It will come as you surrender into commitment:

- *Commitment to begin operating from your deepest purpose*
- *Commitment to focus your attention on your intention*
- *Commitment to train your actions to be based in the field of the future rather than patterns of the past*

*Adapted from **Presence***

By Peter Senge, et al

For personal consultation, coaching, and leadership development opportunities please contact tom@Growitforward.com.

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