

CREATE YOUR OWN FUTURE

1. Imagine that there is a solution to every problem, a way to overcome every limitation, and no limit on your achieving every goal you can set for yourself. What would you do differently?
2. Practice "back-from-the-future thinking." Project forward five years and look back to the present. What would have to have happened for your world to be ideal?
3. Imagine your financial life was perfect in every way. How much would you be earning? How much would you be worth? What steps could you take, starting today, to make these goals a reality?
4. Imagine your family and personal life were perfect. What would it look like? What should you start doing more of, or less of, starting today?
5. Plan your perfect calendar. Design your year from January to December as if you had no limitations. What would you change, starting today?
6. Imagine that your levels of health and fitness were perfect in every way. What could you do, starting today, to make your vision for yourself into a reality?
7. What one action are you going to take immediately as the result of your answers to the questions above?

6 Determine Your True Goals

Realize what you really want. It stops you from chasing butterflies and puts you to work digging gold.

WILLIAM MOULTON MARSDEN

There is perhaps no area of life where self-discipline is more important than in setting goals and working toward them every day.

We have known throughout the centuries that all human action is *purposeful*. Humans achieve goals automatically, as long as they set them in the first place. Once you become absolutely clear about what it is you want and then discipline yourself to do more of those things that move you toward this goal, your ultimate success is virtually guaranteed.

Here's the question: If goal achieving is automatic and built into your system, why is it that so few people have goals? As mentioned in chapter 1, one of the main reasons people don't set goals is that they don't know how to. This is what we will deal with in the pages ahead.

Seven Keys to Goal Setting

There are seven keys to goal setting. These are general principles that apply to virtually every goal. When you find a person who is not achieving his or her goals, it is because of a deficiency in one of these seven key areas.

The first key is that *goals must be clear, specific, detailed, and written down*. A goal cannot be vague or general, like being happy or making more money. A goal must be specific, concrete, and tangible and something that you can clearly visualize and imagine in your mind.

The second key to goal setting is that *goals must be measurable and objective*. They must be capable of being analyzed and evaluated by a third party. "Making lots of money" is not a goal. It is merely a wish or fantasy that is common to everyone. Earning a specific amount of money within a specific period of time, on the other hand, is a real goal.

The third key is that *goals must be time bounded*, with schedules, deadlines, and subdeadlines. In fact, there are no unrealistic goals; there are merely unrealistic deadlines. Once you have set a clear schedule and deadline for your goal, you work toward achieving your goal by that time. If you don't achieve the goal by that deadline, you set another deadline—and, if necessary, another—and work toward that until you finally succeed.

Throughout the world, many millions of people travel by air each year. Thousands of airplanes with hundreds of thousands of people crisscross the globe every day, touching down in almost every city and town. Air travel is a trillion-dollar industry that affects us all.

The success of the air travel industry, and the successful arrival of every passenger, is totally the result of systematic,

computerized, automatic, national goal setting. When you take a trip, you have a specific city or goal in mind. You decide when you want to fly and how long it will take. You determine the distance to the airport and the time necessary to check in. You calculate how long it will take to fly to your destination and then how long it will take to get to where you are going once you get off the plane. You set a specific schedule for every part of your journey.

Hundreds of millions of people do this every year. They successfully travel from where they are to where they want to go with incredible precision and punctuality. This is goal setting on a mass level. And the same process will work for you on a personal level.

The fourth key to goal setting is that *your goals must be challenging*. They must cause you to stretch a little bit. They must be beyond anything you have accomplished in the past. Your goals should have about a 50 percent probability of success. This makes the process of striving toward the goals slightly stressful, but forcing yourself to stretch also brings out many of your best qualities.

The fifth key is that *your goals must be congruent with your values and in harmony with each other*. You cannot have goals that are mutually contradictory. I have met people who want to be successful in business but also want to play golf every afternoon. It is clearly not possible to realize both of these goals at the same time.

The sixth key is that *your goals must be balanced* among your career or business, your financial life, your family, your health, your spiritual life, and your community involvement. Just as a wheel must be balanced to revolve smoothly, your life must be balanced with goals in each area for you to be happy and fulfilled.

The great question you must eventually ask and answer is, *What do I really want to do in my life?* What do you really want for yourself in your heart of hearts? What would you be most excited or enthusiastic about achieving personally? If you could accomplish only one goal in the whole world and you were absolutely guaranteed success at that one goal, what one goal would it be? The intensity of your personal desire will determine the amount of energy and determination you put behind any goal you set for yourself. What do you really want, and how badly do you want it?

2. Believe That Your Goal Is Achievable

The second step in goal setting is to *believe* or have a conviction. You must absolutely believe, deep in your heart, that you deserve the goal and that you are capable of attaining it. Belief is the catalyst that activates all your mental and physical powers. Spiritually, we refer to belief as faith. All high achievers, in every field, are men and women of tremendous faith and conviction. They intensely believe in their ability to accomplish the goals they have set for themselves.

Wonderfully enough, when you set a clear goal for yourself—something that you really, really want—and you begin working toward it, day by day, you intensify your desire and deepen your belief. Every step forward deepens your conviction that it is possible for you. This is the meaning of the statement “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

Your level of confidence in your ultimate ability to succeed is the key determinant of your determination and persistence. It is therefore essential that you make your goals both believable and achievable, especially at the beginning.

The seventh key is that *you must have a major definite purpose* for your life. You must have one goal that, if you accomplish it, can do more to help you improve your life than any other single goal.

Your life begins to become great only when you decide upon a major definite purpose and focus all of your energies on achieving or obtaining that one single goal. Surprisingly enough, you will find yourself achieving many of your other, smaller goals as you move toward achieving your major goal. But you must have a major definite purpose for your life. In addition to the seven keys to achieving any goal, you must also have a method for goal setting and achieving that you can apply to any goal for the rest of your life.

Twelve Steps to Set and Achieve Any Goal

Here is the twelve-step goal-setting methodology that I have taught to more than a million people. It is like a recipe for preparing a dish in the kitchen. It has twelve ingredients. Depending upon your situation and your particular needs, you can vary these ingredients to create the kind of goals and life that you desire. Successful, happy people use these principles all the time, whether they are aware of them or not. Whenever you find a person who is underachieving, one of these ingredients is either missing or in short supply.

1. Have a Desire: What Do You Really Want?

Step number one in goal setting is to *have a desire*. You must have an intense, burning desire for your particular goal. This desire must be personal, something that you want for yourself. You can never want goals for someone else, nor can you get excited about a goal that someone else wants for you.

For example, you cannot set a goal to go from poverty to financial independence within one year. This kind of a goal is self-defeating because it is so far beyond your capabilities. You must set a goal that is reachable, and then set another goal after that and another after that. By achieving small goals, one at a time, you build your self-confidence. You develop forward momentum. You eventually reach the point where you become convinced that there is no goal that you cannot attain if you are clear about it and if you work at it long enough and hard enough. But you have to walk before you run when setting goals.

3. Write Your Goal Down

The third step to goal achievement is for you to *write it down*. A goal that is not in writing is not a goal at all. Everyone who succeeds greatly works from clear, written, specific, detailed goals and plans, reviewed regularly, sometimes every day. I personally recommend that you write and rewrite your goals each day, day after day, week after week, and month after month. This programs them deep into your subconscious mind where they take on a life and power of their own.

Continually ask yourself, "How will I measure success in the achievement of this goal? What standards will I create? What benchmarks or scorecards can I use to measure my progress?"

4. Determine Your Starting Point

The fourth step is for you to *analyze your starting point* in the attainment of your major goal or goals. Where are you now? If you want to lose weight, the very first thing you do is to weigh yourself to determine your baseline or current weight.

If you want to achieve a certain level of financial worth, you put together a personal financial statement for yourself and determine how much you are worth today.

When you assess your situation by analyzing your starting point, you are forced to be honest with yourself. This enables you to set goals that are believable and achievable rather than setting goals that may be unattainable and self-defeating.

5. Determine Why You Want It

The fifth step is for you to *decide why* you want a particular goal in the first place. Make a list of all the ways that you will personally benefit by achieving that goal. The more reasons you have for wanting to achieve your goal, the more intense will be your desire. Reasons are the fuel in the furnace of achievement.

If you have one or two reasons for attaining a goal, you will have a small amount of motivation. But if you have forty or fifty reasons for achieving a particular goal, you will be so motivated and determined to succeed that nothing and no one will stand in your way.

I have had friends over the years who decided that they wanted to make a lot of money and achieve financial independence. They then wrote out lists of literally hundreds of things that they would do with the money that they intended to earn and accumulate. These people, each in their own areas, became extraordinarily successful far faster than could have been predicted because they had so many reasons for achieving their goals. The more reasons you can think of, the more intense will be your desire and the deeper will be your belief and your conviction that your goal is attainable.

6. Set a Deadline

Step number six is for you to *set a deadline* for the achievement of your goal. A deadline is a "best guess" of when you will attain the goal. It is like aiming at a target. You may hit the bull's-eye, or you may hit to one side or the other. You will achieve fully half of the goals that you set for yourself before your deadline, and you will probably achieve half of your goals after the deadline. But you must have a deadline, just like a scheduled departure time for an airline flight, whether or not it leaves on the particular minute written on your boarding card.

If your goal is big enough, break your deadline down into subdeadlines. This can be very helpful. I worked with a company recently that had hired a young MBA into the sales department. This young man had taken courses on financial analysis and planning. He therefore wrote down his sales goals by the year, by the month, by the week, and even by the day. He analyzed his activities and compared them against his goals every day, sometimes twice a day. Within six months of starting, he was the most successful salesman in his company. His sales increased steadily and predictably month after month.

When you break your goals down into daily and hourly amounts and activities, you will be astonished at how much more you get done.

7. Identify the Obstacles in Your Way

The seventh step in goal setting is for you to *determine the obstacles* that are standing between you and your goal. Why aren't you at your goal already? What is blocking you? What is

holding you back? Of all the things that are holding you back from attaining your goal, what is the biggest single obstacle?

You can apply the 80/20 Rule to the obstacles and difficulties blocking you from achieving your goals. This rule says that, in most cases, 80 percent of the reasons you are not attaining your goals are internal. They are within you rather than in the world around you. Only 20 percent of the obstacles are contained in your external situation or in other people.

Average and mediocre people always blame their failures to make progress on the people and circumstances around them. But superior people always look into themselves and ask, "What is it in me that is holding me back?"

8. Determine the Additional Knowledge and Skills You Need

Step number eight is for you to *determine the additional knowledge, information, and skills you will require* to achieve your goal. Remember, in the information age, knowledge is the raw material of success. To achieve something you have never achieved before, you will have to do something you have never done before. You will have to become someone you have never been before. To go beyond your current level of accomplishment, you will have to acquire knowledge and skills you have never had before.

Every new goal should be combined with a learning objective. Whatever your goal, you must decide what you will have to learn and master to attain it. Ask yourself, "What one skill, if I developed and did it in an excellent fashion, would help me the most to achieve this goal?" Whatever your answer, you should write it down, make a plan, and then work on developing that skill, every single day, until you master it. This decision alone could change your life.

9. Determine the People Whose Help You Will Need

Step number nine is for you to *determine the people whose cooperation and assistance you will need* to achieve your goal. Start with your family, your boss, and your coworkers. Think about your customers, your suppliers, and your banker. Whose help will you require, and what will you have to do to get them to help you? How can you earn their cooperation by helping them in some way?

Relationships are everything. To achieve anything of consequence, you will need the help of lots of people. The more and better relationships you develop, the faster you will achieve your goals and the better will be every part of your life. Who are the key people in your work and personal life? Who will they be? What can you do to gain their help and cooperation?

10. Make a Plan: Put It All Together

Step number ten is for you to *make a plan* to achieve your goal. A plan is an organized list of tasks that you will have to complete to get from where you are to where you want to go. It is similar to the plan that you make when you are going on a vacation or taking a trip. You make a list of all the things you will have to take with you and all the things you will have to do before you depart and after you arrive.

In goal achieving, you decide exactly what it is that you want and write it down. You analyze your starting point and determine the reasons you want to achieve the goal. You set a deadline and subdeadlines. You list the obstacles you will have to overcome and the problems you will have to solve. You determine the skills, knowledge, and information you

will have to learn or acquire to achieve your goal. You decide upon the people whose help you will need and what you will have to do to get their help and support. You then take all of these elements and combine them into a plan of action.

A plan is a list of activities organized by time, sequence, and importance. What do you have to do first, and what do you do second? What is more important, and what is less important? What has to be done before other things can be done? Of all the things that you have to do, what are the activities that are more important in achieving your goal than anything else?

11. Visualize Your Goal Continually

Step number eleven in goal setting is for you to *visualize your goal* each day as if it were already attained. See your goal vividly in your mind's eye. Imagine what it would look like if you had already accomplished it. Get the feeling that you would have if you were at your goal already. Imagine the pride, satisfaction, and happiness you would experience if you were already the person you wanted to be, with the goal that you want to enjoy.

Repeat this visualization, combined with the feeling that goes with it, over and over during the day. Each time that you visualize and emotionalize, you program your goal deeper and deeper into your subconscious and superconscious minds. Eventually, your goal becomes a powerful unconscious force motivating and inspiring you day and night.

12. Never Give Up

Finally, the twelfth step to goal setting is to *back everything you do with persistence and determination*. Resolve in advance

that you will never give up. Make the decision, long before you face any obstacles or difficulties, that no matter what happens, you will persevere until you finally reach your goal.

This form of mental preparation, deciding in advance that you will never give up, can do more to help you than almost any other factor. You will encounter many setbacks and disappointments on the way to your goal. This is inevitable and unavoidable. It goes with the territory. You must decide, in advance, that nothing will stop you. Then, when you face the inevitable obstacles and difficulties that occur, you will be psychologically prepared. You will bounce rather than break.

Take Action Today

Here is a powerful exercise that brings everything in this chapter together into a simple process. Take out a clean sheet of paper and at the top of the page write the word "Goals" with today's date.

Then make a list of at least ten goals that you want to accomplish in the next twelve months. Write these goals in the present tense, as though a year has passed and you have already attained the goals. For example, if you want to weigh a certain amount, you would write, "I weigh X number of pounds." If you want to earn a certain amount of money in the next twelve months, you would write, "I earn X number of dollars this year."

Once you have written out your ten goals, review and analyze your list. Then ask yourself this question: "*What one goal on this list, if I accomplished it, would have the greatest positive impact on my life?*"

Read through your list of goals and select the one specific goal that answers this question. This goal then becomes your

major definite purpose for the foreseeable future. This goal becomes your primary organizing principle. This becomes the goal that you write out using the twelve-part goal-setting process described above.

Apply the Twelve-Step Process

Now that you have selected a goal that you really want and believe you can achieve it, write your goal on a separate sheet of paper, and set a deadline.

Analyze your starting position and write out a list of reasons why you want to achieve this goal.

Identify the obstacles that stand between you and the attainment of this goal. Identify the knowledge and skills that you will need to achieve the goal. Identify the people whose cooperation and assistance you will require.

Make a plan to accomplish this goal. Then take action on your plan and do something every day that moves you toward your goal.

Visualize your goal continually as if you had already achieved it, and resolve that you will never give up until you are successful.

You Will Amaze Yourself

When you begin to practice these principles in your life, you will be literally astonished at the things that you start to accomplish. You will become a more positive, powerful, and effective person. You will have higher self-esteem and self-confidence. You will feel like a winner every hour of the day. You will experience a tremendous sense of personal control and direction. You will have more energy and enthusiasm. As

a result, you will accomplish more in a few weeks or months than the average person might accomplish in several years.

When you become a lifelong goal setter, through study and practice, over and over again, you will program the "master skill of success" into your subconscious mind. You will join the top achievers in our society and become one of the happiest and most successful people alive.

DETERMINE YOUR TRUE GOALS

1. Decide what it is that you really desire in life. What is it that others have that you wish you could have as well?
 2. What one belief, if you had it, would help you the most to attain the goals that are most important to you?
 3. What is the one goal that, if you attained it, would have the greatest positive impact on your life?
 4. What one skill, if you were absolutely excellent at it, would help you the most to achieve your most important goal?
 5. Who is the most important person whose cooperation you will require to achieve your most important goal?
 6. What is the largest single obstacle or difficulty that stands between you and your goal?
 7. Make a list right now of ten goals you would like to achieve in the next year, select one, and then work on it every single day.
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