



Annual Review

Powerful questions to help you cut the noise,
see patterns, and act decisively in 2025

“Every leader does year-end review and comes to conclusions of one sort or another. My observation is that two leaders looking at the same information will not see the same thing. The one who’s a more skilled analyst, who digs deeper and wider, will benefit more.”

— Super Bowl Winning Coach Bill Walsh.

1. The Key to Success

When I interview the best in the world on The Knowledge Project Podcast, one factor correlates more toward success than any other.

While luck, ambition, competence, ambition, talent, passion, and intelligence play a role, the most important driver of success is knowing what you want.

Success means different things to different people. Success isn't money, fame, or fancy things. Success is simply knowing what you want and getting it.

When you know what you want, you can direct your choices and attention toward getting it.

Be honest with yourself about what you want.

What I want is

2. An Honest Audit

Success is simple but not easy: Do more of what works. Eliminate what doesn't.

Great leaders regularly step back and analyze their performance with clear eyes.

Imagine a world-class CEO just took over your life. You're not in charge anymore, they are.

What key metrics will they look at to gauge where you are at?

Your Metrics (e.g., time spent with family, savings in the bank, time spent on focused work)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What's not working that you need to eliminate?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What do you need to scale up?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

3. Maximize Focus

Excellence demands elimination.

Most people spread themselves too thin, taking on too many projects and not really getting much done.

When everything is important, nothing gets the attention it deserves.

Your success in 2025 depends more on what you say NO to than what you say yes to.

List your top 10 goals for 2025

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Now circle only 3.

Everything not circled is now your avoid-at-all-costs list.

All energy spent on these things comes at the expense of your top 3. You can't work on these until one of your top 3 is accomplished. Simple, but not easy.

For each of your top 3 goals, define:

- **Success Metric:** What indicates success?
- **Weekly:** What do I need to do in the next 7 days?
- **Monthly:** What do I need to do in the next 30 days?
- **Key Support:** Who/what do you need to succeed?

4. Create Momentum

Procrastination moves in silence to kill dreams.

Motion creates momentum, and momentum reveals opportunities that standing still never could.

Often, when we find ourselves procrastinating it's because the gap between where we are and where we are focused is too big. Instead of thinking about the end, focus on the next small step that moves you closer toward your goal. A marathoner who hits a wall at mile 4 doesn't focus on the finish line. If they did, they would quit. Instead, they focus on getting around the next corner.

No one feels ready to climb Everest in one shot. Instead, they break up the drip.

The world rewards starters, not waiters.

Your challenge is to list three things you're avoiding and identify the next smallest step.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

5. Structural Edge

Avoid your weaknesses.

Tiger Woods didn't practice bunker shots before St. Andrews - he perfected his drives to avoid sand traps entirely. Tobi Lütke is a natural introvert so he partnered with Harley Finkelstein to tell the story about Shopify. Mark Zuckerberg knew he wasn't an experienced operator, so he hired Sheryl Sandberg rather than trying to become one himself.

The goal isn't to be well-rounded. It's to amplify your uniqueness and build a life where your weaknesses aren't holding you back.

Do more of what you're good at and less of what you're bad at.

Your challenge:

1. List 3 things other people would tell you that you're weak at
2. For each one, design a specific system to avoid it entirely

My biggest weaknesses:

1.

2.

3.

How to avoid them:

Weakness 1:

Weakness 2:

Weakness 3:

The one I'm going to work on first:

6. The Inner Circle

You become who you spend time with.

If your network doesn't match your aspirations, it's time to change your network.

Outliers are incredibly selective of the people in their lives. Not just the people they get very close to, which is a small inner circle, but all the people in their lives. Every person in your life is either positive, neutral, or negative.

List the 5 people you interact with most (in person and online)

| | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| Person: | | | | | |
| Information quality (do they know things you need to know?) | | | | | |
| Growth catalyst (do they push you to be better?) | | | | | |
| Energy impact (do you feel energized or drained after interactions?) | | | | | |
| Future alignment (are they going where you want to go?) | | | | | |
| Values and Ethics | | | | | |
| Score: | | | | | |

Score each person (+1, 0, -1):

- +1: Energizing, inspiring, helpful
- 0: Neutral impact
- -1: Draining, limiting, negative
- Tally up the score

Remember: Letting go of draining relationships isn't selfish. It's necessary for growth.

7. Easy Mode

Winners don't make things harder than necessary.

The best performers seem to have an unfair advantage: they're playing on easy mode while others struggle on hard.

A student who crams the night before plays on hard mode. One who studies daily, sleeps well, and reviews notes plays on easy. Same test, different difficulty settings.

Your audit:

1. List 3 areas where you're making life harder than needed
2. For each one, write the "easy mode" version:
 - Hard: Rushing every morning
 - Easy: Packing bag night before
3. Pick one habit to upgrade to easy mode this week

Remember: Success isn't about heroic effort. It's about removing unnecessary friction.

Your move: What one change today would make tomorrow easier?

8. Rules

Most rules aren't laws of nature - they're just accepted patterns. The best performers know how to use rules to their advantage.

Rules can help us turn desired behaviors into default behaviors. For example, my rule is that I workout every day. No exceptions. This rule takes me toward a desired goal.

But rules can also prevent us from doing things we don't want to do. For example, when I was working in an organization, I had a rule that I would never go to a meeting that didn't explicitly need me. Another rule was that I wouldn't take on any new projects until one of my top 3 was done.

The rule helps.

List 3 positive rules that would help you move toward the future you want:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Now list 3 Anti-rules that help you avoid things you don't want:

- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Rules can also hold us back when we stop asking why it exists and just blindly follow it. What are three rules you follow that are holding you back?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

9. My Action Plan

Plans without timelines are just wishes.

Here's how to make it real. The difference between dreamers and achievers isn't talent - it's the rigor of their execution system. Break down your goals into clear 30-60-90-day markers with specific metrics and accountabilities.

The goal isn't perfect execution - it's rapid learning and adjustment. Review and revise these targets monthly.

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- [*Clear Thinking*](#) is my *New York Times* bestselling book, offering an easy and proven way to make better decisions.
- Inspired by Charlie Munger, [*The Great Mental Models*](#) is the Encyclopedia of big ideas you never learned in school.

I hope my framework helps you have the life you want.

All the best in 2025,
Shane