

DREAM
BIG,
WIN
BIG!

DISCOVER THE CHAMPION
WITHIN YOU BY CHANGING
THE WAY YOU THINK.

"Where you've been has nothing to do with where you're going and Bobby's story is living proof."

**former PGA Tour and
US Amateur winner,
Sam Randolph**

"A fascinating book that casts new and needed light on what it takes to be successful in America today, offered by a man who learned the makings of success from the ground up. Bobby has created a masterwork of self-help, and done so in an easy to follow, easy to implement way. Readable and thorough, Dream Big, Win Big! is an essential work."

**Geoff Campbell, author of The Cold War: The Home Front and The Persian Gulf War:
Life of an American Soldier**

"Everyone wants more than they could ask or imagine but this requires some sobering wisdom, the how to's. Bobby is a good example of success outside the traditional box in that he draws from his personal life lessons gained from the reality of life. Dream Big Win Big will reaffirm why and how you too can experience a rewarding life no matter where you have or haven't been."

Rey Martinez, Sr. Pastor Waves of Faith

"Bobby is walking, talking living proof that the American Dream is alive and well and that in America anyone, from any walk of life can make a success of themselves."

**Greg Ricks, President
Performing Ads Company**

Foreword

Bobby is a person who at first glance, appears to have nothing in common with me, but upon further inspection, shares many of my life experiences. We attended the same high school, ran the same streets, and did many of the same things. Although our paths didn't cross until later in life after we had turned things around (thank God!), we were both heading towards the same fate until we each made a choice. We chose not to let society's mentality become our reality. If we had, this book and foreword would have been written either from prison or the grave. Bobby's story and the knowledge and wisdom he shares in his book will benefit anyone, no matter where you are from or where you are going. Whether you are young, old, black, white, rich, poor, educated or uneducated, it doesn't matter. Dream Big, Win Big! is a mixture of motivation, inspiration, street education, business school, and overcoming adversity all rolled into one. This book is not only about life change, but how to change your life. Bobby is a fantastic speaker, wonderful author, tremendous family man, and I'm proud to call him a friend.

Johnny D. Wimbrey

International Motivational Speaker and Author of the book,

"From The Hood To Doing Good."

Dream BIG, Win BIG!

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Dedication

No matter where you are in life right now, God has much in store for you. God wants to take you to new levels in every area of your life.

I Cor. 2:9

To my beautiful and wonderful wife, Cary. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for being there for me and believing in me. You are everything to me, my best friend. I love you.

Acknowledgements

"If I have the belief that I can do it, I shall surely acquire the capacity to do it even if I may not have it at the beginning."

Mahatma Gandhi

Before I thank anyone else, I want to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, because without him there is not a doubt in my mind that I would not be here right now writing this. Only by his grace have I made it to where I am today. I would also like to thank my wife Cary for all of her support. To my wonderful kids, Caleb, Carimar, and Julian, you are my inspiration and my joy! Everything that I do is to make sure you never have to go through the things that I did as a child. To my sister, and in many regards, best friend Robyn. We have been through so many things together and it gives me such joy to see how we've both turned out. To my brother Derek, I am so proud of you! You are doing great things! To everyone at Waves Of Faith, especially Pastor Rey and Pastor Lorenzo, from the moment I walked through the doors I knew this was my home. I will never be the same again. To my brother in Christ, Jaime Pelayo, thanks for being there to listen. To all of my friends from way back, Fidel Sanchez, Gilbert Perez, Ben Cerda, Chuck Robertson, Danny Leal, Paul Strickland, Al Garcia, Mark Melanson, Kyeve Tatum. It's awesome to have such great friends for such a long time. There isn't a price tag that can be put on "true" friendship. To my running

buddies, Carlos and Jorge Villarreal. Your hot sauce may have hooked me, but your friendship keeps me coming around. To more recent friends, Greg Ricks and Yolunda and Chris Elam. You are truly people who have touched my life. Thank you for everything. To Johnny Wimbrey and his lovely wife, Crystal. JW, my brother from another mother, we ran the same streets, went to the same high school and experienced many of the same things. It's no wonder God made sure our paths crossed when the time was right. The two of us together are going to do BIG things. Thanks for getting me to stop talking long enough so that I had time to actually "listen" and "learn." You are wise beyond your years. To my "Coach" Kelvin Collins and his incredible wife Yvetta, the opportunity to be coached by a millionaire that learned from billionaires was one I couldn't pass up. I'm glad I didn't. You have changed me life forever and much of what is in this book I learned from you. Thank you. To my Dad, James. I know you did the best you could and I love you for that. The things that happened were not by your doing or by your choice. To my Maternal grandmother, Memaw. We know you did what you could to help us back then. We all love you. And last, but certainly not least, thanks to Geoff Campbell. There is no way to express how much you helped me in this project and it's scary to think how it may have turned out otherwise.

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*"The way you THINK determines the way you
FEEL. The way you FEEL determines the way you
ACT. Therefore, YOU are what you THINK. If you
want to change your LIFE, just change the way
YOU THINK!"*

Bobby Minor



*"You have brains in your head. You have feet in
your shoes. You can steer yourself,
any direction you choose."*

Dr. Suess, from "Oh, The Places You'll Go!"

Preface

Greatness from the Ordinary- The Story of Jacob

The story sounds as if it was ripped straight from The Jerry Springer Show. A man takes advantage of his twin brother's starvation to steal his birthright, and later takes advantage of his father's blindness to receive the blessing intended for his brother. By this point, the brother has had enough and vows to kill his conniving sibling.

The man takes refuge with an uncle, who agrees to let the man marry one of his daughters in exchange for seven years of labor. The uncle, however, pulls a switch on the man, who finds that he has married not the woman of his dreams but a sister he cannot stand. The uncle understands the man's anger, and agrees to let him marry his other daughter provided he remain married to the first and that he provide another seven years of labor.

The man complies and this time his uncle makes good on his word. The man and his first wife have a number of children, but he has no such success with his second wife, the woman he truly loves. The second wife, anxious to bear the man children, tells her husband to sleep with her maid. He does, resulting in two children. The first wife, by this

Greatness from the Ordinary

point barren, becomes jealous. She asks the man to sleep with her maid, which he does, resulting in still two more children. The first wife somehow becomes able to bear children again, which she naturally does, and the second wife finally produces a son of her own.

Eventually, the man decides to leave his uncle's place, but not before swindling him of some of his choicest cattle.

One thing from this story seems clear: No such man could ever be elected president of the United States. The story is festooned with scoundrels, and, were it to be made into a movie, could no doubt warrant a rating of at least R. It's difficult to have sympathy for any of the characters, least of all the swindling, philandering man. Those of us with religious scruples would no doubt denounce the man and use him as a poster boy for how not to act.

Trouble is, this man is Jacob, blessed by God. It's true that Jacob hoodwinked and stole twin brother Esau's inheritance. It's true that he was a polygamist. And while he acted with the consent and even encouragement of his wives, he was an adulterer. Nevertheless, God had special plans for Jacob; Jacob was to be the father of the Israelites.

I relate this story not to pose deep philosophical questions about the nature and tenor of our national debates on such issues as gay marriage and abortion. Nor do I mention it as prelude to a book-long effort to try to convert you.

Rather, I think this story beautifully demonstrates that all of us are called to great things. All of us, no matter our past -- or even our present. That's not to say that great things will come whether we change our ways or not. Far from it. But if we step back from the din and cacophony of the Now, we can hear the call of a better life.

Dream Big, Win Big!

As it happens, I am an unabashed Christian. But I came to the fold not from the cradle, but later in life, after difficult years requiring difficult deeds. There are many things in my past that I regret. But I know that the train of the past has already pulled from the station. All I can do now is hop aboard the train of the present and confidently go toward an ever brighter future.

Many people want to move toward the life of their dreams, but never do anything about it. They feel they're not worthy. They feel hogtied by their past, or shackled by their present. It need not be so.

The Bible is rife with examples of unworthy people who nevertheless were called upon to do great things. In addition to Jacob, we find Solomon, David, and Jesus' own apostles, just to name a few. From more contemporary history we virtually can pluck names at random and find instances of imperfect vessels being used to accomplish great deeds. As just one example, President John F. Kennedy had trouble maintaining the sanctity of his marriage vows, but successfully steered the nation through its closest brush with nuclear Armageddon, and later set the country on a course to the Moon.

The point here is that we are not our past. We can choose to rise above where we are. Whether we see ourselves as sinners or simply as imperfect, we can become better. Whether we're from an affluent family or a family on food stamps, we can rise to success in our own right. We can do great things.

Jacob himself first became aware of the things in store for him when he had a vision of a ladder stretching to heaven. In this vision, he heard God reciting a litany of blessings on him.

Greatness from the Ordinary

Today we can forge our own vision of the life we want to experience. By dreaming big, we can achieve the life success we were destined to have. Esau lost his birthright, but ours is limited only by our imagination.

Of course, dreaming big is not the only step necessary to achieve success. James Thurber's Walter Mitty dreamed large, but in the end remained a shy, henpecked husband. Dreaming big is, however, the first and most essential step on the road to personal success. In the pages that follow, we'll journey that road together.

Introduction

"The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering the attitude of their mind."

William James

"...a Kick in the Teeth May Be the Best Thing for You."

I'm not supposed to be here right now. It's not because I have a prior engagement. It's not because I have something else more important to do. I'm not supposed to be here because everything I have experienced in life points to the fact that I should not be where I am today. There aren't many success stories where I come from. I lived in neighborhoods steeped in chaotic dissipation and chronic desperation, neighborhoods where hope goes to die, neighborhoods where the expectation is that a young man will be strung out on drugs, shot, killed or incarcerated before he turns 21.

Don't get me wrong. There are people from my circumstances who have good, decent lives and are doing positive things. But when you grow up the way I did, you're not expected to be here long and you're not expected to do anything great with your life. Indeed, when you grow

A Kick in the Teeth

up the way I did, you are smothered by the rubble of low expectations. It gets reinforced in school, in the looks of people on the street, in the way store owners view you with suspicion. It can become a part of you, a lie that defines your future. You become a pessimist, one who as President Harry S. Truman said “makes difficulties of his opportunities” as opposed to an optimist, who Truman said “makes opportunities of his difficulties.” Over time, you become the lie, trading your innate greatness for the spiritual and emotional poverty of low expectations.

It turns out I had a problem with that. I knew from a very early age that I was born to be great and to do great things. But even though I knew it, I didn’t always believe it. The belief came later, much later. Only after I nibbled and nearly swallowed whole the stale but poisonous idea that I was a product of low expectations I could not overcome was I finally able to believe in my destiny.

Life is a journey, not a destination, and it was perhaps because of the years of trials and tribulations I endured that I could take an ownership stake in the greatness that was mine to have. As Walt Disney once said of adversity, “You may not realize it when it happens, but a kick in the teeth may be the best thing in the world for you.” I’ve been kicked in the teeth plenty during my life, and was never quite able to immediately view it as a godsend. In retrospect, though, I see Disney’s wisdom. Life’s struggles equipped me for success and instilled in me a faith in myself and in my destiny.

The great author and speaker Les Brown says that one of the easiest things he’s ever done in life was to make a million dollars. The hardest thing he ever did was gaining a belief he could do it. We are built for success but we get programmed for failure. We grow up letting society beat us

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down. We let people who have never experienced any real success in their lives tell us what we can and cannot do. We let people who are more broke than we are tell us that we will never succeed. We slowly let the dream stealers poison our minds, and hence, our lives. We come to believe ourselves ill-equipped for success, falling into an abyss of doubt and self-perpetuating failure. Malcolm S. Forbes has noted, “Too many people overvalue what they are not and undervalue what they are.” The first step toward success is in valuing who we are.

You are about to read my story. A story of how a guy like me, someone with the deck stacked against him, defied the odds and became something great. You’re not only going to hear my story but how I did it. I’m going to give you detailed instructions on what you can do to make great things happen in your life. I’ll tell you right now it’s not going to be easy. If it were easy, even the naysaying dream stealers would achieve success. Consider this book a working man’s trust fund. I’m bequeathing you with knowledge, knowledge that can change your life. But merely having knowledge is not enough. You’re going to have to put it into action in your own life and become your own engine of change and transformation.

Everything I’m going to share with you is based on my real life experiences and not on some classroom theory. If it worked for me, it can and will work for you. It’s up to you, however, to work the plan and to seize your own greatness and success. In the pages that follow, you will learn how I went from the streets to success with several Fortune 500 companies. You will see how I learned that I was built to be great, and how I learned to believe in my innate greatness. You’ll see how I learned that to Win Big, you’ve got to Dream Big!

"If you want to change who you are, begin by changing the size of your dream. Even if you are broke, it does not cost you anything to dream of being rich. Many poor people are poor because they have given up on dreaming."

**Rich Dad, from Robert Kiyosaki's book,
"Rich Dad Poor Dad"**

Chapter One

A Slow Growing Tree

We've all heard the adage, "Don't judge a book by its cover." And yet we all do it, each and every day of our lives. It's a coping mechanism, a way of bringing order to our lives. The disheveled man on the median bumming change is an alcoholic and will use whatever money he gets to buy booze. The girl in the hot pants and halter top is a slut who will sleep with anyone. The man in the suit is highly successful, the product no doubt of an ordered home growing up and the benefits of higher education.

People who meet me now assume I've always been a card-carrying member of the great American middle-class, a suburbanite who lived on the Honor Roll and parlayed early academic success into a professional degree in college that ultimately opened the doors of corporate America. Let's just say I clean up well, because that image of my past is a fiction. Nothing could be further from the truth.

For one thing, I've been in jail three times, once for being with a guy in a stolen Camaro. He tried to run from the police, ended up crashing the car, but was able to get away

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on foot. I got beat up by the police, and the incident showed up as a felony arrest on my record for years even though I was never charged with a crime. That alone would keep me from getting jobs even after I turned my life around.

My life has been far from pristine, and it has been far from the fast track to greatness. But despite my hardscrabble beginnings, I have become a success. Moliere once wrote, “The trees that are slow to grow bear the best fruit.” It took years of wandering in a spiritual wilderness, down blind cul de sacs and up dead end streets, but I was able to achieve the greatness that was my destiny. There’s nothing in the early part of my story, however, that would begin to foreshadow that success.

*“I would never have amounted to anything
were it not for adversity. I was forced to come
up the hard way.”*

J. C. Penney

The beginning of what should have been the end for me began on the day my parents divorced. Up until then, we lived by outward appearances the American Dream. My mom stayed home, and my dad made an honorable living working in a warehouse. We lived in a comfortable home on a quiet, tree-lined street near Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas. It was a *Leave It to Beaver* life, and it was good.

America itself was changing, however. It was the late 1960s and early 1970s. Millions of Americans were “dropping out” of mainstream society to find themselves and build what they claimed was a more sensible and fair society not constrained by artificial rules and limits. Some, of course, just wanted to do what they wanted to do, and

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there was an overall sense that society was atomizing, tearing apart, becoming unmoored.

My mother, of course, was not June Cleaver. She was more of a free spirit, a spirit in perfect tune with the times. In some ways, I'd have to say she marched to the beat of a drummer only she could hear. No one else had or heard the music, and all my brother, sister and I could do was hang on and hope she knew where she was going. We were, after all, just kids. My parent's marriage broke up because my mother was having an affair with one of my dad's coworkers. My father moved out. The other man, who would become my mom's second husband, moved in. Home life would never be the same.

Mom began selling marijuana, and eventually she was arrested. Inevitably, she lost the house. We moved from the quiet, tree-lined street to a harder neighborhood on the South Side of Fort Worth, a predominantly black and Hispanic neighborhood. In retrospect, it was an odd life for us those next three years. Strangers were constantly at our home, people my mother met and adopted like stray cats. Our home was like a commune, and my mom continued to sell drugs.

I can only remember one Christmas from that time that seemed like a normal, quintessential American Christmas. My brother, sister and I all got bikes and other presents. I have no idea how my mom managed it, because she never had a regular job and increasingly, she didn't seem to have any sort of connection with what most people would consider a normal life. Though she rarely showed it, there was still a part of her buried beneath the jaded and self-absorbed public self that yearned to provide a normal life for her children. She must have scrimped and saved her

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drug money to make it happen. She certainly wasn't a big-time dealer.

That did not, of course, shield her from having big-time problems. She was arrested again, this time because, she claimed, someone had planted heroin in the house. It was about this time that the man who would become her third husband moved in. Home life was chaotic. I slept on the floor or on a couch. One of the few times I can remember having my own room was when I was 10. I converted the utility room on the back porch into my bedroom, just so I could have my own space.

Despite all the craziness of my home life, I craved a sense of normalcy and began the habit of dreaming big. When I played sports, for example, I would assemble lists of the all-star teams I would create from amongst my friends. I also made lists of professional players I would like to see play together on one team. I kept statistics for every sport I ever played, intuitively knowing that, in order to get better, I needed to know where I was. I also dreamed of things I would get for my sister, brother and myself if we were in a better situation. I think the reason I dreamed so much was because even then, I knew that things would be better. Or knew that I could make them better eventually.

One day when I was about 11 I came home from school and found everything we owned out on the curb. We'd been evicted again, and we moved to an even more questionable neighborhood. It was a crazy life for a child. For one thing, my mom was promiscuous. She was married four times but had many other lovers. Men, women -- it didn't matter. Growing up, I was exposed to many things that no one should be subjected to, let alone children. But when you're growing up in the middle of it, you don't think

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anything of it. You figure that's just the way life is, and you assume everyone else lives that way, too. I can remember coming home from school and finding my mom and her friends sitting around in the living room getting high. I'd watch cartoons as they passed a joint around. Sometimes someone would be so out of it that they'd pass the joint to me and the room would rumble with laughter. I'd just pass the joint to whoever was next.

I don't know that I'll ever understand my mother. Somewhere in her soul she was a good, large-hearted woman capable of enormous compassion and love. If she saw a hitchhiker she'd pick him up, and the next thing you'd know he'd be staying at our house. Meantime, she also thought it important that my brother, sister and I got

*"It's easy to carry the past as a burden instead
of a school. It's easy to let it overwhelm you
instead of educate you."*

Jim Rohn

a strong education. From the second through sixth grade, we attended a private school, where we learned next to rich kids who truly had life's advantages.

To this day, I don't know how mom pulled it off. The school was, and is today, expensive. Mom just had a way of being able to hustle people, scam them, make things happen. But the same woman who placed a premium on opening her home to those down on their luck and in ensuring that her children got a decent education also essentially neglected us. It was not uncommon when I was 11- or 12-years-old for me to be out on the streets at 11 p.m., usually en route to 7-Eleven to get something to eat. We did not

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have family meals in our house, and Mom made no effort to even provide dinner. Many were the nights when a can of cold green beans was my makeshift supper. In a curious way, I learned a lot about life from my mom, though what I learned from her was hardly conventional.

We eventually moved to an even more distressed neighborhood, and it was then that I began to learn that any society in which upward mobility is possible is also one in which a person is but a missed payment away from a lifetime of downward mobility. I was also daily getting a schooling in the idea that the only permanent thing in life was impermanence.

"Where I was born and where and how I have lived is unimportant. It is what I have done with where I have been that should be of interest."

Georgia O'Keeffe

One day when I was 12 I came home from school and was greeted by my mom's third husband. He broke the news that Mom had moved out, gone to live with a man who would later become her fourth husband. She hadn't bothered to stick around long enough to tell us kids herself. I lived with my mom's third husband for awhile and remain friends with him to this day. We have much in common. We were both touched, and scarred, by the same woman.

I eventually stayed primarily with my grandmother, a good, warm-hearted woman who was clearly overmatched in trying to raise what I had become, a feral teenager. By the time I was in high school, I did pretty much whatever I wanted to do. I had no curfew, at least none that could be enforced, and I ran with a rough crowd.

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To get the question out of the way, I was never actively involved in gangs. But I likewise was not a member of the church choir. In fact, the kids I hung out with in high school are now either in jail or dead. I'm not sure exactly why I felt the need to be with people like that. I guess I innately understood that I'd rather be a part of the group than a victim. Of course, I endured my share of close spots, and discovered I had a gift for talking. It was a good gift to have, especially when one of my friends discovered I had been messing around with his girlfriend.

Like all teenagers, we thought we were invincible and lived as though we were. We'd drive to Dallas and get drunk, or we'd get high wherever we happened to be. It was a life of listless dissipation, but to us, it was just life. The future did not matter because the future was not now, and now was as good a time as any to fire up a joint and release the tensions of the day. Such an attitude is not unusual for a teenager, but was probably more ingrained in my case because of what my life had been to that point. Growing up I never knew whether I would have a home to come home to, so the here and now always took precedence over the vagaries and uncertainties of tomorrow.

I'm certainly not proud of everything I did, nor do I recommend the me of this period as an example to others. At the same time, I cannot ignore where I came from. The key is that once I opened my eyes and saw I was not where I wanted to be, I did not let the past, or my present, prevent me from moving on.

My grandmother died when I was a sophomore in high school. She was, is, and will always be near and dear to my heart. In many ways, I wish I had been a better grandson

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to her. But I know that from her vantage point today, she is beaming proudly, knowing that her exceptional quiet example eventually took root and blossomed into the man I am today. My father inherited an apartment complex from my grandmother, and I lived there the next several years. My dad's financial problems, however, ensured the experience would be difficult and memorable. I remember one summer when, for a two month period, both the water and gas were shut off because of nonpayment.

By my junior year in high school, I had developed a carefully cultivated self-image as a player, and I worked hard to maintain it. I did whatever I could to create money, working scams, hustles and selling drugs on the side. When a friend stole a credit card, he and I charged away as long as we could at a local mall. When a store clerk got suspicious, we just ran out of the store with our bags of merchandise and laughed all the way home. I had developed a hustler's mentality: If I wanted something, I figured out a way to get it, legal niceties aside. I was my mother's child, and I had learned my lessons well. As Mark Twain once said, "I have never let my schooling interfere with my education." In a perverse way, my mother had taught me the art of survival, both because her inadequacies as a mother required that I fend for myself and because her strengths provided me with an example.

In 1984, I became just the second person in my family to graduate from high school, graduating from Trimble Tech near downtown Fort Worth. Still, I did not have a long time horizon. I never did anything with the future in mind. If I was in the midst of good times, I had no idea how long they would last but knew with certainty that they would eventually end. I did not even know whether I would be alive tomorrow. I went from selling marijuana to selling

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cocaine. It brought in more money and at the time seemed more glamorous. I wasn't getting rich but I was making enough to be comfortable, and that was all that mattered.

Without any sort of life plan, I wandered through life. A friend once suggested the idea of joining the U.S. Marines reserve corps. Though he ultimately decided against it, I ended up talking someone else into doing it with me. Two days later we were off to boot camp in San Diego. Though I did not see the experience as a long-term commitment, I was able to excel. I ultimately became squad leader, got the highest possible score on the physical fitness test and was the best shot in my platoon. I learned a lot. But not enough.

"A difficult time can be more readily endured if we retain the conviction that our existence holds a purpose - a cause to pursue, a person to love, a goal to achieve."

John C. Maxwell

I reported to one reserve meeting after completing boot camp, and then stopped going -- a decision the Marines did not care for. I ended up receiving a "less than honorable" discharge. I had never had structure in my life, and it would take more than the Marines to instill in me the importance of structure.

All that was about to change. One afternoon my dad and I went to a flea market. Because I liked to read, I hung around a stall owned by a man who sold nothing but paperbacks. Several titles caught my attention: *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie, *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill, and *See You at the Top* by Zig Ziglar.

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The books were \$1 a piece, and I had only \$2 with me. But using my persuasion and people skills, by-products of my street days, I got all three books for \$2. I read and reread those books, and I still read them today. These three books really changed the way I think about things. And that led to a golden realization, a “Eureka!” moment. The mind is the most powerful thing in the world. I realized that if you can change your mind, you can change anything. You can change the world.

“If we study the lives of great men and women carefully and unemotionally we find that, invariably, greatness was developed, tested and revealed through the darker periods of their lives. One of the largest tributaries of the RIVER OF GREATNESS is always the STREAM OF ADVERSITY.”

Cavett Robert

One of the first things that changed for me was that I wanted to become more stable and dependable. By remaining friends with one of my ex-girlfriend’s brothers, I got a job with a local utility company as a meter reader. Instead of being subdued and beaten down by the menial nature of the job, I strove for excellence. I wanted to be the Roy Hobbes of meter reading, the best there ever was. In point of fact, I did not misread a meter over a six month period, an impressive accomplishment. I worked there for three years, continually striving to be the best. I was also, however, realizing that there was so much more for me to do and to accomplish.

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I'll never forget when a colleague and friend quit the utility company and came back to visit. He looked sharp and crisp in a suit, and I knew that whatever it was he was doing, I wanted to do it, too. I talked to him, found out he was selling insurance, and asked if he would make some introductions for me. I was hired on the spot and quickly fell in love with my job. With quiet pride, my dad said, "I've known all along that you needed to be in sales." Although my territory was in the impoverished black neighborhood of Como in Fort Worth, I had never been so happy. I went door-to-door selling insurance and collecting premiums. For two months, it was the best job in the world. Then someone asked me what would happen if some of Como's lesser citizens knew that the smiling white guy walking through the neighborhood was laden with insurance premiums. I never looked at the job the same again. I became suspicious of people on the street. I had allowed someone to poison my mind, and the magic was gone. This led to "Eureka!" moment number two in my life. Never let another person's mentality become your reality.

I went on to sell used cars and then became a copier salesman for a Fortune 500 company, where I was able to increase sales 40% in my first year and I also achieved the highest sales rating for three consecutive years. I was on the way up.

Sad to say, some of my motivation no doubt came from the death of my mother at the age of just 48. She drank and got high everyday, and her body just quit. Her death made me realize that life is short, and that I certainly am not invincible. I realized I could not take my successes in sales for granted. I realized I would have to work, and work hard, in order to continue to achieve and in order to gain even greater success.

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I wanted to be a success in all that I did. I reread my books from the flea market, determined to be the captain of my own fate. I created an adult men's baseball team, and my goal was to make it the best in the area. We went 26-1, won the championship and even went to Mexico to play twice. I had also always wanted to play ice hockey. After seeing an ad for a men's league, I re-taught myself to skate, bought instructional videos and goalie equipment. By my second full year of playing, I was named MVP of the league, had the lowest goals against average, and got to practice several times with the local minor league professional team, the Fort Worth Fire. More importantly, my team won the championship. One of the coaches on the Fire even told me that if I had started playing when I was younger, there was no doubt in his mind that I'd be playing professional hockey.

I began to put my goals in writing. I created action plans. And I got results. I got the biggest contract of the year for the copier company, and I attribute the success in part to consciously committing my goals to paper. Not having goals is like going on a trip without knowing where you are going or how you will get there. That's no way to run a railroad, and certainly no way to run your life.

I left the copier business looking for new challenges, and found them with a waste management company selling major accounts. I ended up landing the second largest apartment complex account in company history. I was by now beginning to see, and believe in, my abilities. When I joined a sports supply company, I found that I was the only salesman without a college degree. But rather than be intimidated, I was motivated to achieve more than the college boys. It was not long before I saw a need for the company to create a new division. I did my research, created

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an action plan, and presented it to senior executives. The vice president loved the idea, and I became director of the highly profitable division, doubling my salary and increasing my bonuses and overseeing a team of 50 people. The experience showed me the power of what I had inside of me, a power that begins with the ability to dream.

Dreams can be powerful forces in the world, both for good and ill. Adolph Hitler dreamed of world domination and brought civilization in Europe to the precipice of destruction. Martin Luther King Jr. had a more positive dream of a colorblind America in which the races got along in harmony. King committed his dream to paper, and shared it publicly in one of the country's most memorable speeches -- a moment in time that helped push the nation on a continuing path of integration and reconciliation. Vincent Van Gogh once said of his paintings, "I dream my painting and then paint my dream." Personal and business success is no different. The dream comes first. Only then can action follow.

I eventually went to work for another Fortune 500 company with the challenge of creating a new division for a national cable giant. I developed a proposal, ushered it through approval and was given the task of launching and running the division. The enterprise was an unqualified success.

New challenges constantly beckoned. I went to work for a shoe and sports apparel company, as a sales representative. Within my first week I landed a \$50,000 account. I was responsible for a large, multi-state territory which put me on the road for much of the year. I spent a lot of idle time in lonely hotel rooms, alone with my thoughts. I began to do a personal inventory. As my experience in launching new divisions demonstrated, I have an entrepreneurial spirit. I began to ache to do something on my own, for myself, instead of building the dreams of others. I wanted to build my own dream.

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One thing that had always intrigued me was niche publishing. Why not, I wondered, create a publication that builds on my personal interest in the sport of golf? I did my research, created a media kit, sold ads and launched North Texas Junior Golfer Magazine. I later expanded to south Texas, central Texas and central Florida. Once the publications were up and running, I walked away from corporate America and began living my dream.

Funny thing about dreams, though. They keep changing as we change. Out of the publications grew a partnership to create and launch the Young Guns Junior Golf Tour with events throughout Texas. I later created an online monthly junior golf publication, all financed with advertising revenue. Currently I'm working on a special-edition coffee-table golf magazine. Based on projections it should net somewhere around \$200,000. Not too bad for a "Boy from the Hood." Now my dreams are taking me in a new direction.

Before the Bill of Rights was adopted as part of the U.S. Constitution, the only right guaranteed to U.S. citizens was the right to patent and copyright intellectual property. The idea behind the protection, of course, is to ensure that people have an incentive to dream big and have exclusive use of their original ideas, ideas that ultimately benefit all of humanity. Some ideas, however, are just too good to keep to yourself. I left the partnership in early 2005 to create a full-time consulting and public speaking business, and to share with people just like you how anyone -- regardless of his or her background -- can achieve great things. If I can rise above my background and past, you can, too. And I'm going to show you how. Just be patient, and remember that it is the slow-growing trees that bear the sweetest fruit.

Chapter Two

“You’re Not Going Fast Enough”: The Importance of Having a Hustler’s Mentality

I have a hustler’s mentality. It may sound harsh when you put it that way, but that’s exactly what I have. True, the phrase conjures up images of slick, sometimes ruthless and usually destructive individuals looking out solely for themselves, let the chips fall where they may. Having a hustler’s mentality is not a bad thing, though, when used for the right things.

You see, someone like me knows how to get things done. Think Ellis Boyd “Red” Redding, the Morgan Freeman character in *“The Shawshank Redemption.”* He was the go-to guy in prison when someone needed something from the outside. He knew how to get things, and to get things done.

That’s the way you have to be when you are a product of the streets. You don’t have time to sit around and wonder why things aren’t going your way. Instead, out of and amidst the chaos, you have to figure out a way to get things done and then execute your plan. One of my favorite quotes comes from Mario Andretti, the legendary race car

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driver. He said, “If everything seems under control, you’re just not going fast enough.” Life rarely sits still, especially for a hustler. A hustler has to think quick, often in the midst of a cacophony of competing interests, danger and large financial stakes. Moreover, a hustler has to make life-or-death decisions with the inner calm of a Buddhist monk.

This is one trait I know I inherited from my mother. She was a hustler to the core. As far as I can remember, she never had a real job, a conventional 9-to-5 set up. She either sold drugs or “hustled” people, and somehow usually came out on top. More times than not, when we needed money to pay rent, buy food, pay utilities, or buy school clothes, she somehow came up with the money.

“I like things to happen; and if they don’t happen, I like to make them happen.”

Winston Churchill

Mom also had another remarkable quality, she was very “likeable”, another gift that she passed on to me. The main reason she was so likeable was because, in spite of the things she did, she had a tremendous heart when it came to people. I know you may think what I’m saying is hard to believe considering the way I grew up, but it’s true. When you combine a hustler’s mentality with likeability, it is not that hard to get what you want 99.9% of the time. Back in the day, if I wanted something, I was always able to figure out a way to get it. Sometimes it was in ways I now regret.

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Because street hustlers are mentally dextrous, there are an infinite number of ways for them to get what they want. A hustler might borrow something from someone and turn around and sell the item for cash. Perhaps the hustler might convince someone to steal the item for them. A hustler might even talk someone into stealing a wallet and using the credit cards to buy the things they want. Many street hustlers are idea men, guys who come up with often risky plans to make a quick buck. Normally blessed with a gift to get people to trust and follow them, they never have a problem getting someone to do the dirty and dangerous work for them. Many hustlers, of course, gravitate into the world of drug dealing. Risk-takers might even find themselves able to persuade a major dealer to front them, or provide them with product without paying in advance. After breaking the product down and selling it, the hustler will have cleared a tidy sum. In the likely event that the dealer comes looking for his money, the hustler "in the zone" will get a heady thrill knowing he has angered someone unafraid to use violence to vindicate his rights and debts. A true hustler believes he can get himself out of any situation, no matter how precarious.

The careful reader no doubt is now wondering how it is I know so much about the life of a hustler. Truth be told, I did many things that at the time I believed I needed to do, either out of a desire for survival, street respect or to make ends meet. I either did or saw the sorts of things I've described. Indeed, I found myself in hundreds of situations that, in retrospect, I never should have emerged from alive. Check that. I didn't find myself in such situations, I put myself in them. No matter what my circumstances, I chose my own path within the framework of options I allowed

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myself to see. The fact of the matter is, I did many things as a teenager and young man that I today deeply regret. I deeply regret them because, though I never caused anyone physical harm, I caused them other ills. I deeply regret them because I found myself using and squandering God-given gifts for selfish ends. Had I not finally opened myself to the possibility of dreaming big and seeing a better use for my skills, I would have been well down the road to prison or the cemetery. I am now convinced that it is only by God's grace, and because He had a bigger plan for me, that I was able to emerge from those years intact. God built me to be a winner, and that is how I came to be here sharing my story with you. Thing is, God built all of us to be winners. I was blessed because I came to see that reality, believe it, and make it my destiny.

Against that backdrop of past recklessness and ongoing contrition, one might be inclined to wonder how I can then turn around and advocate having a hustler's mentality for life success. Please understand. I'm not saying that, to be successful, one has to hang his or her friends out to dry, or cheat them. I'm not saying that one need to make reckless choices for short-term ends, the future be damned. Indeed, one need only make reference to the Enron scandal to see that a hustler's mentality improperly applied can cause grievous damage to thousands of people -- a financial tsunami.

Most everyone by now knows the sad saga of Cincinnati Reds icon Pete Rose, a preeminent baseball player whose gifts on the field were a liability off of it. Rose became a fan favorite and a true legend as he hustled his way to 4,256 hits, more than any player in the history of the game. Even when he drew a walk, Rose sprinted to first base, earning him the nickname Charlie Hustle. Somehow, though, Rose

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has never been able to utilize the drive and determination that earned him plaudits on the field for positive good as a man. As a Reds manager, he even gambled on baseball games. Rose never learned how to channel his gifts into success off the field, and today he is a vision of a broken man, barred from the baseball Hall of Fame enshrinement his performance should have guaranteed because of poor choices, hubris and a misguided hustler's mentality. Consider Rose just another example of a hustler's mentality

"Do or do not. There is no try."

Yoda

on the fast lane to personal perdition. I nevertheless assert that, in business and in life, you have to have a hustler's mentality. It just has to be bent toward positive goals.

What am I talking about? Let me give you some examples of how I used a hustler's mentality to achieve success in corporate America.

I went to work for a large company covering a four-state territory as one of 32 inside sales reps. I was being paid a decent base salary with monthly bonuses. Out of the 32 reps, I was the only one without a four-year degree. Nevertheless, I took my background and experience and put it to positive use. I did research on a huge market opportunity we were missing. Using a street hustler analogy, this market opportunity was similar to a fat wallet in an unlocked Porsche. It was just asking to be exploited. Using my findings, I created a proposal for a new department that would target that opportunity and generate more than \$250,000 in brand new revenue within

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the first 12 months. After presenting this plan to the vice president of our company, my base salary doubled and I was entitled to new bonuses. I was tapped to head and oversee the new department of 50 inside and outside sales people. All because I used a hustler's mentality.

At that same company, I also formed an exclusive agreement with a company that had previously held a partnership with a competitor. Just this relationship alone brought in more than \$100,000. How did I do it? I did it

*"Things may come to those who wait, but only
the things left by those who hustle."*

Abraham Lincoln

because I outhustled the other guys. Let's face it. There are days when you don't have your "A" game. But there is never any excuse for not hustling. And if you're a hustler, you never make excuses -- even when "common sense" tells you that you're engaged in a hopeless task.

When you're in sales, you get used to having doors closed on you. But if you're a hustler, you make those doors open. Working for a Fortune 500 company selling office equipment, I cold called a business that had a sign on the door that said, "NO COPIER SOLICITORS ALLOWED." Did that stop me? What do you think? Of course not. I have a hustler's mentality. I look forward to such challenges. As I entered the office, I was actually laughing, partly because I really couldn't believe I was being so brazen. My laughter caused the people in the office to start laughing without even

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knowing what they were laughing at. Ninety minutes later I was walking out the door after having a long talk with the purchasing director, and 45 days later I had a signed contract in my hand. All because I showed a hustler's moxie.

A hustler is in constant, purposeful motion. I remember working for a well-known but small specialty shoe manufacturer as an outside sales rep covering a territory from Texas to California. I secured a \$50,000 account my first week with the company. I did this simply by digging up leads on the Internet. Once again, all because I was willing to hustle each and every day.

With another company, I exceeded sales goals by 143% in my first three months on the job, achieving top producer status in sales. Hustlers get in there and make things happen.

While interviewing for a position with another Fortune 500 company, I was asked by the vice president of marketing if I would be interested in doing something other than the position for which I was interviewing. The job I wanted would almost certainly have paid me a six figure salary. But the vice president said that my past experience of making things happen could be put to good use in creating a new division that he had only dreamed would ever become a reality. I took the challenge. Within three months, I had the new department producing more than 50 new customers a month and increased customer exposure by more than 60%. Most people are afraid of the unknown. True hustlers, though, love to make things happen.

After spending many years in corporate America, I decided to try my hand at being an entrepreneur. I did my research and due diligence, and found a need for a

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particular specialty sports publication. Even though I had no experience in publishing and had no investment dollars or start-up capital, I created a four-page media kit and sold enough advertising in three weeks to start printing. Within eight months I was printing more than 25,000 copies locally with more than 200 distribution points, and had added editions in two other cities in Texas and one in Florida. A real hustler shows no fear.

I have accomplished many other things in my business life, of course. Here I only want to give you a snapshot of what having a hustler's mentality can do for you when it is put to good use. So what does all of this mean for you? A lot of what I learned instinctively and on the streets through trial and error you can apply to your day-to-day strategies in corporate America.

The first rule, of course, is to take advantage of your opportunities. To a street hustler, an unattended wallet is an opportunity. In corporate America today, there are lawful opportunities just sitting there waiting for a hustler to turn into cash and success. You could say that there's gold in them thar' hills. But seeing opportunities and actually doing something about them are two different things. Here are some key points to remember:

1. A true hustler gets things done. A true hustler does not say something cannot be done. Instead, a hustler asks, "Why not?"
2. A true hustler is never part of the problem. Instead, the hustler is the solution.
3. A hustler is not afraid to take risks. Nobody ever achieved

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anything truly great without taking lots of risks. With lots of risks comes lot of failure. But out of the midst of failure can come tremendous success. As the space age dawned, the Soviet Union was launching Sputnik while U.S. rockets were exploding on the ground. Eventually, of course, the United States was able to send men to the moon.

4. Hustlers love to win and hate to lose. Always keep in mind that there are two types of people, spectators and players. Spectators are the ones who buy the tickets to watch the players play. Players are the ones that participate in the game. Hustlers are players and the only way to win is to play the game. Nobody ever won an MVP award from the stands or on the bench.

5. Hustlers love to make things happen.
Get out there and make something happen today!

Chapter Three

*“Before you can win, you have to believe
you are worthy.”*

Mike Ditka

Winning is a Choice, so is Losing

My good friend and business associate, international motivational speaker and author Johnny Wimbrey, says, “If winning is possible, why choose to lose?” That is the \$100,000 question. If winning and losing are both by choice, why would anyone choose to lose? Why doesn’t everyone choose to win?

I truly believe that, deep down inside, 99.9% of people everywhere want to win. The problem is, they don’t know how. Another problem is that they don’t believe they are destined to win. Still others are simply afraid to succeed. Like it or not, success brings responsibilities and expectations, and some people are fearful that if they achieve success, they won’t be able to replicate it the rest of their lives.

Winning is a Choice

As I've stated before, I feel we all are built to win but that we get programmed to lose. Jean Nidetch, founder of Weight Watchers, says, "It's a choice, not chance, that determines your destiny." Winning does not happen by accident. It truly is a choice.

So many people go through life buying into the theory that they just have to accept what life has to offer. To them, it's an off-the-rack world and the fact that they're between sizes is just their tough luck. They believe it is just by chance that some people hit it big while others suffer through life sifting through the scraps and leftovers the winners have left behind.

Since you're reading this book, I'm hopeful that you're not one of those people content to let life's currents drag you into the stagnant backwaters of defeat and defeatism. Since you're reading this book, I'm assuming that you truly are the captain of your life, or that you want to be. And that in large part is what it takes to become successful.

Legendary football coach Vince Lombardi puts it this way, "Winning is a habit. Unfortunately, so is losing." What does all of this mean? The answer is so simple it's almost scary. Our habits, both good and bad, come by way of our choices. If we smoke or drink, it's by choice. If we exercise and eat healthy, again, it's our choice.

It's funny. When we say the word "habit," it's almost always associated with something negative. Think about it for a moment. If we bite our nails we say, "It's a bad habit." Yet when someone gets a manicure, we never speak of aesthetic nail care as a good habit.

One definition of habit is "a pattern of behavior acquired through frequent repetition." Another is "an

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established custom.” In neither does the definition specify whether a habit in and of itself is good or bad. Let’s look closer at the first definition. Through frequent repetition, the way we behave, or act, becomes habitual. It stands to reason, then, that bad habits can be replaced with good habits simply through frequent repetition.

Does that mean it is easy to break a bad habit and replace it with a good one? In most cases, no. In

“Losers visualize the penalties of failure. Winners visualize the rewards of success.”

Rob Gilbert

fact, numerous experts say breaking a bad habit can take anywhere from weeks to years. One thing upon which the experts are agreed is that it takes a lot longer to develop a good habit than it does a bad one.

That, of course, is a large stumbling block in our society. As a people, we are results oriented, and we want results yesterday. If we don’t get instant gratification, we begin to doubt what we are doing. But think about where we might be in this country today if some of our leaders had had the same attitude. Consider, for example, the case of Ulysses S. Grant. A failure at just about every venture he tried, Grant went on to become one of the greatest generals of the Civil War. Grant did not allow failure to become an unbreakable habit, even though the potential for defeat never lurked far from the surface. Grant continued to believe he would win. The Battle of Shiloh provides a case in point. The battle looked like it was going to result in a Confederate rout. Union forces were decimated, and the

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courage of the Union soldiers had faltered. General William Tecumseh Sherman, encountering Grant, said, "Well, Grant. We've had the devil's own day, haven't we?"

"Yes," Grant said. "Yes. Lick 'em tomorrow." And that is precisely what the Union forces did.

I think of people in two ways -- bouncers and builders. Bouncers are the ones who never stick to anything long enough to see results. They are the ones that are always "in search of." They stay up late at night watching every infomercial on television looking for the magic formula that will get them whatever it is they want out of life, be it financial success, fresher breath or a toned body. While bouncers have time to waste searching for easy solutions to achieving their dreams, they don't seem to have time for anything that takes time, including working on themselves.

Consequently, they bounce through life and never really accomplish anything of substance. They wonder why everyone else always gets life's breaks while they suffer in perpetual failure. These are the people usually who quit one day before something big happens in their lives and they don't even know it. I have a friend who as a young man was told by his high school baseball coach that he was a bubble player. The coach was not sure whether my friend would make the team, and indicated in no uncertain terms that my friend simply had not drawn much attention or interest from the coach. My friend decided to quit right then and there. During practice that day, one of the outfielders broke his leg. My friend regrets the decision to quit to this day, knowing that he might have enjoyed playing baseball for at least a few more years had he not left just as opportunity was about to present itself.

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The tragedy for most bouncers is that they don't realize that success is so tantalizingly close to them. They continue to bounce even though they are within reach of the proverbial brass ring.

Builders, on the other hand, are the polar opposites of bouncers. They are committed to whatever it is they are undertaking. Not merely involved, mind you, but committed. What's the difference between being involved and being committed? Think back to the last time you had bacon and eggs for breakfast. The difference between being involved and committed is the difference between the chicken and the pig that provided you your breakfast. The chicken was involved, while the pig was committed! Like the pig providing the bacon, builders are committed. They do whatever it takes to succeed, to win. If they have a bad habit -- and by the way, losing is a horrible habit -- they do whatever it takes to replace their bad habit with a good one.

All of which brings up a point I cannot emphasize enough. If you truly want to eliminate a bad habit, you must replace it with a good one. This technique is especially important when it comes to winning and losing. I'm sure you know someone or know of someone who quit smoking or drinking cold turkey. They just got up one day and decided to quit. You can do the same thing when it comes to losing. However, if you don't replace the losing habit with a winning mindset, you'll just be riding the fence for the rest of your life.

You can either be a spectator or a player in your own life. The spectators are the ones who ride the fence. They are the ones who always wonder, "What if?"

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Let's take a look at winning. One way to define it is "succeeding with great difficulty." Malcolm Forbes once said, "Victory is sweetest when you've known defeat." If we haven't invested in something then we really don't appreciate the reward, and winning is no different. The harder it is and the more it takes, the sweeter the victory is. Think about working on a project, either at home or at work. The projects and achievements that stand out and gave you the most satisfaction were the ones that took the most effort to complete. The successes that more or less fell in your lap or that didn't require much effort aren't that

*"A competitive world offers two possibilities.
You can lose. Or, if you want to win, you can
change."*

L. C. Thurow

big of a deal. The victories that you had to put everything into, the ones you had to fight to complete, are the triumphs that gave you the greatest feeling of accomplishment. They probably brought you the most recognition as well. This is true of any manner of achievements. It could be the garden you personally planted at home or the presentation you developed and delivered at work that brought in the big client. Being recognized gives us a great feeling. Think about this: Triumph is just "try" with a little "umph" added. No matter what you do, always give it everything you've got, and then have the patience to see what happens.

Now I'd like you to take a look at winning versus losing side-by-side.

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WINNING can be categorized fairly easily. To win is:

- to achieve victory or finish first;
- to achieve success in an effort or venture; or
- to succeed or prevail.

LOSING likewise is easy to categorize. To lose is:

- to be deprived of something;
- to fail to win, or simply to fail; or
- to be defeated.

So, which one sounds the most appealing to you? Which one sounds like you? Zig Ziglar says, "Every choice you make has an end result." The choices we made yesterday, the choices we make today and tomorrow, the choices we make next month, next year, next whenever, all have an end result. As so many of us stress to our children, but fail to think about as adults, actions have consequences. It's simple physics: For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. It's simple life. For every choice we make there is a consequence, for good or ill. It's up to you to decide whether you choose to win or to lose.

I want to share a story with you about Lanny Bassham, Olympic gold medalist and author of the book *"With Winning in Mind."* In the 1972 winter Olympic Games in Munich, Germany, Lanny won the silver medal in a rifle competition. While most people would have been thrilled to win a silver, Lanny wanted gold. Even though he said winning silver was 10 times better than bronze, and winning bronze was 10 times better than no medal at all, he also knew silver was still the closest you could come to gold and still lose. For him, winning silver just meant that he was the first loser.

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Lanny wanted to know what made the gold medal winners different from everyone else. He averaged five hours a day over the next two years interviewing champions and finding out what made them winners. Based on his findings, he created his Mental Management® system that he not only used to win gold in the '76 Olympic Games in Montreal, but to win numerous gold medals in international competitions and set several world records.

"The winners in life think constantly in terms of I can, I will, and I am. Losers, on the other hand, concentrate their waking thoughts on what they should have or would have done, or what they can't do."

Dr. Dennis Waitley

What Lanny found was painfully simple and yet tremendously profound. Go ahead and take out a pen and paper; if you write nothing else down from this book write this down. What Lanny found was that the only main difference that separates winners from the others is the way winners think. Winners are convinced they will finish first. Others merely hope to finish first.

Obviously, it does take a little bit more than just thinking you are going to win to actually achieve success. It takes commitment to doing whatever is necessary to achieve your goal. Remember, it's not practice that makes perfect. It's perfect practice that makes perfect. Winners are convinced they will win because they know they've done everything they possibly can to put themselves in the best position to win. They are prepared and they have a plan.

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Legendary high school football coach turned billionaire Art Williams has a book titled, *“All You Can Do Is All You Can Do, But All You Can Do Is Enough.”* If you know in your heart that you’ve done everything you possibly can, then you cannot do anymore. That is the kind of commitment it takes to make yourself a winner.

If you truly want to choose to win then you need to start right now. Not tomorrow, not after you finish reading this book, not next week, not when things slow down. There will never be a perfect time, or a better time. Next week you’ll still have deadlines to meet, bills to pay, dogs to walk. If you don’t start right now, you may never set yourself on the path to the success that is yours to claim.

Because you’re reading this right now, you’ve taken the first step. As you continue to read I am going to give you detailed directions on how to learn from my experience and to implement my strategies into your life. I’m going to help you achieve your destiny of success, to help you become a winner. But you have to be committed.

Remember the pig.

Chapter Four

"Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself."

Leo Tolstoy

Why We Are Where We Are Right Now

Have you ever wondered why you are where you are in life? It may sound harsh, but the answer is as plain as a bowl of unsweetened corn flakes. We are where we are today because that is where we want to be, because all of the choices we've made in life have added up to now.

You are where you are today because deep down inside, that is where you want to be and because you shape your external reality to be consistent with your internal beliefs. In other words, you are what you think.

We convince ourselves we want to change, but at the moment of truth we make other choices that lead us from where we truly want to be. We don't allow ourselves to change, and we become mired in the muck of past decisions that hold us back from achieving the life of our dreams. The years pass, and the people we are today are little removed from the people we were.

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Why is this?

First, it has been proven scientifically that there is a direct link between our ability to make excuses and to implement change.

It's almost predictable and cliché. People become excited, determined and enthusiastic about the change process, right up until things start changing. Have you ever tried going to work out at a gym in January? The treadmills are in constant use, and trying to work in on weight machines becomes less of a physical toil as it is an exercise in futility. The gym overflows

"Change and growth take place when a person has risked himself and dares to become involved with experimenting with his own life."

Herbert Otto

with those "committed" to New Year's resolutions of a healthier lifestyle. By February, however, you have the gym practically all to yourself. The January exercisers are gone because their dog has died, their tummies hurt, locusts have attacked and so on ad infinitum. Deny it if you'd like, but in general, people are lazy. It's easier to fool ourselves with bogus excuses than to change. The irony is that, the more we claim to want and need change, the greater our ability to come up with world-class excuses. We become gold medalists in the sport of excuse making.

Everything is okay so long as we're merely thinking about change and coming up with good strategies for change. Everything is okay so long as we're merely planning for change. But when we're on the cusp of actually implementing change, we get cold feet.

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How can this be? It seems that every time we want to make one major change in our lives, we come up with at least 100 excuses that prevent us from taking action. When we're honest with ourselves, we know that 99 out of those 100 excuses are usually nothing more than garbage, and the real tragedy is that we are only hurting ourselves. The litany of potential excuses stretches to eternity: Grandma gets sick, our car breaks down, we lose our job, we have to work overtime, the leaves need to be raked, the screen door is coming off the hinges, we're too busy, and the granddaddy of them all, "This is just who I am!" As much as we claim to desire change while in the planning process, the closer we get to actually realizing change we find ourselves outside our comfort level. Fear creeps into our psyche -- fear of the unknown, fear of failure, fear of success. Fear's roots grow deeper than those of our desire for change, and we become paralyzed with inertia and revert to the status quo.

Let me share something with you, however, that may help you over the hump. Changing your life is just like having a baby. There never is a "perfect" time. If those of us who are parents right now waited until the perfect moment to have kids, the total world population at this moment would be around 10. There is always something coming up, a reason why now is not the time.

How many times have you wanted to do something positive in your life such as lose 10 pounds, read 30 minutes a day, or anything else falling under the banner of self-improvement? Now think about how many times you actually got started. Not very many, most likely.

One of the main reasons we don't follow through on our ambitions is because we don't think now is the right

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time. We decide to wait until tomorrow, next week, next month, next year. The sad thing is, we find out tomorrow, next week, next month, next year that the time still is not right, and we continue to be who we've always been.

We've all heard the playful definition of insanity: doing the same thing over and over but expecting a different result each time. Of course we know that more of the same thing will yield more of the same thing.

You are where you are right now because you keep doing the same thing.

If you are not where you want to be -- and there always seems to be some circumstance or event that keeps us from breaking out of our funk -- at some point in time you'll have to accept reality and acknowledge that YOU are the only thing always at the scene of the crime. The one constant in your life is you.

It is not circumstances or events that keep you from getting where you want to be. It's you. No question about it, that's both a scary and enlightening reality. Challenge yourself. Stop clinging to the mind viruses that hold you back from the life change you deserve.

Now is the time to find people who are where you want to be, and to do what they do. No more excuses.

Sometimes, of course, we don't change because we either don't know how, don't believe we can, or because we're just flat-out afraid. American novelist James Lane Allen said, "The outer conditions of a person's life will always be found to reflect their inner beliefs." Similarly, circus great and showman P.T. Barnum said, "More persons, on the whole, are humbugged by believing in nothing, than by believing too much." We want to be different and we

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want our lives to be better, but we have bought into the false and poisonous beliefs that we are incapable of change. We think we are who we are and that is all we ever will be. That need not be true, unless we make that failure our reality. We all were put here by God to do great things, but most often we end up “settling for less” because of “stinkin’ thinkin’.” And as accomplished as we are as excuse makers, there’s simply no excuse for that.

I recently came across the text of a commencement address by Apple Computer and Pixar Animation Studios

*“Don’t make excuses. Make things happen.
Make changes. Then make history.”*

Doug Hall

CEO Steve Jobs to the Stanford University graduating class on June 12, 2005. I was struck by Jobs’ willingness to allow life to come to him and to give himself over to change when necessary for success. His story, which you might think of as the trials of Jobs, perfectly encapsulates some keys to success I’d like to impart to you here. The full text of the speech can be found at the Stanford University website.

Jobs began his address by pointing out to the assembled graduates that he had never graduated from college, noting that “this is the closest I’ve ever gotten to a college graduation.” He then proceeded to tell three simple yet poignant and important stories.

The first story he told concerns the importance of, as he put it, “connecting the dots.” Jobs’ biological mother was a young, unmarried graduate student who decided

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to put her son up for adoption. She wanted her boy to be adopted by college graduates, and made appropriate arrangements. But when he was born, the adopting couple decided that they wanted a girl, and Jobs' mother searched anew. She found a couple, but after learning that the mother had never graduated from college and that the father had never finished high school, Jobs' biological mother refused to sign final papers. The couple truly wanted Jobs, however, and, after promising that the boy would go to college, his biological mother relented.

His parents made good on the promise, and Jobs found himself at Reed College, an expensive private school. Jobs

"You change your life by changing your heart."

Max Lucado

worried about the financial strain on his parents, realizing that their working class savings were being funneled into his tuition. Moreover, Jobs found that he could not justify such a sacrifice. For one thing, he had no idea what he wanted to do with his life, and could not fathom how college would help him decide. Six months after entering Reed, Jobs dropped out. Now freed from having to take required courses that bored him, Jobs began attending classes that interested him.

"It wasn't all romantic," he said. He slept on floors in friends' rooms, and returned soda bottles for the deposit money. He also recalled how he "would walk the seven miles across town every Sunday night to get one good meal a week at the Hare Krishna temple." The experience was exhilarating. "I loved it," Jobs said. "And much of what I stumbled into

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by following my curiosity and intuition turned out to be priceless later on.”

As a case in point, Jobs recalled how Reed at the time had one of the strongest calligraphy programs in the nation. Drawn to the beauty of calligraphy, Jobs began dropping in on calligraphy courses and in the process learned the characteristics of great typography. Of course, such knowledge in and of itself appeared to hold little practical value. “But 10 years later, when we were designing the first Macintosh computer, it all came back to me,” Jobs said. “And we designed it all into the Mac.” Jobs summed up: “If I had never dropped out, I would have never dropped in on this calligraphy class, and personal computers might not have the wonderful typography that they do.”

By simply following his interests, Jobs came to an eye-opening revelation. “You can’t connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards,” Jobs said. “So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something -- your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life.”

Everything we do, everything we experience, every person we meet, has value. We are changed by the experience and enriched by it, even if we don’t recognize it at the time. Jobs by all appearances was shiftless, aimless, and ambitionless in college, floating idly and without direction on a sea of life choices. But because he was purposefully aimless -- pursuing things that attracted his interest -- he was far from a passive companion in his own life. Like a sponge, he absorbed knowledge that intrigued him, though it seemed even to him at the time that the knowledge that captured his interest was without practical value.

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Because he was constantly alive to the “now,” while having a firm command of his past, Jobs was able to parlay that peculiar interest in calligraphy into a revolution in computer typography.

The next story Jobs related spoke to life’s perennial themes of love and loss. He related the by now legendary story of how he and a friend started Apple Computer in his parent’s garage when he was just 20. With hard work and dedication, the two in just 10 years grew the company from that two-person garage company into a \$2 billion concern with more than 4,000 employees. The Macintosh had just come out, and future success appeared limitless. That’s when Jobs got fired from the company he had labored to build and launch following a very public disagreement over visions for the future with a man Jobs had hired to help run the company.

Jobs briefly felt like a failure, believing he had failed to live up to the standards set by the previous generation of entrepreneurs. However, as the sting of defeat began to fade, Jobs realized that he still loved being an innovator and entrepreneur.

“I didn’t see it then, but it turned out that getting fired from Apple was the best thing that could have ever happened to me,” Jobs told the Stanford grads. “The heaviness of being successful was replaced by the lightness of being a beginner again, less sure about everything. It freed me to enter one of the most creative periods of my life.”

Jobs was a whirlwind for the next five years, starting first one company called NeXT, and another called Pixar. He even met the woman who would become his wife. Pixar went on to create the wildly popular Disney film Toy Story,

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the world's first computer animated feature film. Today, Pixar is the world's most successful animation studio. Then Apple bought NeXT, Jobs returned to Apple, "and the technology we developed at NeXT is at the heart of Apple's current renaissance."

Jobs recognizes that the temporary setback he endured provided the fuel for future success. "I'm pretty sure none of this would have happened if I hadn't been fired from Apple," he said. "It was awful tasting medicine, but I guess the patient needed it. Sometimes life hits you in the head with a brick." Jobs had clearly come to the same realization as Walt Disney before him: Sometimes a kick in the teeth is precisely what you need.

"If you do not change direction, you may end up where you are heading."

Lao-Tzu

Several things stand out. Jobs could have been forgiven if he had withdrawn and become absorbed with self-pity. Instead, he came to view his setback as an opportunity. Jobs had clearly learned that his past experience could help him achieve future success. It was just a matter of keeping on keeping on, of hard work, of figuring out how to connect the dots. The linchpin of his success story, however, is that Jobs had found what he loved to do and had the courage to do it.

Jobs' advice to the graduates? "Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work," Jobs said.

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“And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven’t found it yet, keep looking. Don’t settle,” Jobs counseled.

The Apple founder concluded with a story about death. Jobs recently was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. The initial diagnosis was grim, and Jobs was instructed in no uncertain terms to get his affairs in order. A later biopsy revealed that the cancer was in fact curable with surgery. Jobs had the surgery and is now cancer free. Nevertheless, Jobs knows that

“Both tears and sweat are salty, but they render a different result. Tears will get you sympathy; sweat will get you change.”

Jesse Jackson

death awaits him eventually. Recalling something he read as a teenager, Jobs noted that, if you live each day as though it were your last, sooner or later you’ll be right. That notion has reverberated in Jobs’ inner ear ever since. He said that he awakes everyday and asks himself, “If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?” He continues, “And whenever the answer has been “no” for too many days in a row, I know I need to change something.”

Death itself, Jobs asserted, is a powerful instrument of change. And change is what keeps life fresh. Said Jobs:

“No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to heaven don’t want to die to get there. And yet Death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it. And that is as it should be, because Death is very likely the single best invention of Life. It is Life’s change agent. It clears out the old to make way for the new. Right now the

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new is you, but someday not too long from now, you will gradually become the old and be cleared away...."

Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma -- which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become.

I began this chapter by noting that we are where we are today because here is where we want to be. All of our choices have led us to where we are today. Stephen Jobs is a wildly successful man because that is where he wants to be. He has recognized that change is sometimes necessary, though painful, and has embraced a mindset that itself embraces change. Moreover, he has listened to his heart, has taken an inventory of his soul. He knows what he wants and lives in a way that allows him to achieve it.

Being a huge fan of Apple and the Mac I use to this very day (I can't live without my iBook), I felt compelled to share Jobs' story with you. It is a great story in and of itself. What's more, it is an incredible testimony to the power and necessity of change, sometimes brought about by our sheer force of will and sometimes brought upon us by events outside our control.

If you truly want to bring good things to your life, you must embrace change. No more excuses. No more fear. Believe in your vision and it can and will happen to and for you. Some of you, no doubt, inspired by Jobs and filled with a dream, are now pumped and ready to take on the world. Others, however, may be ready to leap to a new future but are uncertain about how they can make change a part of their lives. Just keep reading because we're now ready to look at specific ways to make change a force for us, instead of a stumbling block on the road to our greatness.

Chapter Five

Mental Mapquest®: Your road map to Winning BIG!

Sometimes people take off on journeys without knowing precisely where they will end up or how they will get there. Occasionally these sojourns yield remarkable results. For example, Christopher Columbus played a hunch and set out from Spain in search of a western route to India, which was famed for its spices. Believing the Earth was round, Columbus figured that, by traveling west, he'd eventually come around to India and its riches. With no maps to guide him and a crew bedeviled by fears that the entire expedition would fall off the edge of the Earth, Columbus boldly sailed westward toward India in pursuit of his dream. Theoretically correct, Columbus hadn't figured on encountering another land mass. Indeed, Columbus went to his grave believing he had found a western route to Asia. Of course, instead of finding India, Columbus opened up a "new world" to Europe. Leaving aside the subjugation and destruction of native peoples -- which is by no means a small matter -- today's world continues to be shaped by Columbus' mapless journey.

Though things generally worked out for Columbus in the end, for most of us it makes sense to plan our trips thoroughly with maps. Few of us would even consider the

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idea of traveling from city to city without a fairly detailed idea of how to get there.

In the days before the Internet, we relied on paper maps. They weren't bad, and continue to hold utility today. However, they give us limited information. We can find our destination on a map grid, but are left to our own devices in selecting the best way to get there. As we make our way, we sometimes find that the street we thought would get us where we want to be is one way in the opposite direction of our destination, or is festooned with traffic lights that slow our progress to a crawl.

We're much more fortunate today. If we want to find the best way to get someplace, we can go to the Internet and

"Thinking is easy, acting is difficult, and to put one's thoughts into action is the most difficult thing in the world."

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

find a site such as mapquest.com, type in our beginning address and destination's address and retrieve detailed, step-by-step directions on how to get there. For example, if I want to go from the Adam's Mark Hotel in downtown Dallas to the Park Plaza Hotel near the French Quarter in New Orleans, I can simply type in a few addresses and receive directions that look something like this:

1. Travel northwest on OLIVE ST toward LIVE OAK ST. <0.1 miles
2. Turn LEFT onto LIVE OAK ST. 0.1 miles
3. Turn SLIGHT LEFT onto N ST PAUL ST
0.1 miles
4. Turn LEFT onto COMMERCE ST 0.3 miles

Mental Mapquest®

5. Turn SLIGHT LEFT to take the I-45 S ramp toward I-30 0.1 miles
6. Merge onto I-30 E/US-67 N. 6.4 miles
7. Merge onto US-80 E via EXIT 53B toward TERREL 19.1 miles
8. Take TX-557 SPUR E toward I-2 E/ SHREVEPORT 3.7 miles
9. Merge onto I-20 E toward SHREVEPORT 148.6 miles
10. Merge onto LA-3132 E via EXIT 11 toward ALEXANDRIA 7.5 miles
11. Merge onto I-49 S via EXIT 7 toward ALEXANDRIA 202.1 miles
12. Merge onto I-10 E toward BATON ROUGE 131.4 miles
13. Take EXIT 234B on the LEFT toward POYDRAS ST/SUPERDOME 0.2 miles
14. Stay STRAIGHT to go onto POYDRAS ST . <0.1 miles
15. Turn LEFT onto S CLAIBORNE AVE. 0.4 miles
16. Turn RIGHT onto CANAL ST 0.1 miles
17. End at 1500 CANAL ST NEW ORLEANS, LA 70112-2818, US

Total Est. Time: 7 hours, 57 minutes

Total Est. Distance: 520.96 miles

My online directions would provide even more detail than this example because accompanying maps will highlight the required maneuvers -- an arrow pointing to the left for a left turn, for example. If I follow these directions from top to bottom exactly as they are written, I stand a very good chance of ending up where I want to be. This is thousands of times better than just hopping in my car, driving aimlessly and hoping for the best.

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Even if I know where I am, in this case the Adam's Mark Hotel, and where I want to go, the Park Plaza Hotel, I don't have enough information to give me confidence that I will reach my destination. Could I get there without more information? Possibly. Is it realistic to expect I could get there without more information? In a word, no. Let's face it. Not even the celebrated Columbus got where he wanted to be. Even if by some miracle I did end up where I wanted to be, the odds are high that I will have taken needless detours and wasted valuable time in the process.

Clearly, it makes sense to have a plan when we go on a trip. It would be pure folly to undertake a journey without adequate preparation. And yet this is exactly what we tend to do when we want to experience change in our lives.

Being properly prepared, of course, does not insulate us from encountering detours or delays for road construction, bad weather, or car problems. As Scottish poet Robert Burns once wrote, "The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men,/ Gang aft a-gley," meaning, of course, that our best plans often go awry. Some things will always be beyond our control, and that's okay. The point is, the well-prepared traveler has detailed, step-by-step instructions on how to get from point "A," where they are, to point "B," where they want to be.

When implementing change in your life, you need to have the same sort of detailed, step-by-step instruction. This is your Mental Mapquest®. You cannot drive aimlessly through life simply hoping you will arrive at your destination. Certainly, with a minor life change, as with a short trip, you can probably get away with just winging it. Someone who has never been to Texas before can probably figure out how to get from Dallas to Fort Worth. Getting

from Reunion Arena to the Will Rogers Coliseum, however, would require some homework. So it is with big life changes. To experience life-altering change, you need detailed -- and the more detailed, the better -- instructions.

The need for detail is self-evident when you think about it deeply. The more focused your aim, the better your

"To accomplish great things, we must not only act but also dream. Not only plan but also believe."

Anatole France

chances of hitting your target. Let me offer an example. I love sports, and golf in particular. Anytime I'm preparing to hit a shot, I always try to find the smallest possible target. For example, when I'm on the tee I'm not just thinking "hit it in the fairway." I'm not even just aiming at a tree in the distance. What I might do, however, is aim for a branch on that tree in the distance. Let's say the fairway is 25 yards wide in my landing area and I'm just aiming for the fairway. If I miss 10 yards left or right, I could be in big trouble, even out of bounds, depending on the course. But if I'm aiming for a branch and miss by 10 yards, I still have a very good chance of being in the fairway. In a worst-case scenario, I still should be in play.

You need to have that same sort of laser-like focus when implementing change in your life. That way, even if you're a little bit off, you still have an excellent chance of hitting your target. There's a saying in golf that I stress to my 14-year-old son when we're playing together: It's not how good your good shots are, it's how good your bad shots are. Similarly, "golf is a game of misses."

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The legendary golfer Ben Hogan said he never hit more than 2-3 shots per round exactly as he wanted. That means that, on average, 65 to 66 shots each round were “misses.”

It is imperative to keep this in mind as you follow your Mental Mapquest®. Even our most amazing and detailed plans will have flaws. Even without flaws, our plans will sometimes founder on the shoals of unforeseen or unforeseeable events. When you get right down to it, there are only two things we can control in our lives -- our own ACTIONS and our own REACTIONS to life's events. We choose our actions and, as much as we might hate to admit it, we choose our reactions as well. If you stop and think about it, there is nothing else we can truly control.

“Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare.”

Japanese proverb

Nobody makes us mad; we choose to get mad. Nobody makes us quit; we choose to quit. Nobody makes us change; we choose to change.

The rap group Outkast has a line in a song called “Mrs. Jackson” that sums up this idea nicely. “You can plan a pretty picnic,” the lyrics state, “but you can’t predict the weather.” Sure, it’s pop music and as such subject to criticisms of shallowness. But at least in that one line, Outkast has summarized an eternal and unchanging truth. We can put together the most well-conceived, thoroughly thought-out, comprehensive and detailed plans, but sooner or later those plans will collide with objective reality. Life

happens. How we react to the collision will in large part determine the ultimate success of our plan.

The St. Louis Cardinals in 2005 were odds-on favorites to make a return trip to the World Series. Because of off-season signings, many observers believed the team was even better than the one that had the best record in the Majors in 2004. Combining a potent offensive juggernaut with stellar defense and strengthened pitching, the team was considered baseball's best. Then reality set in. Injuries to key starters piled up like cord wood. The slugging third baseman and Gold Glover Scott Rolen went down for the year. Talented catcher Yadier Molina was forced to the disabled list. Right fielder Larry Walker was felled by unbearable neck pain. Left fielder Reggie Sanders broke his leg in a collision with highlight reel hogging center fielder Jim Edmonds, who himself was hobbled by ailments throughout the season. Despite playing for much of the season without five of their regular starters, the Cardinals nevertheless once again amassed the best record in baseball. The team ultimately fell short of its goal of making and winning the world championship, but nevertheless showed continued resilience in the face of unexpected obstacles -- a case study in the value of persistence and fidelity to the Mental Mapquest® even in the face of adversity. Once injuries began to decimate the team, the Cardinals could have folded the tent. Instead, relying on contributions from bit players and career bench players, the team remained focused on its goals and came tantalizingly close to achieving them.

That sort of dedication and focus is necessary to achieving anything positive in life. Let's say you plan the world's most amazing picnic for you and your family, and

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then on the appointed day it rains. How will you choose to react? Most likely, you'll be disappointed, especially if you have put a lot of time and effort into the planning. Rain need not completely derail your plans, however. You can reschedule the picnic, or hold it in a different venue. Instead of going to the park, you can picnic on the family-room floor. The essential point is that the fact of rain does not mean you need to scrap the plan and decide to never picnic again. That would be insanity.

Similarly, when you're on the road to changing your life, things will happen. Unexpected things, disappointing things, discouraging things no doubt will build at one point or another and threaten your plans like a gathering storm. It will rain on your picnic. People will tell you that you can never change. People will tell you to stop wasting your time. People will tell you that you need to be content with what you have in life, and that things could be worse. People will tell you that life is unchangeable, and that you should stop your dreaming.

Don't listen to them.

The day you stop dreaming is the day you start dying. Life can change. I know this for a fact. I am Exhibit A, living, breathing testimony to the fact that people can and do change, for the better, each and every day. We have no one set destiny. We have a host of potential destinies. The one we ultimately arrive at is a function of our choices. Consider: If I had followed the roadmap given to me as a preteen running mean city streets, I would now either be dead, incarcerated, on drugs, selling drugs, on drugs and selling drugs, or homeless. I would be by any measure a

failure, a net drain on society, a societal have-not. None of those outcomes would have surprised anyone, least of all me. So what happened? I made a choice. I chose a different destiny for myself. I made a choice never to stop dreaming and not to accept the meager options life was then offering me. I knew there was something better for me in life, and if I had to order a la carte, so be it.

No matter how unerringly bleak things may seem at

*"Your goals are the road maps that guide you
and show you what is possible for your life."*

Kahlil Gibran

any given time, we have options. We can accept what life is throwing at us, or we can seek out an alternative.

The 10 chapters that follow will help you create your own Mental Mapquest®, with each chapter dedicated to one principle, or attribute, you'll need as you undertake your journey of change. An outline at the back of the book will help you inventory and put everything together so you can create your own individualized road map to success. By book's end, you'll be better prepared than Columbus. But you'll have to start just as Columbus did -- with a dream.

Chapter Six

*"You can often measure a person
by the size of his dream."*

Robert H. Schuller

Dream Big!

If nothing else, the popularity of *USA Today* demonstrates that Americans like to streamline and simplify. In the days before the Internet and 24-hour cable news channels, people turned to newspapers for in-depth coverage and to television reports for the news in summary form. *USA Today* brought the television approach to newspapers, and has been an unquestioned success as the world boldly marches into the Information Age.

It works for newspapers, but how to summarize a book? Boiled to its essentials, this book can be summarized by the statement, "Dream Big!" True, many people who read my story believe it is a tale of overcoming adversity. Having lived the life, I can attest to the truth of that sentiment. More than that, however, my story is a story of hope and it is a story of faith.

Just what is hope? To me, hope is a dream. When we are hoping we are dreaming and when we are dreaming

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we are hoping. We're hoping that, one day our dreams will come true. A dream is defined as a condition or achievement that is longed for; an aspiration. One definition of hope is a wish or desire accompanied by aspiration. Like Siamese twins, where one goes so goes the other.

Faith is acquired through taking action. Once we begin to put a plan in place and begin to take steps towards making our dreams a reality, our hope becomes faith. We truly start to believe that we will receive what we are hoping for, that it will happen, that our dreams will come true.

But it all starts with hope.

"Dream lofty dreams, and as you dream, so you shall become. Your vision is the promise of what you shall one day be; your ideal is the prophecy of what you shall at last unveil."

James Allen

Let's face it. We all tend to create gray areas in our minds when in reality, many if not most things are truly black and white. We tend to ride the proverbial fence on so many things. But our glass cannot be half-full and half-empty at the same time. Likewise, we cannot dream big and think small at the same time. It is impossible to have negative thoughts and positive thoughts at the same moment. In the physical world, we know that two objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time. So too with our thoughts.

Try this with me. Think of a time in your life or an event that made you very happy. Reflect on that for 30 seconds. How did you feel? More than likely, you felt proud, accomplished -- like a winner. Now think of a time

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when, in your opinion, someone or something made you mad. Reflect on that for 30 seconds. How did that make you feel? It no doubt pulled you down. Now think of both things at exactly the same instant. Of course, you can't. It's impossible. It's impossible for your conscious mind to employ two completely separate thoughts at precisely the same moment in time.

Did it take any more energy or effort on your part to think positive for 30 seconds compared with thinking negative for 30 seconds? Of course not. All of which distills to this: It does not take any more effort to dream big than it does to dream small.

Careful readers no doubt picked up on the fact that, in asking you to think of a time in your life when someone or something made you mad, I included the phrase, "in your opinion." The reason I included the phrase is because no person or event can "make" you mad. You choose your reaction. There is not a person in this world who can force you to feel a certain way. By the same token, no person or event can prevent you from dreaming big. It's your choice. Do you want to dream big, dream small or not dream at all?

Two of the world's greatest thinkers sum up our choices nicely and come down squarely on the side of dreaming big. Henry David Thoreau counsels, "Go confidently in the direction of your dreams! Live the life you've imagined." Ralph Waldo Emerson suggests, "Hitch your wagon to a star." These men were not writing sweet nothings for greeting card companies. They were offering a key to success. Dream big. Success will follow.

No one can take away your dreams or your ability to dream -- except yourself.

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I recently had the extreme pleasure of meeting a woman at a speakers' training workshop. When I met her there is no way I would have guessed she is 65-years-old. She looks closer to 50, and her energy and zest for life rivals that of most 20-year-olds. I can think of only a handful of people I've met who are as positive as she is. At first blush, there would seem to be no reason for her to be otherwise. On closer inspection, however, you see she was born with physical deformities. You see, Beverly Jean Gipple was born with only three fingers on her right hand and, according to her, her feet looked like "seal flippers."

Back in 1940, orthopedic surgery did not exist. However, where everyone else saw no hope, Beverly's father dared to dream. Even after being told Beverly would never

"You gotta have a dream. If you don't have a dream, how you gonna make a dream come true?"

Oscar Hammerstein II

walk, her father saw an alternative future for his daughter. Doctors told him that about the only thing that could be done for Beverly was to separate her toes, which were fused together. His response: "Let's start with that!" Notice that he said "start," as in starting point. He never had the mindset that that was all that was going to be done. He dreamed his daughter would be able to walk and live a normal life. Twenty-six surgeries later, his dream became reality. Along the way, he taught Beverly to dream, and to dream big.

There were no piano teachers with eight fingers and none that knew how to teach someone with eight fingers to

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play, so he inspired her to teach herself. She did. Likewise, when she was unable to participate in a high school typing class because the teachers were unable to instruct an eight-fingered girl how to type, Beverly's father bought her a typewriter and urged her to teach herself. She did. They both dreamed big and never let other people's perceptions become their reality.

In 1981, Beverly wrote this poem, titled "Dreams."

*Dreams never come true,
Do they?
The young dream dreams.
They dream of what they will be
Ad what they'd like to be.
Some reach their dreams;
Some give up.
Why?
The mature are so busy surviving,
They forget to dream.
The pressure builds;
The restlessness nags.
Is that what I am?
Is this all there is?
What happened to my dreams?
Why?
The aged reminisce.
I remember when I was strong,
When I had purpose,
When I dreamed dreams.
What was my life?
I can't remember my dreams.*

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Why?

Why didn't someone tell me that

Dreams don't have to die?

That dreams are the journeys and

messages of the core of me?

"Anything is possible."

"Ask and ye shall receive."

"Take the moment and it is yours."

These all sound so true.

Why did I believe they

Couldn't be true for me?

Why did I abandon my dreams?

What joy to learn that

There is no limit on dreams.

The supply never diminishes;

The source never runs dry.

Dreams are never too old

or too late.

I can dream any dream I choose.

And it is truth and

Shall be made manifest

If I but ask and receive

And be ready to move.

Such excitement!

I haven't felt this alive in years.

Dreams don't have birthdays.

They can live anytime;

I only have to choose.

Youth, don't give up your dreams;

Go for it!

Mature, don't overlook;

Recognize.

Dream Big!

*Aged, don't forget;
Remember who you are and
Combine wisdom with experience.
We need your dreams.
You need your dreams.
Dream on, dear friend, dream on.
Please.*

Powerful, mesmerizing, and dead on, Beverly's poem demonstrates the power of the mind. One line in particular stands out to me. She writes, "I can dream any dream I choose." If I had to summarize this book and my whole life, that is the line I would choose. Beverly's powerful poem illustrates the simple and yet elusive fact that it is we who have the power. We not only can choose what dreams to have, but how big we want those dreams to be.

I recently had the pleasure of asking Chris Valetta, former NFL football player and contestant on the Donald Trump television reality show "The Apprentice," what one main lesson his experience had taught him. Without missing a beat, he said, "To think way bigger!" He said most people think too small, preventing them from reaching their full potential.

A number of years ago the actress Lily Tomlin did a wonderful and highly acclaimed one-woman show called "The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe." In one skit, she mused that she had always dreamed that one day she would be somebody. After a pause, she said, "I guess I should have been more specific." Tomlin's punchline points to a fundamental truth. Our dreams help us visualize the future we want. If we dream only of getting a new car, for example, that vehicle may well end up being a basic, stripped

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down Kia as opposed to the fully pimped out ride of our inner desires.

You will have a hard time getting anywhere in life if you only see yourself winning a small prize. You need to visualize yourself with your dream house, your dream car, your dream life. If your dreams are too small, more likely than not you sell yourself short by limiting your innately boundless potential. You will lack the vision to make bigger dreams possible.

A perfect example of this is the sub four minute mile. At one time, running a mile in under four minutes was considered impossible. Why? Because no one had done it yet, and because no one had done it yet, no one thought and dreamed big enough to believe it could actually be done. Indeed, many people believed that pushing the body to achieve a four minute mile would result in death.

That was the conventional thinking until May 1954 when, on a nasty day at Oxford University in England, Roger Bannister broke the barrier with a world record time of 3:59.4. He beat the previous record by almost two seconds. Forty-six days later, John Landy ran a 3:58. Within a year, 16 other runners all broke the four minute mile. Thinking it was impossible kept many runners from dreaming big. Without the big dream, they lived self-fulfilling prophecies and failed to break the barrier. But once Bannister showed it could be done, it was done in spades by countless other athletes.

One of the most important things about dreaming big is having an accompanying belief that, not only can that dream come true, but that it will. Hope must become faith. Landy at one point had said that the goal of the four minute mile was “like a wall,” a wall he could not penetrate. Three

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times, Landy had run the mile in 4:02. Not until Bannister's achievement did Landy begin to believe he could break down that wall.

Our goals must be out of immediate reach and yet not out of sight. Dreams are the stuff that the good life is made of. If we see ourselves working in dead-end jobs all our lives, then the odds are good that that is what will happen. However, if we see ourselves achieving greater things, there is no doubt they will happen. Our minds will start to think of ways to make the dream manifest and we will start to work

"The only place where your dream becomes impossible is in your own thinking."

Robert H. Schuller

on ways to call it forth in our lives. This is really how it works. There is a saying that says, "If you believe it, you can achieve it." I prefer to say, "When you believe it, you will achieve it." That's a subtle, yet huge, difference.

When you decide you can no longer see yourself settling for what life has to offer, when you decide you can no longer see yourself building someone else's dreams instead of your own -- that's when you will start to think bigger and dream bigger. Ideas will come to you from places you never knew existed. These ideas will turn into action. This is what I mean when I say, "To live the dream, you must first believe the dream." It is to your benefit and no one else's for you to dream big.

When you put your dreams out of immediate reach, but not out of sight, you'll find that things will start to happen

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in your life that may never have seemed possible before. Amazing in its simplicity, this approach begins to show results in just a short period of time. Your life will begin to change. In turn, your dreams will become increasingly bigger. Your mind will begin to turn over new ways to make this new dream a reality, and you will be able to marshal your mental and psychic energy to line up with this new vision and ability to think and dream big.

Dreaming big, like life itself, is a journey, not a destination. Dreaming big and achieving success is a never-ending process. Indeed, the moment we think we've arrived

"I learned that there were two ways I could live my life: following my dreams or doing something else. Dreams aren't a matter of chance, but a matter of choice. When I dream, I believe I am rehearsing my future."

David Copperfield

and have it all figured out is the moment we should be most on our guard. We can crash as quickly as we've risen. We should constantly and continually strive to become better and to take things to a new level, to places we have never before reached. In his Hall of Fame induction speech, the incomparable shortstop Ozzie Smith said he spent each and every day of his baseball career striving to get better. Once considered a one-dimensional player renowned for his glove work, Smith conscientiously worked on improving his hitting, making himself into a .300 hitter. He even taught himself to become a switch hitter -- all while continuing to labor to improve his fielding prowess.

Once you have mastered the skill of continual dreaming and striving, you will have the confidence of your convictions. Your past successes, and a growing ability

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to see the whole picture, will give you the faith that your new dreams will come true.

Johnny Wimbrey always tells me, “You can’t see the picture if you’re in the frame.” In order to dream big, you have to step away from yourself and the lingering mental shackles of your current life. Only then can you begin to dream your potential instead of your self-imposed limitations.

Dreaming the big dream so you can rise to a new level is, in truth, your sole purpose. God created us all to do great things, and He gave us all unique gifts. Dreaming small is a waste of our God-given gifts. We must challenge ourselves to think bigger and to dream big! My life would not be what it is today if I had not dreamed big. For many years, all I had was my ability to dream and my faith that God, notwithstanding who I was at that time, put me here to do big things. How could I do big things if I didn’t first have big dreams? And what good would it do to have big dreams if I didn’t actually believe they could become real? The answer, of course, is that without the hope of my dreams and my faith in them, I never would have achieved success.

I recently came across a poem titled “Dream Big.” Though the author is unknown, he speaks to the heart of this chapter. Asserting that now is the time “to embark on something worth doing,” the author adds that our journey need not be:

...for any grand cause, necessarily – but for something that tugs at your heart, something that’s your aspiration, something that’s your dream. You owe it to yourself to make your days here count.

Have fun.

Dig deep.

Stretch.

Dream big.

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The author cautions, however, that “there will be times when you want to turn around, pack it up, and call it quits.” That’s when you know, the author tells us, that “you are pushing yourself, that you are not afraid to learn by trying.”

It is important to remember that dreaming big in and of itself is not the complete answer. Baseball legend Mickey Mantle grew up in Oklahoma dreaming of being a big league ballplayer. Blessed with enormous gifts, Mantle nevertheless struggled in minor league ball. He called his father and said he wasn’t sure if he could make it. His father immediately showed up and told his son to pack his things and come on home. His father said he thought he had raised a man but saw before him a quitter. Mantle, of course, did not pack his things. With renewed persistence he soldiered on to enjoy one of the most storied careers in baseball history. The dream is essential to success. So too persistence, and faith that the dream will come true. Dreaming big is the first step in the process. The next is to define your goals, a subject we’ll examine in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven

"The indispensable first step to getting the things you want out of life is this: Decide what you want."

Ben Stein

Defining Your Goals

In the mid-1950s, both the United States and Soviet Union announced they would send a manmade satellite into Earth orbit as part of their contribution to the International Geophysical Year, an 18-month effort that stretched from July 1957 to the end of 1958. The project was an endeavor to learn as much as possible about Earth and space, but for most Americans there was an expectation that the U.S. would be first into space and would demonstrate its technological superiority over the Soviet Union. Launch of the U.S. Navy's Vanguard satellite, scheduled for November 1957, would be vindication of the American way of life.

However, scientists were having trouble with the rockets that would put Vanguard into orbit, and the launch was pushed back to the following spring. Most Americans were unperturbed. They were bombarded daily with space age imagery; even cars were designed to resemble jet planes and rockets. Common house furniture was marketed as

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having space-age design. Americans were confident and optimistic. It was a new world, and it was theirs.

That optimism evaporated on October 4, 1957, when the Soviets announced the successful launch of Sputnik, Russian for “traveling companion of the Earth,” or simply, “fellow traveler.” Just as Americans were settling in front of their television sets for the premier of the long-running television series *Leave It to Beaver*, the Soviets had beat the Americans into space.

Vanguard was rushed to the launching pad. On December 6, 1957, all appeared ready. But when it came time for liftoff, Vanguard exploded after rising less than five feet from the ground. It would not be until January 31, 1958, that the U.S. was successfully able to launch a satellite into space when a U.S. Army Jupiter rocket put the Explorer into Earth orbit. It would not be until March 17, 1958, that the Vanguard would be successfully launched.

As the space age dawned, the U.S. appeared perpetually behind the Soviets. By 1961, President John F. Kennedy was fretting, “We may never catch up.” By May 25 of that year, however, Kennedy had seized upon an organizing vision that would forever change the tenor of the Space Race, and the results the country achieved in its bid for space supremacy. Speaking before a joint session of Congress, Kennedy on that day committed the nation to landing men on the moon. He said:

“I believe this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before the decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to earth. No single space project in this period will be more impressive to mankind, or more important for the long-range exploration of space; and none will be so difficult or expensive to accomplish.”

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Kennedy's bold vision imbued NASA with a sense of purpose and a clearly defined goal. Instead of blindly chasing Soviet space firsts, NASA now had a specific endgame, and it methodically plotted out a course to achieve Kennedy's goal. In July 1969, Neil Armstrong became the first man to walk on the moon -- just eight years after Kennedy's challenge to the nation.

"Committing your goals to paper increases the likelihood of your achieving them by one-thousand percent!"

Brian Tracy

As a postscript, it is worth noting that the troubled Vanguard launch was hardly a template for the future. Long after Sputnik and Explorer fell to Earth, the Vanguard remains in space today. It made unquestioned contributions to science with the data it sent back to Earth, and now is setting longevity records that may never be rivaled. Vanguard is expected to stay in orbit another one to two thousand years, and already is the oldest man-made object in space. The Vanguard story is unquestionably one of the values of persistence, perseverance and faith -- all ingredients of dreaming big.

Kennedy, of course, was dreaming big when he committed the nation to landing on the moon. What made the dream successful was that it included a clearly defined goal.

Without clearly defined goals, it is impossible to

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have a true sense of direction. Dreaming big is the first step to opening your mind. But without goals, without a sense of why you want your dreams to become reality, those dreams will remain dreams.

One of the best ways to begin to develop goals is to determine why your dream is important to you. What, precisely, is your “why”? Your “why” will become the fuel for all of your goals.

It is common among those new to the self-improvement path to set vague goals such as having a lot of money or buying a big house. Those reasons do not qualify as why’s. In order to find your why, you have to dig deep. Why do you aspire to have a lot of money or a big house? Perhaps it is because you grew up poor or never had your own room as a child. Those reasons are fine as starting points, and yet they are still not big enough to be your why.

The best way for me to put it so that you can see how big your why needs to be is like this: If your why don’t make you cry, then it’s not big enough. Your why has to be so big, so important to you, that if anyone or anything comes between you and your why, it would literally make you cry.

Just why is having a why so important in defining your goals? All of your goals will come as a result of determining your why. In the abstract, I know, this all sounds vaguely metaphysical. But let’s look at a specific example. Let’s say your general goal is to have a lot of money. By asking ourselves a series of questions, we can ultimately find our ultimate why. Why do we want a lot of money? Perhaps it is because when we were growing up we were poor. What exactly did it mean to be poor? Digging deep,

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we might dredge up some specifics in response, such as that at school other kids would make fun of us because we didn't have money to buy new clothes and all that we wore never fit right or was never in style. Why is that important to us now? We might have a ready response to that question in that we want better things and a better life for our children. As chef Emeril Lagasse might say, "Bam!" Now we're getting somewhere. Would the thought of your children being made fun of at school because they are wearing ill-fitting hand-me-downs make you cry? If the answer is yes, you're getting to the essence of your why.

The more clearly defined your why or whys are, the more clearly defined your goals will be. What's more, the more clearly defined your goals are, the greater your chance of achieving them. If your why is big enough, it will keep you moving toward your goals no matter what may arise. The reason we need something bigger than ourselves is because we're human. Humans quit on themselves and settle for less than they desire when things get tough. Oddly enough, humans don't quit if they are working toward something beyond themselves.

Our kids are a perfect example of something bigger than us. Perhaps our why is that we want our sons to go to private schools and get stellar educations instead of going to the substandard public school down the street, as we had to do. (Lest anyone misunderstand, I have nothing against public schools. Indeed, both of my older children are in public schools. This is simply an illustration of a hypothetical why.) With that why in mind, we work a full-time job by day and a part-time job at night to pay the tuition. On those nights when we are tired and don't feel like going to that second job, the thought of our sons not being able to attend

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private school help us to suck it up and report for work. We don't want to let our sons down.

On the other hand, let's say that our purpose in working the second job is merely to have some extra shopping money. Many of us would begin to weigh the opportunity costs of that second job --not being able to sleep or go out with friends -- and sooner rather than later we would end up dropping the second job. Our why in this instance would not be big enough. It is impossible to overstate the importance of finding your why when defining and setting goals.

"The greater danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it."

Michelangelo

Once we have done the hard work of ascertaining our why or whys, it is essential that we break down our ultimate goal into a series of smaller goals of varying levels of difficulty. For best results, I recommend taking your ultimate, long-range goals and breaking them into a series of mid-term goals, which you should further breakdown into short-term goals. Each goal should have a specific purpose in mind and bring you closer to achieving your ultimate goal.

Let's face it. Long-range goals can seem well beyond our reach even if they are realistic. A lot of people will advocate setting 30-, 60-, and 90-day goals, but I think it is better to focus on doing the little things each day that will lead to success in the end. For example, if I wanted to lose 10 pounds over the next two months I wouldn't necessarily articulate my goal as losing 10 pounds over the next 60

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days. In truth, most of us in setting goals have no real idea about how long it will take to achieve them. My goal could be to lose 10 pounds in two days. That would not only be unrealistic, it would be dangerous to my health. The point here is that it is counterproductive to become fixated on timetables. Instead, we should focus on doing the things everyday that will help move us closer to reaching our goals.

"When we are motivated by goals that have deep meaning, by dreams that need completion, by pure love that needs expressing, then we truly live."

Greg Anderson

For sake of argument, however, let's say our goal is to lose 10 pounds in two months. That is our long-range goal. To accomplish it, we'll want to lose five pounds by the end of this month and 5 more the next month. Those are mid-range goals. To accomplish our mid-range goals, we'll need to lose a pound a quarter each week, which is our short-term goal. We can break down our short-term goals even more, as we provide specifics. In order to lose a pound and a quarter each week, we may decide that we will eat four small meals daily, walk two miles every morning, and drink only sugar-free sodas. To my way of thinking, that last short-term goal should be our real focus. It gives us a real chance to achieve our overall goal.

If our short-term goals are focused and well conceived, the end result will be achievement of our ultimate goal. It may take 45 days or it may take 75 days. It really doesn't matter so long as we are moving forward each and every day.

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Setting goals seems a simple enough idea. But as we've examined already, poorly set goals lead to less than ideal results. The first essential in setting goals is to state our goals in a positive way. Kennedy didn't say he wanted the U.S. to go to the moon losing fewer than 10 astronauts. He said he wanted to land men on the moon and bring them safely back to Earth. Express your goals positively. "Execute this technique well" is a much better goal than "Don't make this stupid mistake."

The second key to successful goal setting is to be precise. Kennedy wanted to land men on the moon, a specific goal that allowed the collective genius of NASA to figure out the interim steps necessary for ultimate success. By setting precise goals, you will be able to measure achievement. Moreover, you'll know exactly when you have achieved your goal, and can take complete satisfaction from your accomplishment.

We all know people who want to have stoves with five front burners. The fact is, though, it is difficult to give adequate attention to too many things at one time. That is why it is important to develop and set priorities. When the U.S. committed itself to a moon landing, it was not at the same time focusing on plans to create a space station. Although a space station was at the time a goal, the immediate goal was to get to the moon. When you have several goals, prioritize them. This technique not only helps eliminate the sensation of being overwhelmed by too many goals, but also helps direct attention to the most important things at the most appropriate times.

In setting goals it is also important to commit them to paper. Write those rascals down, by all means. The process of writing helps the ideas crystallize within us and gives them more force. By writing our goals down, we are in essence making a contract with ourselves to achieve them. Having

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something down on paper somehow makes it all seem more real.

When setting goals, we should also be mindful of keeping them achievable. Keep operational goals small. If we commit ourselves only to one large long-term goal, it can feel as though we are making no progress. I'll never forget the first time I traveled into Colorado from the East. The eastern portion of Colorado is as flat as Kansas, a veritable sea of nothingness as far as the eye can see. Eventually, though, I began to see the craggy spines of mountains in the distance. Even at 70 miles per hour, however, it seemed it took an eternity to reach them. By keeping our goals small and incremental, we allow ourselves more opportunities for reward. Derive today's goals from larger goals, and eventually those larger goals will be achieved.

It is imperative when setting goals to understand the difference between performance and outcomes. Imagine a big league hitter striding to the plate. He can do everything correctly, swing perfectly, and strike the ball on the bat's sweet spot, shooting a line drive into the outfield gap. Unfortunately for him, an outfielder can swoop in and catch the ball. The batter's performance was stellar; his outcome was less so. With that example in mind, it is important to set performance goals, not outcome goals. We should set goals over which we have as much control as possible. There is little more dispiriting than failing to achieve a personal goal for reasons beyond our control. Any number of things can interfere with the outcomes we want -- a bad business environment, bad weather, injury or even just plain bad luck. If we base our goals on personal performance, we can keep control over the achievement of our goals and draw satisfaction from them.

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Finally, it is essential that we set realistic goals. The goals we set should be achievable -- and they should be our own. Advice constantly bombards us from all quarters. Parents, the media, and society at large can all seem to be imposing their goals on us, unrealistic though they often are. This advice, moreover, is often given in ignorance of our own desires and ambitions. Alternatively, we may be naive in setting our goals too high, failing to appreciate potential obstacles or the number of skills necessary to achieve a particular level of performance. By the same token, it is just as important not to set our goals too low. It is a common trap that trips up goal setters who are afraid of failure, or those who are lazy. Our goals should be

"The ultimate reason for setting goals is to entice you to become the person it takes to achieve them."

Jim Rohn

slightly beyond our immediate grasp, but not so distant that there appears no hope of achieving them. After all, no one will put serious effort into achieving an unattainable goal. That having been said, the mere belief that a goal is unrealistic does not make it unreachable, as the case of John Landy in the previous chapter demonstrates.

Many factors contributed to the nation's success in achieving John Kennedy's dream of landing men on the moon. For example, the fact that his goal was specific gave scientists an organizing principle on which to apply their attention. Still, Kennedy's dream could have remained just that, a dream, if not for the fact that his vision spurred action. It is not enough to want something to be so. We must take action, which will be the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Eight

"You will never win if you never begin."

Robert Schuller

Take Action!

A

s a phrase it has become a bit shopworn, this inscrutably Eastern bit of wisdom: A journey of one thousand miles begins with a single step. As with many things we consider clichés, this pearl has become ubiquitous because it is true. In point of fact, I could end this chapter right now, inasmuch as that statement so perfectly encapsulates the importance of taking action, of taking that first step.

For most of us, unfortunately, the first step is the hardest. That is why determining our why and setting goals is so important. The bigger our why, the easier it is for us to take action. Which is not, of course, the same as saying that it is ever easy taking the first step. Let's understand at the outset that even when we're well prepared, it can be difficult, scary, a leap of faith for us, to take that first step. That having been said, the more clearly we define and break down our goals, the easier it is for us to take action. Imagine staring down a 72-ounce steak and large baked potato. The

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entirety of the eating looks impossible at one sitting. And yet many an eater has conquered the dish by breaking the meal down into manageable goals -- a quarter of the steak, a third of the potato, say -- manageable goals that allow the eater to begin with confidence, to pick up that fork, to begin eating. It certainly won't eat itself.

When we think of taking action, we need to be mindful of the fact that taking action does not mean accomplishing our long-term goal in one step. Indeed, that is one of the reasons we set short-term and intermediate

"Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there."

Will Rogers

goals. The short-term goal sets our minds on an achievable accomplishment even as it brings us that much closer to our ultimate goal. The key to reaching that ultimate goal is to get moving in the right direction.

As a Chinese proverb puts it, "Be not afraid of growing slowly; be afraid only of standing still." Consider the case of the great redwoods. A redwood sapling is tiny, helpless and frankly, relatively hopeless in appearance, resembling the Christmas tree Charlie Brown decides to buy for the school play. Give it a few hundred years, however, and it becomes one of the most awe-inspiring and majestic objects in nature.

Granted, we don't have a few hundred years to make our mark on the world. All the more reason to get moving and take action. Now.

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But what exactly does it mean to take action? Truth be told, there are many types of action, including inaction. The starting point for action rests on making a decision. Stuck in a rut and uncertain what your next step should be? Feeling as though you can't make a decision today or that you simply can't make a decision? Surprise! Those are decisions, too. What we're looking for, though, are decisive command decisions that push us to take decisive action -- the sort of action that creates motion and momentum in the direction of our success and goals.

When we take decisive action, we are making a decision to move up in the world. When we take decisive action, we are making a decision to bury our excuses and to reject the limitations that want to hold us back. Think about the last time your car needed work. Let's say your car needed a new alternator. Leaving it in the driveway for a week did not fix it. Talking with friends about the financial sacrifices necessary to purchase a new alternator did not fix it. Indeed, the car did not get fixed until you made the decision to take the car to the shop and have a new alternator put in. Similarly, your problems will not go away until you take decisive action to resolve them. Moreover, you will not achieve the success you yearn for unless and until you make a conscious decision to take action in pursuit of your success.

Now might be as good a time as any to take a personal inventory. What positive changes are you trying to realize for yourself at this moment? Do you need to shed nagging doubts, self-limiting beliefs and a generally bad attitude? Have you made a conscious decision to have a positive attitude about your success? Are you motivated to see your goals realized?

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We are accustomed to thinking about life in terms of its complexity. Especially today, with rapidly changing technology, scientific breakthroughs and lightning fast communications, we often find ourselves fretting about life's tangled convolutions -- and in the process, missing the big picture. Short and sweet, ultimately life is about problems and solutions. The people who achieve success are the ones who choose to solve the most pressing problems, their own and those of others.

Sure, some problems seem insoluble. But the human mind is the most complex organism known to science. It is hardwired to solve complexity. You have at your disposal all you need to begin your journey of positive change, positive attitudes and lifelong success. It's all right there, between your ears.

I firmly believe that each and every one of us is naturally brilliant and richly gifted, endowed with all we need to reap life's rewards. I also know from firsthand experience that life challenges our dreams, tests our resolve and imposes detours on our journey toward success. It is not because we are unworthy or undeserving. It is simply the nature of being human and the nature of success. If ultimate success were easy, we would not think much of success. Consider this: Everyone is equipped for success, but not all of us succeed. Some of us fall behind because we encounter obstacles and give up. Some of us are derailed because we have a limited vision of what it means to be successful. Others fail to succeed because they never take the first step necessary.

The fact of the matter is that success requires perseverance and hard work. Setbacks and detours are inevitable. They need not turn our dreams into nightmares.

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Indeed, we can become better equipped for success if we handle our obstacles in a positive way, building fortitude and character in the process. When you get right down to it, achieving our ultimate goal is not the real goal. The real goal is to grow as people and relish the wonder of self-discovery along the way. Our setbacks, in fact, provide us with what we need for sustained, lifelong success. After all, once we've achieved our ultimate goal, we'll need to establish a

The first step towards getting somewhere is to decide that you are not going to stay where you are."

John Pierpont Morgan

new one lest we become stagnant, limited in our thinking, consumed by doubt -- in other words, right back where we started from.

Our talents and gifts can get us to the Promised Land of success, but it is our character that will keep us there for the duration. If we allow ourselves to gain wisdom through all of our experiences, including those that at the time appear negative, we become stronger. I know of a local middle school whose leaders are using athletics as a means of keeping kids in school and teaching them important life lessons along the way. They wear t-shirts that say, "All we have is all we need." The message is clear. They're not worried about what they don't have. They're focused on what they do have, and a good portion of what they have is their brains. They're determined not to let a lack of physical resources deter them from their goal of athletic and academic success. They made a decision to act, and are moving in the right direction.

Dream Big, Win Big!

Woody Allen once said, *"Eighty percent of success is showing up."* By reading this book, you've shown up. Now it's time for you to act. As Sally Berger put it, *"The secret of getting ahead is getting started."*

So:

No more excuses. No more laying down on the job. No more blaming your parents. No more blaming your circumstances. No more blaming yourself. Excuses and blame only lead to regret, to thoughts about what you could have done and what you should have done. But "coulda', woulda' shoulda'" thinking won't get you any closer to your dreams.

In order to step boldly in the direction of our dreams,

*"I do not believe in a fate that falls on men
however they act; but I do believe in a fate
that falls on them unless they act."*

G. K. Chesterton

it is clear we must become active and decisive. To do that, it may be helpful to understand why we are instead inactive and indecisive. A number of factors can play a role in our lethargy, and I'll consider the major ones in turn.

One thing that holds us back is boredom. We need to become self-aware and recognize our boredom, and to understand what it is -- a shackle that keeps us from reaching for success. A bored mind is a mind that is not fully engaged, and a mind not fully engaged is not a mind that will have the dexterity necessary for us to reach our goals. Don't accept boredom in your life. Create the excitement and exhilaration you need to build positive momentum in your life. After all, life is to be lived, not watched.

Take Action!

Another common stumbling block is a feeling that we are overwhelmed. Perhaps the Himalayas of paper on our desks make us feel like we are forever doomed to a life of mundane and mindless tasks. We're constantly bombarded with distractions that can keep us from focusing on what is important. Often when we're overwhelmed we postpone tasks as we try to find a way to keep from feeling as though we're drowning. Procrastination only makes things worse, however.

Procrastination's roots grow deep, and are watered by a lack of motivation for success. It is, after all, easier to put something off than to take action. If we are focused and on target with our goals -- and if we firmly establish to ourselves why we must act -- we'll find that we'll experience better self-guidance and clarity in identifying those times when we are stuck, and how to get unstuck.

Becoming unstuck, of course, and taking action is simply a matter of thinking forward and acting with purpose. We must be compelled to act now. Yesterday is gone and tomorrow never really comes. Now is the only time we have any control over. Don't get caught in the life-sapping trap of saying you'll do something tomorrow. Friend, you only have now.

A loss of confidence is another shackle that can keep us from becoming active and in charge. When we procrastinate, our confidence wanes even more. On the flip side, getting things done can build our confidence. Successfully completing even small tasks helps build our confidence, and those small victories are the ingredients of a much larger victory -- achievement of our dreams. Moreover, simply completing a small task helps boost our energy levels. By choosing to take decisive action, we actually reduce the

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pressure we face. Inaction builds pressure as we fret about the work mountain before us, leading to a loss of confidence, which leads to greater procrastination. It is a vicious cycle, one that can destroy the lifeblood of our dreams.

Having a poor sense of self worth can also lead to disastrous results, something I know all too well. Often, you won't even realize how disabling low self-esteem can be. But it is difficult to take decisive action when something inside of you thinks you do not deserve success. Indeed, it is impossible for us to pursue something we don't think we deserve. If we think we don't deserve success, we will most likely end up with a self-fulfilling prophecy as we put in a weak effort or sabotage our own efforts.

Another thing that trips us up on the road to success is the fact that success requires work we don't like. No matter our ultimate goal, we all have certain mundane tasks that aren't exciting but that nevertheless contribute to long-term success. When we are motivated for success we realize that the successful people are the ones who do things that the unsuccessful people won't. Face it. There are some boring and unexciting tasks that are part of life. The key to overcoming this hurdle is to shift your thinking out of the "have to" category and into the "choose to" column. This simple shift in thinking can make all the difference in the world. Of course, some people are in jobs they simply don't like or are faced with work they find unfulfilling. Those are the people who must decide what they need to do in order to expand their talents, put them to better use, and consequently experience more enjoyment. The bottom line is that it is never a good idea to cling to security at the expense of living your best life now.

Take Action!

Some people, of course, are simply distracted easily or are just plain lazy. These are the people who postpone action because they'd rather put their feet up every night and watch movie reruns on television. It is highly unlikely that they'll be enjoying the abundant lifestyle anytime soon. Let's face facts: Success takes effort and consistent, focused activity. Laziness is not part of the equation. In fact, you should consider it a banned substance.

When you dream of a better tomorrow it is essential to act in the now or you will only be chasing a fantasy. You will arrive at the end of your life, empty and full of regrets.

"If you have a great ambition, take as big a step as possible in the direction of fulfilling it. The step may only be a tiny one, but trust that it may be the largest one possible for now."

Mildred McAfee

It need not be that way, however, and the fact that you're reading this book demonstrates that you do want to seize control of your life and be the captain of your own fate. All of us have seen magicians work their magic. We can become our own magicians. Just as a magician uses the magic works "ta-da!" you can magically transform your life and get yourself in gear right now. All you have to do is use the TA-DA formula, an acronym built on the words Think, Ask, Decide and Act.

Think: Take the time to reflect and consider potential actions. Ponder the possible outcomes of one action over another, of action versus inaction. Check yourself and check your activities.

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Ask: Gather the facts and make sure you have all the information you need in order to act. Make sure you ask good, focusing questions of yourself and those who form your support team. Obviously, you don't want to paralyze yourself with analysis. You do, however, need to be informed and prepared in order to launch yourself on the road to success.

Decide: Simply weighing the value of one action versus another or of doing nothing at all is not enough. You must decide your proper course of action. No one else can do it for you, nor should you want him or her to. This is your life. You decide.

Act: Once you've decided on an action, act. Do it now! Build your momentum. Of course it won't be easy at all times. It will be worth it in the long run. Coach yourself into taking consistent action now! If you don't trust yourself, find an accountability partner or a success motivation group that can help keep you on task and in action. Not tomorrow, not next week, mind you. Do it now!

The TA-DA formula applies to any task, and you can utilize it repeatedly as you work from short-term goals toward your ultimate goal. It is a simple formula and yet it is essential in helping you get unstuck and remaining in the game. Consider it the jack and spare tire of self-improvement. Just as you'd be squeamish about taking a cross-country car trip without a jack and spare tire, so should you be uncomfortable in hitting the road to success without proper emergency tools. The TA-DA formula will always be there for you in case of emergency. Again, however, this important tool will be meaningless unless you take action. First comes the dream, then the action. Without the action, it is impossible to win big.

Chapter Nine

"A wise man adapts himself to circumstances as water shapes itself to the vessel that contains it."

Anonymous

Be Adaptable

Popular culture has it that sharks are primitive and stupid. They're just opportunistic hunters, preying on the sick, lame, and unsuspecting, with nary a brain wave -- or so goes the popular thinking. And yet, no idea could be more wrongheaded. Under normal conditions, sharks behave with great intelligence, and various experiments have shown their learning capacity compares with that of rats and birds. Until I met Kelvin Collins I really had not given sharks much thought. What I learned from Kelvin was that sharks are the epitome of what it takes to be successful. This he learned from a multi-millionaire that kept a full-grown shark as a pet in his house. Because of this, the Great White Shark has become Kelvin's personal mascot.

Present-day sharks, which exhibit an astonishing range of diversity, have not changed in any substantive way in the last 150 million years (and have been around for 350 million years), suggesting they have attained a level of evolution that approaches perfection. True, sharks are

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predators; indeed, with as many as 3,000 teeth, arranged in five rows, they can be considered the consummate predator. Sharks likewise are incomparable swimmers; the blue shark annually migrates nearly 2,000 miles following the Gulf Stream, while the mako shark can hit speeds of 21 miles per hour. Sharks are also prolific breeders. The female blue shark, as one example, can give birth to as many as 135 young.

Sharks are exceptionally adaptable creatures. They now occupy many ecological niches, ranging from tropical seas to the Arctic and Antarctic oceans. Some sharks even turn up in freshwater streams and rivers. That having been said, sharks like other highly developed animals have to adjust progressively to biological change, and as a consequence need time to adapt to altered environmental conditions. That is of particular concern today because human modification of the Earth potentially threatens the extinction of many species. During the last 10 years alone, humans have done more harm to sharks than had been done in the last 150 million years. Throughout their long history, sharks, which survived the age of the dinosaurs unscathed, have never faced such a grave threat to their future existence.

And yet, given their track record, you'd have to be inclined to bet on the sharks. Their ability to adapt to changing circumstances is remarkable. One of the leading theories about the extinction of dinosaurs is that a large meteor struck Earth, forcing vast clouds of dust, dirt and debris into the atmosphere, creating long term and cataclysmic climate change. While the dinosaur failed to adapt to colder global temperatures, the shark continued to thrive. As Charles Darwin noted in his seminal work, *On the Origin of Species*,

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“In the survival of favored individuals and races, during the constant-recurring struggle for survival, we see a powerful and ever-acting form of selection.” Sharks had what it took to survive. Dinosaurs didn’t.

Just as species need to be adaptable to survive longterm, so too do individuals and businesses. Those who are unable to adapt end up in the unemployment lines.

Legend has it that there was a high profile meeting at the Parker Pens Corporation in the mid-1980s. The company had been successful for a long time, and had done so in the face of considerable and continuous challenges ranging from cheap imports to widespread availability of cheap ballpoint pens to introduction of roller ball pens. Parker, however, had begun to lose its way in the 80s. In an effort to stay

“One learns to itch where one can scratch.”

Ernest Bramah

profitable, the company emphasized competing in foreign markets at the neglect of its traditional markets. Company leaders realized the strategy was failing and arranged a strategic meeting. Just one item was on the agenda: “What market are we in?” The answer transformed the business and reinvigorated it with life.

Someone at the meeting asked a simple yet poignant question, “When did you last receive a Parker pen?” Think about that yourself. Most likely, you’ll have an answer similar to those that arose at the Parker meeting. You received one as a birthday or Christmas present, or as part of a presentation. It was a reward of some sort. Company leaders realized that Parker was in the gift business. As such, it made no sense for the company to attempt to compete with

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makers of cheap, throwaway pens. As a result, the company abandoned a strategy of continually cutting costs and quality. The company actually spent more, and redesigned and repackaged their products. The advertising budget was increased by 60 percent. Parker raised prices and began to target the “style-conscious and affluent sector.” Despite a world recession, Parker pens increased its turnover by almost 50 percent in the last half of the decade.

As the Parker pens story illustrates, sometimes adaptability means staying the course and focusing on the things that made us successful to begin with. Of course, it also means that if we find we’re gaining no traction in our attempt to stay competitive, we need to be nimble enough to switch gears and try another tack. Indeed, Parker originally thought it was being adaptable when it responded to an influx of cheap pens by cutting costs and quality. But people weren’t buying Parker pens to stock the company supply cabinet, and recognizing that fact returned the company to its roots and infused its revival with phenomenal success in a down market.

The story illustrates the necessity of determining your market style. According to Jonas Ridderstale and Kjell Nordstrom, authors of *Karaoke Capitalism*, markets can be termed either “fit” or “sexy.” They argue that companies like Hewlett-Packard and 3M are fit because they are highly adaptable, continually changing, and ever on the lookout for new opportunities. By contrast, companies such as Ferrari and Parker Pens, market leaders in niche markets, are sexy. For sexy companies, attempting to adapt to changing conditions can be death, as Parker nearly learned.

Even some of the seemingly immortal companies such as U.S. Airways, Polaroid, Enron and K-mart have

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declined or disappeared in recent years -- evidence of a trend of a declining lifespan for companies. In the 1930s, the average lifespan of companies was more than 60 years. Today, it is just 12.5 years.

Does this declining lifespan for companies mean that companies today are failures? Not necessarily. Consider the remarks of paleontologist and environmentalist Richard Leakey, who said: "We tend to think of extinction as a mark of failure -- as something that happens to a species that is somehow not up to the challenge that nature presents to it. In fact, extinction appears to be the ultimate fate of all species: more than 99.9 percent of all the species that ever existed are now extinct -- probably as much a result of bad luck as of bad genes."

Leakey's observation appears to be as true for organizations as it is for plants and animals and people. And if extinction is unavoidable, perhaps some of the lessons of nature can be applied to business to help delay the inevitable for as long as possible. For my money, if there ever were a "fit," adaptable species to copy, sharks would be it. In Darwinian terms, they are the epitome of natural selection. They have roamed the world's waters for some 350 million years and have survived by adapting to different challenges and changing environments. They survive in all conditions and live through a vast range of temperatures and hosts of challenges.

One interesting biological fact about sharks that bears emulation: Sharks must keep moving or they will die.

It seems to me that 3M is about as close to a shark as we can find in the contemporary business world. This \$20 billion company has proved incredibly adaptable through the years. 3M began in 1902 as the Minnesota Mining and

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Manufacturing Company and primarily was a concern that mined for material to make sandpaper. Throughout the next 100 years the company changed and evolved. Today, its offerings include sandpaper, Scotch tape, magnetic tape, microfilm, overhead projectors, post-it notes, respirators, pharmaceuticals and high tech products. Clearly, 3M is a company that knows how to change and adapt. That ability, however, is not an accident or a quirk of nature. The company has research laboratories in 31 countries outside of the U.S. and more than 2,600 employees dedicated to research and development. Clearly, 3M in the Ridderstale/Nordstrom model is a fit company.

*"If you live in the river you should make friends
with the crocodile."*

Indian Proverb

Fit companies are contrasted with "sexy" companies. In nature, sexy animals survive even though logic would dictate that they fall by the wayside as more fit animals dominate the reproduction landscape. And yet, we see examples all the time of unfit animals thriving. Consider the peacock. It clearly isn't designed for survival. Its tail is too long and it is not suited to flying. It's very existence appears to fly in the face of natural selection, which concerns itself with the survival of the fittest, the notion that the stronger, more clever animals pass on their genes through a variety of strategies. It survives, however, because it is sexy. Females apparently choose these flashy males with the dubious long tails based upon looks. Peacocks appear to know this,

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spending about 15 percent of their day preening and keeping themselves sexy -- roughly four times as long as the female.

In a related manner, there are companies that work hard at staying sexy and making it appear effortless. BMW, for example, employs more than 100 people in its acoustics and vibration technology departments. These employees make sure that everything from the sound of the windshield wipers to the sound doors make when closing are acoustically perfect. Computer simulator designer Christian Muhldorfer described the sound of a new development model thusly, "The door now has a full, reassuring feel."

BMW, like peacocks, obviously works hard to be sexy. One need not look far, however, to see examples of companies that suffer when they begin to take their success for granted. For example, Encyclopedia Britannica believed it had an invincible worldwide niche. Sales in 1990 reached \$650 million. But when technological advances came along, Encyclopedia Britannica ignored them and failed to effectively adapt. By 1996, sales had dropped to \$325 million and Jacob Safra, a Swiss businessman, was able to buy the company for a fraction of book value.

Similarly, Polaroid resisted technology's march. Sounding like the buggy whip manufacturer at the dawn of the automobile era, Polaroid CEO Gary Dicamillo in a 1998 Harvard Business School profile said, "Some people think photography is going to go away as everything in our industry becomes digitized. But I disagree. I think analog photography will endure." Three years later, Polaroid filed for bankruptcy with nearly \$1 billion in debts.

There are few successful peacocks around in business. You'll find them clustered in the luxury market. Every other

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company, however, needs to be adaptable, flexible and in constant motion. Of course, they need to keep moving in the right direction. For example, the pressures being placed on McDonald's to produce healthy fare options would appear to put pressure on them to adapt. There is a real danger that McDonald's could alienate its traditional consumers while simultaneously failing to attract health-conscious eaters. Frankly, if you're searching for a healthy option, McDonald's wouldn't be the first name to leap to mind.

*"I found out that if you are going to win games,
you had better be ready to adapt."*

Scotty Bowman

Even the sexy peacocks of the business world must keep moving, however. They must constantly work to do everything they can to retain their sexy image. It seems a straight forward, common sense approach. And yet it is problematic for some businesses. Take the case of Walt Disney, a company that could be the very definition of a sexy company. With a household name and a positive reputation built up over the course of 80 years, Disney is unique. Unfortunately for Disney, the company has been in clear decline over the past decade. To outsiders it appears that Disney has been trying to adapt and pull in a broader audience, and in so doing has lost one of its unique, core values -- its commitment to families and family values. When you hear Roy Disney describe the company his father and uncle established as "being widely seen to be rapacious, soulless, and always looking for the 'quick buck,'" you know you're in trouble.

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Clearly, to be successful, companies and individuals need to identify whether they are fit or sexy. Even then, however, there will be no substitute for hard work and constant questioning about what market you serve. The key, in short, is adaptability.

When asked to develop an article on effective leadership, Richard Leakey came up with one of the finest descriptions you'll ever find. Leakey candidly admits that as a young manager, he fell on the "traditional leader" model of management that worked so well for him on the mean New Jersey streets of his youth. In essence, this management style asserts top-down power; you do what the boss says or else.

*"To the man who only has a hammer,
everything he encounters begins
to look like a nail."*

Abraham H. Maslow

It was not until many years later that Leakey began to question the long-term effectiveness of such a style. The more he questioned, the more he came to realize that there are, in fact, better and more effective management styles, and that they had been available to any student of history. For example, a 17th century Russian field marshal named Count Suvorov never lost a battle even when outnumbered. His secret? Suvorov realized that the foot soldier was the engine of his success. He treated them with respect, trained them to be skillful and encouraged them to greatness.

So why had so many generations of leaders failed to learn from Suvorov's success? "To learn from the past we must have 'paradigm flexibility,'" Leakey said. "We

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have to remain adaptable and not get ourselves locked into having only one way to do something.” He noted that the opposite condition is “paradigm paralysis,” in which you limit yourself to one fixed thought or context. Summing up, he said, “Simply said, a leader must be adaptable.”

According to Leakey, the leader who can gain the trust of his followers will likewise earn their commitment and respect. Moreover, committed people will follow their leaders absolutely anywhere. Leaders such as Suvorov, Leakey said, had:

...learned the importance of their followers being resourceful, and they recognized the need of providing training in the areas that would help them make better decisions and be more effective in action. They also realized the need for their followers to maintain an optimistic outlook, which required the leader to establish a positive vision of the future, either for them, their family, or their country. Finally, through their actions, these leaders demonstrated consideration for their followers by being committed to excellence....

Leakey’s foray into the attributes of effective leaders led him to formulate a summary of traits that are “musts” for strong leadership. The first is adaptability. Noting that Charles Darwin found that successful species are the ones most responsive to change, Leakey said, “Leaders must be adaptable to change.” There’s no use, he argued, in keeping a tradition that creates roadblocks to progress and success.

As we strive to reach our dreams, we must be willing to allow ourselves to adapt to changing conditions. The alternative is extinction. Be the shark, not the dinosaur.

Chapter Ten

“Nothing great in the world has been accomplished without passion.”

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

The Three P's: Passion, Positive Attitude, Patience

There are many attributes that will help you to win big, but three stand out as essential. I call them the three P's -- passion, positive attitude and patience. Of these, passion takes center stage.

You see, passion is the fire that will fuel whatever it is you are trying to accomplish in life. Frankly, life is too short to spend too much time around people who don't have passion. Similarly, passion is too important not to foster it in the people around you. Most of all, though, life is way too short to live without passion.

I remember one time after a sales presentation when I was approached by someone who told me I had been too excited and should tone it down a bit. I replied that I would

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never apologize for being excited about something I believe in. Which brings me to a key point: Your level of passion will not and cannot exceed your belief in something. It simply is not possible. If you don't believe in something it is impossible for you to be excited and passionate about it.

When it comes to making change in your life, you have to be passionate about it. First, of course, you have to believe it will happen. The world is filled with people who have enough belief that they think something can happen, but that's not enough. You have to believe it will happen.

"Anyone can dabble, but once you've made that commitment, your blood has that particular thing in it, and it's very hard for people to stop you."

Bill Cosby

Earlier, we discussed the importance of your why. One of the reasons that your why is so important is because it becomes the catalyst for your passion. As we mentioned earlier, if your why doesn't get you fired up, it's not big enough.

I am passionate about many things in life, and it shows. One thing I am very passionate about is committing myself to a life of change. What exactly does that entail? I live by the credo that we never fully "arrive," and the day we think we have, we're in trouble. I know that, in order to be the best husband, best father, best brother, best uncle, best man, best Christian, best businessman/entrepreneur, best speaker that I can ever be, I have to be in continual pursuit of the knowledge and wisdom that will help me to grow everyday. To me, the day I stop growing as a person is the day I start dying.

The Three P's

Another thing I am very passionate about is helping other people experience success in life. I believe that God put me here for a reason and gave me many gifts. I believe it is imperative that I share those gifts with others. We all have God-given gifts. At the same time, most of us have been brought up to be modest and humble. We become embarrassed when others compliment our abilities, or we downplay them. But think of how you'd feel if you gave someone an expensive sweater. You hear another person compliment the garment, and your gift recipient says, "Oh, this is nothing." We do the same thing to God if we hide our talents and gifts. I've been blessed in life, and I want to share my blessings.

One of my personal goals in life is to help 1,000 people become financially free and experience both time and financial freedom. I want families to have the time and money to be able to be a family. Once I help 1,000, then I'll shoot for 10,000. When I get to 10,000, I'll go for 100,000. I have been blessed and I want to share it 1,000 times, 10,000 times, 100,000 times over. Just as others have mentored me, I now mentor others in return.

I choose to surround myself with other people who are passionate about life. In my experience, people with passion are more interesting, harder working, more driven and generally more fun to be around. They derive more pleasure from life, they get more excitement from their days and experience life with greater intensity. A person without passion has no more value than a candle without a flame. When I speak of passion, I mean to encompass zeal, enthusiasm and fervor. It is the force that relentlessly and inexorably drives us forward. Passion is a burning desire that creates commitment to a person, project and life. A

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world without passion is a world without Mother Teresa, Mozart or Michelangelo. Every great endeavor has been fueled by passion.

The opposite of passion, of course, is indifference. A society in which no one cares about his job or country is on the verge of collapse. Passion is the motor that propels us to our destination and it is the glue that binds our society.

Passion has magical power. It turns the dream into reality. For example, Walt Disney's passion helped him overcome severe setbacks, a nervous breakdown and the discouragement of staff, peers and friends. Acting against the advice of all, he transformed his dream of Disneyland into reality, and brought magic to generations. As it happens, another magical quality of passion is its ability to lighten our loads. With the wave of a wand, work becomes fun. Tedious effort becomes exciting. Passion also is power, for, as Margaret Mead wrote, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

You will find that doors that are locked for ordinary folks suddenly open for those with passion. How can anyone resist the enthusiasm? And even if the doors remained shut, the passion's fires will burn them down. The passionate have big dreams, and big dreams come with big obstacles. For the passionate, those obstacles are minor annoyances. The passionate are focused on their goals, not their worries. They don't have the time for self-pity. When things go wrong, they learn from their mistakes and quickly continue on their way.

Let's make the importance of passion personal. Would you rather go to work with a frown or a smile? Would you rather lead an empty life or one filled with purpose? Would

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you rather dread or delight in the beginning of a new day? Would you rather be a survivor or a success? Would you rather be a victim or a victor? When it gets right down to it, in the battle between ability and passion, passion is always the winner in the battle for success.

Filmmaker Spike Lee is no stranger to passion, and wants it to spread among young people. "It is really important that young people find something that they want to do and pursue it with passion," he said. "I'm very passionate about filmmaking. It's what I love to do." The American industrialist Charles M. Schwab put a practical spin on Lee's advice when

"Wherever you go, no matter what the weather, always bring your own sunshine."

Anthony J. D'Angelo

he said, "The person who does not work for the love of work but only for money is not likely to make money nor to find much fun in life."

Of course, it stands to reason that without passion, it is impossible to have a positive attitude, our second P. And just as it is essential that you surround yourself with passionate people, you likewise must surround yourself with positive people. Negative people can drain the energy out of you faster than anything else. Keep in mind, you will find that many people will not want to see you change. They do not want you to win big. It sounds terrible, but it's true. I used to tell my oldest son after a round of tournament golf that half of the people don't care what he shot, while the other half wished he'd shot worse. It's just a fact of life and human

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nature that there are many people who would rather see you fail than to see you succeed.

You must choose not to be one of those types of people. We all know people like that, probably more than we care to acknowledge. They're the ones who are never truly happy for the success enjoyed by others. They instead complain that the successful are just lucky and whine that they always get the short end of the stick. These are the player haters.

So, how do we remove negativity from our lives? The most important thing we can do is to have a positive train of thought about every situation. What you think is what will happen. Thinking you can't accomplish something

"If you don't like something change it; if you can't change it, change the way you think about it."

Mary Engelbreit

will prevent you from accomplishing anything. Whatever you seek to accomplish, whether it be success in a new job, losing weight or gaining financial stability, will require you to think positive thoughts. Because the converse is equally true: Negative thoughts will develop into negative actions. That's when people find themselves physically unable to go after the things they want; their thoughts keep them from doing what is necessary for success. If you think you can't do something or that you can't have something, you simply won't strive for it and will never get what it is you want.

Negativity usually springs from low self-esteem and a lack of confidence, those times when we don't believe

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in ourselves and feel we don't deserve success. If you find yourself in that place, the first thing you have to do is rebuild your self-esteem and begin to believe in yourself. You must believe that you can accomplish anything and then have the moxie to go after it and get it, to seize the brass ring. Simply moving forward toward your goal will help you lose a lot of negative thoughts. But it is essential to remove all negative thoughts and actions from your life.

Think positively about everything you want to do and it will come to you. Develop the attitude that you can get anything you set out to have. Once you decide this, nothing can stop you. Surround yourself with positive people. Birds of a feather flock together.

It does, of course, take time to develop and maintain a positive train of thought. Just remember that a positive mental attitude is indispensable to success. Focus on the task at hand, take the step that appears immediately in front of you. By taking such an approach, we find that we are automatically led to subsequent steps, and we eventually find ourselves where we want to be.

Much more goes into having and maintaining a positive mental attitude. One can have a positive attitude that immediately melts in the face of adversity. Or one can have an attitude that is so strong, he or she is able to remain positive, cheerful and optimistic no matter the situation.

No question, this isn't as easy as it sounds. We are all faced with four obstacles that attempt to disrupt maintenance of a positive attitude. Those obstacles are fear, worry, anger and doubt.

We can become afraid that we will lose money, that our efforts will be wasted, or that our emotional and

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physical investments will be forfeited. If left untended, these fears can lead us to think of our potential losses instead of focusing on our potential gains.

Fear triggers worry, and we might begin to use our power of imagination to create all sorts of negative images that interfere with our ability to perform effectively.

Fear and worry create anger and doubt. Instead of constantly moving forward in the direction of our dreams, we can envision ourselves as victims and begin to blame others and outside influences for our problems.

Fortunately, these four horsemen of apocalyptic dream crushing can be combated with a five-pronged weapon that costs you nothing but a mental commitment.

First, focus on where you want to be and what you want to do instead of worrying about who did what and who is to blame for current setbacks. Get a clear mental image of your ideal successful future, and then take whatever action you can to begin moving in that direction.

Second, focus on the solution instead of wasting time rehashing and reflecting on the problem. Solutions are inherently positive, whereas problems are inherently negative. The instant we begin to think in terms of solutions, we become a positive and constructive human being.

Third, assume that something good is hidden within each difficulty or challenge. Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, perhaps the foremost proponent of positive thinking, once said, "Whenever God wants to give us a gift, he wraps it up in a problem." The bigger the gift you have coming, the bigger the problem you will receive. Look past the problem for the gift and you'll be sure to find it.

Fourth, assume that every setback contains a lesson that is essential for you to learn. Only when you learn

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this lesson will you be smart and wise enough to go on to achieve the big goals you have set for yourself. If you are busy looking for the lesson, you cannot simultaneously think about the difficulty or the obstacle. Moreover, you'll always find the lesson.

Finally, whenever you have a goal that is unachieved, a difficulty that is unresolved or a problem that is blocking you from getting where you want to go, sit down with a pen and piece of paper and make a list of every single thing you can do to resolve the situation. As you write, all kinds of insights and ideas will pop into your head.

"I had the blues because I had no shoes until upon the street, I met a man who had no feet."

Ancient Persian Saying

Overcoming obstacles, of course, requires patience -- something that most people today regrettably lack. Waiting has to be one of the most difficult things for us to do. Patience, it seems, is lost in today's world. To wait means to remain at rest in expectation of something. Having patience means having the ability to bear hardship, trouble or difficulty without grumbling. Patience stresses peace, discipline, and a readiness to accept interruptions. To have patience means to be long-suffering. To be long-suffering means to have lasting and calm endurance. Think of the nation's pioneers, those who struck out from the comfort of their homes and set out west in search of bigger dreams. Traveling in ox-drawn wagons, they might make 12 miles on a good day. Contrast that with today's intrepid traveler, who grumbles

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when the speed limit dips to 55 miles per hour.

We have great difficulty waiting for things. We do things quickly. We have fast food, fast banking and electronic mail, and yet we still lack patience. We want it now. No, we want it yesterday. We can't wait for things. Why wasn't it done yesterday? Why is it taking so long?

Sound like your life? Whether we like to admit it or not, most of us lack patience. It is important that we slow down and see the beauty that is all around us. For those of us who have a faith and belief in God, we can rest assured

"Patience is the companion of wisdom."

Saint Augustine

that the more we trust and wait on Him, the more He will strengthen us. Others can take refuge in an old Dutch proverb, which states, "A handful of patience is worth more than bushel of brains."

Benjamin Franklin was perhaps the nation's first self-improvement guru. His rags-to-riches story was certainly an inspiration in and of itself. But Franklin had a passion for life that had him constantly striving for perfection. He was an inventive genius whose forays into science led to development of lightning rods. His list of achievements fills volumes of already published books. Franklin, however, also wanted to help others become successful, and his pearls of wisdom resonate with us today. No doubt all of us have heard the importance of going to bed early and waking up early; according to Franklin, the practice will make us healthy,

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wealthy and wise. The linchpin of his success, however, was his patience. For all his restless yearning and striving, Franklin was a patient man. And he instructed those who wanted to become successful to be patient, too. According to Franklin, "He that can have patience can have what he will."

Consider race relations in the United States, an issue that continues to vex policy makers in particular and society in general. Though we as a nation have many miles to go before we achieve the goal of a truly pluralistic society, we have made great strides. Jim Crow laws were once the norm across the South, relegating blacks to second-class status. Black children were forced to learn in substandard "black" schools. Even water fountains were designated for the exclusive use of whites or blacks.

Segregation and unequal treatment carried a heavy social stigma, which blacks nevertheless tried to bear with dignity. And then, out of the blue, out popped Rosa Parks, who one day in Montgomery, Alabama, refused to take a seat in the back of the bus when a white man wanted to sit down. It was a lightning bolt of resistance that spawned a nascent civil rights movement.

Or so goes popular thinking. In point of fact, Parks, who died in 2005, had been planning and training for that moment of resistance for years. On the day she refused to give up her seat, she had been an active member of the local NAACP chapter. A few months earlier, Parks had gone to a 10-day training program put on by civil rights leaders. Far from being a lightning bolt of individual resistance, Parks' refusal to give up her bus seat was part and parcel of a well-organized and patently patient campaign to improve the lot of the nation's blacks.

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Parks had endured years of indignities but never lost sight of her goal of helping to bring about a more just society. She and other pioneers of the civil rights movement knew that change would not come about overnight, and knew that change would certainly not come without struggle or sacrifice. Parks was arrested for her disobedience. A subsequent bus boycott by Montgomery blacks eventually brought about an end to the city's segregated bus system. In short, the Montgomery bus story is a story of patience.

Indeed, the story of the civil rights movement in the United States has been a case study in patience. Consider what might have happened had Montgomery blacks given up their boycott after a month. Nothing would have changed. Parks' famous refusal and subsequent arrest would have been a mere historical footnote. The example set by the city's blacks would not have ignited other peaceful forms of protest throughout the South. Public restrooms in Georgia would still be designated as "Colored" and "White." Blacks would be unable to eat in restaurants in Texas unless they were in the "black" section of cities. None of those things are true today, testament both to the bravery of dreamers and the value of patience and persistence.

Patience, of course, embodies more than simply holding the course in the face of adversity. Indeed, it touches on the first of all steps of bringing about personal or social change, the ability to dream. As the 18th century French moralist Vauvenargues put it, "Patience is the art of hoping." Our hopes become dreams, our dreams become action, and our action brings about success. So often we panic if our hoped for results do not happen overnight. We think it is time to abandon ship and swim to safety. But if we truly believe in our dreams, we'll find we have the patience to see them to fruition. Armed with passion, a positive attitude and patience, we become unstoppable.

Chapter Eleven

*"Never quit. It is the easiest cop-out in the world.
Set a goal and don't quit until you attain it."*

Paul "Bear" Bryant

Quitters Never Win

Imagine if Elvin "Mutt" Mantle hadn't challenged his son Mickey. As related earlier, Mickey was mired in a slump in the minor leagues and questioned whether he had the skills to make it in professional baseball. Left to his own devices, one of baseball's greatest players might have followed his father's footsteps and endured the hard life of a lead miner instead of a glorious Hall of Fame career in Major League Baseball. Mutt wouldn't let Mickey quit.

He intuitively knew what legendary football coach Vince Lombardi knew. Lombardi, who guided the once moribund Green Bay Packers to football preeminence, realized that quitters can never achieve their dreams. In what we might call The Lombardi Law, he said, "Once you learn to quit, it becomes a habit." In what we'll call The Lombardi Corollary, he said, "Winners never quit and quitters never win."

It is impossible to say how many times we've been a hair-breadth away from career-making success, and,

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without realizing our mistake, we've downed tools and raised the white flag of surrender. Sometimes success is just a problem solved away.

A short story helps illustrate this phenomenon quite nicely. There was a man who had four sons. He wanted his sons to learn not to judge things too quickly. So he sent them each on a quest to go and examine a pear tree that was a great distance away. The first son went in the winter, the second in the spring, the third in the summer, and the youngest in the fall.

When they had all returned, he called them together to describe what they had seen. The first son said the tree was ugly, bent and twisted. The second son disagreed, saying it was covered with green buds and full of promise. The third son had a different assessment, saying the tree was laden with blossoms that smelled so sweet and was so beautiful that it was the most graceful thing he had ever seen. The last son disagreed with all of his brothers. He said the tree was ripe and drooping with fruit, full of life and fulfillment.

The man then explained to his sons that they were all right, because they had each seen but only one season in the tree's life. He told them they could not judge a tree, or a person, by only one season. He said that the essence of who they are -- and the pleasure, joy and love that come from life -- can only be measured at the end, when all the seasons have played out.

If you give up when it's winter, you will miss the promise of your spring, the beauty of your summer, the fulfillment of your fall. Don't let the pain of one season destroy the joy of all the rest. Don't judge life by one difficult season. Persevere through the difficult patches and better times are sure to come.

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So just what does this mean in practical terms? We must hang in there when the going gets tough. We must be grateful for what we have at the present moment and reflect on our past actions in order to move forward. The moral of the story is that we should not focus too much on the bits and pieces of life, but rather on the larger picture. That picture, of course, includes the sometimes difficult experiences we inevitably face and the lessons we've learned from them. Samuel Johnson once said, "Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance." The seasons of our life change just as surely as those of nature. That is why it is

*"My motto was always to keep swinging.
Whether I was in a slump or feeling badly or
having trouble off the field, the only thing to do
was keep swinging."*

Hank Aaron

essential that we stay focused on our desired goals. Johnny Wimbrey perhaps said it best: "You can't see the picture when you're the frame."

Sometimes it seems easy for us to quit because we are so caught up in the minutiae of the now that we don't see the overarching picture. We've all heard the expression, "You can't see the forest for the trees." At the end of the day, however, one thing is clear. You will never win if you quit.

One of life's tragedies is the number of people who are in the middle of doing something positive in their lives and then quit, sometimes just a day before something big and positive would have happened.

Consider the case of Sean Swarner, a man who would have been beloved by Lombardi. Saying merely that

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Swarner is a cancer survivor is a gross understatement. He is a medical marvel. He is an inspiration. He also is the only person in the world ever to have been diagnosed with both Hodgkin's Disease and Askin's Sarcoma. If ever there was a dead man walking, Swarner was it.

He was first diagnosed in the fourth and final stage of Hodgkin's at the age of 13. Doctors gave him three months. Swarner wasn't having any of it, and with determination and perseverance, he overcame his illness. Then, however, he was stricken a second time when a deadly, golf ball-sized tumor attacked his right lung. After removal of this Askin's tumor, Swarner was given just two weeks. And yet, a decade later and with only partial use of his lungs, Swarner is accomplishing things that most of us would never dream possible.

Among other things, Swarner has scaled the 29,035-foot giant known as Mount Everest, an unforgiving behemoth that tortures its challengers with life-threatening conditions ranging from 100 mile per hour winds and a dramatic loss of oxygen to snowstorms and avalanches. Swarner is currently in the midst of attempting to accomplish the "Adventure Grand Slam," which consists of climbing to the peak of the tallest mountains on each of the seven continents and trekking to both the North and South poles. Once completed, Swarner will be just the fifth person in history to accomplish the endeavor, and will be the first cancer survivor to do so. Swarner already is well on his way. In 2003, Swarner returned home to the United States after scaling Africa's Kilimanjaro and Europe's Elbus in less than 10 days.

In addition to his daring ways, Swarner now delivers inspirational speeches around the world, remaining active

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in terms of both life and cancer awareness. Swarner's very life screams the value of persistence. It would have been so easy for him to have accepted the thinking of his doctors and shriveled away. He could have quit, and no one would have blamed him. But Swarner was not about to let an obstacle like cancer get in the way of a full life. He beat the disease twice, and now has seized life in a way most of us cannot begin to imagine. Swarner is richer for the experience. And so are we all.

Sean Swarner is not a quitter. And if he can persevere in the face of two separate death sentences, so can we when faced with life's lesser obstacles.

Fortunately, as special as the Sean Swarners of the world are, they are hardly alone. Those we consider heroes, like Swarner, are all around us, bound by one quality in particular: perseverance.

World War II brought cruelty, sacrifice and pain to millions of people worldwide. In the early years of the war, as Adolph Hitler's carefully scripted and skillfully executed blitzkrieg stormed across Continental Europe, those in Britain could foresee their future. The Nazis were coming. At that stage in the war, the United States was content to let the Europeans sort things out, sitting above the fray in an uneasy neutrality. The British had no such luxury.

Their chosen leader was Prime Minister Winston Churchill, a man whose academic life hardly suggested greatness. Churchill had been a poor, indifferent student frequently punished for lackluster work and lack of effort. And yet Churchill went on to become one of the greatest leaders the world has ever known.

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As much if not better than anyone, Churchill could see the gathering and menacing Nazi storm. He knew that Hitler wanted nothing more than to avenge the humiliation Germany suffered at Versailles at the end of World War I, and to subject the British to compounded humiliations as pay back. Fear was pervasive, and with fear comes doubt and uncertainty. Churchill, however, took that fear and turned it on its head, galvanizing the British people and arming them with a steely resolve, a dedication to resist the Nazi aggressor and emerge victorious.

In his first speech as prime minister, Churchill conceded his humanity in the face of what had to appear at the time as the Nazi machine. "I have nothing to offer but

"The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of will."

Vince Lombardi

blood, toil, tears and sweat," Churchill said, vowing that the collective blood and toil and tears and sweat of his nation would be all that was needed. Just prior to the showdown Battle of Britain, Churchill threw down the gauntlet, both to his nation and the Nazis. Inspiring the resolve and confidence of the British, Churchill said, "We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender." As the battle loomed, Churchill exhorted the nation, urging citizens to give their all. "Let us brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the

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British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, "This was their finest hour."

Britain, of course, weathered the storm. In a later speech to schoolchildren, Churchill reflected on the nation's experience and noted that appearances are often deceiving. At the time of the German onslaught, for example, Britain was poorly armed and clearly outmanned. It would not have taken a major leap to conclude that Britain, like Poland and France before it, would fall under the Nazi heel. And yet the country was able to successfully repel the Nazis.

Churchill reflected:

You cannot tell from appearances how things will go. Sometimes imagination makes things out far worse than they are; yet without imagination not much can be done. Those people who are imaginative see many more dangers than perhaps exist; certainly many more than will happen; but then they must also pray to be given that extra courage to carry this far-reaching imagination.

However, the main lesson to be learned from the experience, Churchill said, was to persevere.

"Never give in," Churchill said. "Never, never, never, never -- in nothing, great or small, large or petty - - never give in, except to convictions of honor and good sense. Never yield to force. Never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy."

Outsiders, Churchill reminded his listeners, had given Britain up as lost. "But instead our country stood in the gap," Churchill said. "There was no flinching and no thought of giving in; and by what seemed almost a miracle to those outside these Islands, though we ourselves never doubted it,

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we now find ourselves in a position where I say that we can be sure that we have only to persevere to conquer.”

If Churchill had been a quitter, the world would be a very different place today. But Churchill wasn’t a quitter, and he inspired a nation of ordinary heroes.

Ordinary heroes. People just like you and me. People who have decided to persevere in the face of adversity in pursuit of their dreams.

Legendary college basketball coach Jim Valvano was one such ordinary hero. As a 17-year-old, Valvano pulled out a white index card and charted the course of his life. On that card, Valvano wrote that he wanted to play basketball in high school and college, become an assistant

“Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance.”

Samuel Johnson

college basketball coach, then a head coach. He wrote that he wanted to get a win at Madison Square Garden, and to achieve a national basketball championship.

The card served as Valvano’s life template, and by the tender age of 36, he had fulfilled his dreams. But he continued to dream big, and knew that living life to the fullest was a way of life, not a part-time activity. He believed in dreaming big, and in working hard to achieve those dreams. “There are 86,400 seconds in a day,” he once said. “It’s up to you to decide what to do with them.”

Surely, Valvano was on top of the world, the master of his fate. Then one day he received the dreaded news. He

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had metastatic adenocarcinoma and was given just one year to live. Valvano did not allow the news to deter him. He worked tirelessly to raise cancer awareness, and was not afraid to let others see his body deteriorate as the cancer progressed. He spoke from the heart, and in the process urged all of us to seize the moment and strive for our dreams.

On March 4, 1993, Valvano was awarded the inaugural Arthur Ashe Courage and Humanitarian Award at the first annual ESPN ESPY Awards. Even as he faced the end of his life, Valvano was teaching others how to live theirs. "How do you go from where you are to where you want to be?" he said. "I think you have to have enthusiasm for life. You have to have a dream, a goal. You have to be willing to work for it."

On that night, Valvano announced his latest dream, creation of a foundation for cancer research. He said that, with the support of ESPN, he was launching the Jimmy V Foundation for Cancer Research, with the motto, "Don't give up, don't ever give up."

Though a dreamer, Valvano was also a realist. He summed up his speech that night by conceding cancer's power. "Cancer can take away all my physical abilities," Valvano said. And yet, it was powerless against him as a person. "It cannot touch my mind, it cannot touch my heart and it cannot touch my soul," Valvano said. "And those three things are going to carry on forever."

Valvano died nearly two months later, on April 28, 1993. But his mind, heart and soul continue to carry on through the Jimmy V Foundation.

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No one among us would have blamed Valvano if he had simply quit when doctors gave him his death sentence. No one would have batted an eye had he wrapped himself in self-pity and withdrawn from the probing eye of the media, content to die a death of private dignity. Valvano, though, was never a quitter. He knew he was a winner, and that winners never quit.

"I've always made a total effort, even when the odds seemed entirely against me. I never quit trying; I never felt that I didn't have a chance to win."

Arnold Palmer

No matter our station in life or our aspirations, we all face trying times. Be it an obstacle on the road to fulfillment of our dreams or threats to our very survival, we all must confront the winter. Of course we are free to quit, to abandon our quest, to surrender to the forces that appear to be arrayed against us. Or we can confront those times with resolve and know that spring and its promise are just around the corner. But before you decide to quit, to give up, remember that struggle is healthy. Preeminent psychologist Carl Jung went so far as to say, "Man needs difficulties; they are necessary for health." Be healthy. Be strong. Stay the course. Never quit.

Chapter Twelve

"The best and fastest way to learn a sport is to watch and imitate a champion."

Jean-Claude Killy

Find a Mentor

It is impossible to stress this enough: Finding a good mentor is essential to success. That is true whether you seek business success or triumphs in other areas of your life. I know whereof I speak; it took me years to realize this myself. Since I by necessity grew up so completely self-reliant, I became wired to believe I had to do everything on my own. If I wanted to get something done, I just did it. If I didn't know how to do it, I figured it out on my own or, as a last resort, found someone who did know how to do it and reluctantly let them run with it.

In hindsight, I could have reached greater heights more quickly if I had had someone to mentor me. Having a mentor earlier would have cut years off of my learning curve. So, by all means, find a mentor.

But what, exactly, is a mentor? Fortunately, this isn't rocket science. A mentor simply needs to be someone who is where you want to be in life, and at the same time is willing

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to help you get there as well. In truth, your mentor may actually end up being several people after it is all said and done. Indeed, you can have several mentors at once.

Let's say there's an area of your life you want to improve. Find someone who exhibits the qualities you would like to have, and then become a sponge. It's a simple concept, really.

*"My chief want in life is someone who shall
make me do what I can."*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

The Number One Rule in finding a mentor, and the only one at that, is that there are no rules! As a matter of fact, your mentor may end up being someone you would never have expected to help you grow. They may or may not be of the same race or sex as you, or even in the same age range as you. The only caveat here is that I would caution you when it comes to having a mentor of the opposite sex, and view that as the exception, rather than the rule. Bonds with mentors can become strong, and you don't need to have your thinking clouded by hormones when you're trying to add focus and perspective to your life. Other than that, though, mentors come in all shapes and sizes; your mentor may come from a completely different background than you, and that's okay. The key is not where they started from, but where they are today. If they are where you want to be, it doesn't matter where they came from.

A perfect example of this comes in the form of one of my mentors, Johnny Wimbrey. Though we share similar

Find a Mentor

backgrounds, Johnny is bi-racial and I'm white. Moreover, Johnny is nine years younger than me. Most people think a mentor has to be someone older and wiser than themselves, when in reality they need only be wiser. Just ask yourself, "Is this person somewhere I want to be?" If the answer is yes, then the fact that your potential mentor is younger is of no consequence. In Johnny's case, he is wise beyond his years.

The fact that Johnny is my mentor does not mean he is superior to me. In fact, Johnny has a lot of respect for me and for my talents. That having been said, he knows things I need to learn in order to achieve the successes I want.

An example may be in order. Let's say I wanted to drive to Florida and I wanted to know the best route. Let's further say I know Johnny has been there several times. Why wouldn't I ask him for directions? I could try to figure it out on my own or even ask someone who has never been, but it wouldn't make much sense. Lamentably, that is exactly what we do with our own lives. We try to figure things out on our own, or accept advice from people who have no business giving it. Johnny may be younger than me, but he knows a lot more about getting to where I want to go than most people twice his age.

In my case I've been blessed with two mentors, one younger and one older. The second one is Kelvin Collins, who is known by most simply as "Coach". Coach has a way of connecting with people that few people can match. He is also a brilliant marketer and truly understands what motivates people to act. He also is someone that I would consider a real visionary. He has the ability to get people to see the way things can be not just how they are at this present moment. The combination of Coach and Johnny, and what they have imparted into me has changed me forever.

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A mentor can exert tremendous influence over the arc of our lives. They help in many ways determine the people we become and the things we do. That having been said, a mentor is not someone we pester daily. Instead, a mentor helps us form the big picture philosophy that guides our lives. Indeed, a mentor is not a personal coach nor a business coach, someone with whom we'd have frequent contact as they attempt to hold us accountable and on point as we strive to reach our goals. A mentor's influence goes much deeper, into the very essence of who we are and who we hope to be.

All of which, of course, speaks to the absolute importance of finding a good and appropriate mentor. One could argue that, in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, Fagin is a mentor. Fagin, we recall, was the evil ringleader of a band of boys that he corrupted into becoming thieves and pickpockets. While it's true that mentors come in many flavors, some clearly are to be avoided. Be mindful also of the fact that a person who was a terrific mentor to your friend may not be a good or appropriate fit for you. The mentoring relationship is incredibly important. Go for specially tailored rather than off -the-rack.

If I could wave a magic wand, I would make sure everyone has a mentor. All too frequently we place people on pedestals and find ourselves afraid to ask for help. What we fail to realize is that asking someone for help is actually a way of giving him or her a great gift. After all, mentoring is not a one-way street. Mentors end up deriving a great deal of benefit from the relationship. The more they teach their philosophy, the more it crystallizes in their own minds. And let's make a bow to human nature. Most people would be flattered to be asked to mentor, honored more than you can imagine. It's not

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for no reason that the saying, “Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery,” has become a cliché. So go ahead. Ask.

There has been much hand wringing in the popular press about so-called select sports, where elite young athletes play on teams surrounded by other elite players and compete against teams composed of equally elite players. Some critics fret that such a system imposes too much stress on kids. Others believe it places too much emphasis on competition and not enough on fun. Frankly, I think that, so long as the child truly wants to play in such an environment, there really is no downside. Sure, the kid who plays select to please his or her parents is going to have issues, but they run deeper than competitive sports. Likewise, many of the parents who funnel their kids into select sports with visions of college scholarships and professional paychecks would probably be better advised to push their kids to crack the books. All that having been said, many if not most of the kids who participate in select sports are going to get better at those sports by playing against kids who have as much if not more talent than them.

“Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can somehow become great.”

Mark Twain

Playing with highly skilled players is one sure way of improving your own game.

The same concept applies to mentoring. The cold hard fact is that we do not have all the answers in life. No one does. But for some reason, we’re often reluctant to admit we don’t know it all. Our egos get in the way and we prevent ourselves from seeking the help we need.

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In sales, which is my background, this sad fact shows up in the fact that we as a collective group rarely take the time to stop and truly learn our craft. Regrettably, it is taken for granted that one can become a salesperson and make a decent living whether or not he or she becomes passionate about learning the trade. Such an approach is impossible in some fields, such as medicine, and we can all breathe a collective sigh of relief. Unfortunately, in sales such an approach is the norm. Don't let that fool you, however. The average sales professional is not a successful businessperson. If you are serious about your career and want to strive to become a "super seller," you can't be afraid to seek outside influences to help elevate your career to the next level.

As it happens, the sales industry is rather incestuous. Consequently, I found that I had to look outside the industry for influences. Otherwise, I'd find myself receiving the same recycled advice, perhaps with subtle nuances that helped me make small improvements but not the great insights that would spur major progress. Sometimes we need to seek out and translate knowledge from other arenas to help us enjoy success in our own.

"My father gave me the greatest gift anyone could give another person, he believed in me."

Jim Valvano

Earlier we discussed the fact that you can have several mentors at one time. Indeed, you can have different mentors for different facets of your life. Finding the right mentors can make all the difference in our lives. They can help us to grow, to focus on what's most important and to help us determine our long-term goals and destination.

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But just how do we go about finding the right mentors? Fortunately for us, the first step is to dream. We envision the life we want, identifying our long-term goals. Indeed, in the influential *Mentoring*, by Floyd Wickman and Terri Sjodin, the authors stress that the first step in finding a mentor is to “imagine what you would like to accomplish with your life.” Wickman and Sjodin proceed to lay out a 21-step process to help readers identify potential mentors, narrow the field and ultimately, choose one or more people to whom to propose a mentoring relationship. I highly recommend this book for anyone interested in finding a mentor for any facet of their lives.

For those who want to begin focusing their thinking in search of a mentor now, here are a few things to keep in mind. The first thing, again, is to assess where you are and where it is you want to be. Take a detailed personal inventory. What kind of personality do you have, and with what types of personalities do you work best? What are your strengths? Weaknesses? Some of the answers might not be flattering, but making an honest assessment is essential. As Socrates urged us, “Know thyself.” Without knowing who we are, we’ll find ourselves limited in finding someone who can support us and help us grow. As you conduct the selfassessment, consider the mentors of your past. Whether we’ve had formal mentoring relationships or not, all of us have had mentors. Perhaps it was a teacher, a youth sports coach, a friend’s parent. What did you like about them? Appreciate about them? Answering those questions can help you refine and hone your search for a new mentor.

Once you’ve completed an honest inventory, seek referrals. Friends and colleagues might know just the person

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you seek. Naturally, now is not the time to fudge the truth. Be upfront about what it is you're looking for and why. It'll save time, and it's the decent thing to do. While you're searching, be sure to keep not only your eyes open but your mind as well. It may turn out that your mentor comes from a completely different field. What you're looking for is someone who has the traits and skills you want as your own. Truth is where you find it, friends. For the sake of argument, the fact that your future mentor is a rickshaw repairman while you're looking to make your mark in soft cheese sales is of no moment or consequence if he or she has *je ne se quois*, that certain something you want as your own.

As you cast your net, brainstorm ideas on where you might find your future mentor. You might, for example, consider colleagues in industry associations, or online virtual communities. Retirees, college professors and even people who enjoy the same hobbies as you can all be fertile ground. Finally, be sure to set parameters. Have an understanding of what you hope to derive from the mentoring relationship. NASA doesn't just shoot rockets into the air and hope they land on Mars. Nor should you enter a mentoring relationship without having a clear idea of what the relationship is about. By knowing your purpose and desired outcomes, you'll be more likely to find a mutually beneficial mentoring relationship.

Once you've found a mentor or mentors, remember why you chose them. You're there to learn. Soak in knowledge and put it into practice. Johnny Wimbrey says the reason he has enjoyed the success he has is because he is three things -- coachable, teachable and trainable. Now also would be an appropriate time to find a good personal

Find a Mentor

coach. Together, the mentor and coach form a powerful one-two punch. The mentor helps us to determine the direction of our sails, while the coach keeps us on course throughout the journey by holding us accountable to our goals. A good mentor shows us how to think and a good coach helps us to execute those philosophies.

Everyone needs outside influences. I know what Johnny Wimbrey has meant to my development, not only as a businessman, but as a human being. I don't even want to consider where I'd be without all the influence he's had on my life. Knowing him has saved me years of trial and error and opened doors for me I never could have opened for myself. So find your muse. Seek wisdom. Somewhere out there is a sage who can bring you the gift of wisdom and perspective. Look for the person you want to be, the person who's been

"A good coach will make his players see what they can be rather than what they are."

Ara Parasheghian

where you want to go. Know what you're looking for and then seek him or her out. At all costs, don't let your ego get in your way. It's okay that you don't have all the answers. Seeking help is not a sign of weakness, but rather is a sign of strength. Of course, if you feel you have all life's answers and can do it all on your own, Godspeed to you. If, on the other hand, you can admit that you can benefit and grow from influences such as a mentor, you are on the road to true prosperity. As with anything, it's your choice. I pray you choose wisely.

Chapter Thirteen

"The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavor."

Vince Lombardi

Self-Image and Daily Personal Development

When I created my original outline for this book, I intended to have one chapter on self-image and another on daily personal development. But to be honest, the two go hand in hand. Your performance in life cannot and will not ever exceed your self-image. What do I mean? We've all heard the expression, "You are what you eat." That may well be true on some sort of molecular level. But in the world of the practical, I say that you are what you think. And what you think about yourself will determine how far you will go in life. Through personal development, in turn, we can improve our thoughts of ourselves, spurring us to the greatness that is ours to have.

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What you think about yourself is what makes you act like you. If you see yourself as an average salesperson, then that's exactly what you will be -- average. If you see yourself as a bad husband, then you'll no doubt conform to that lowly goal. You will never outperform the perception you have of yourself. Remember, for most of us, perception is reality. In that sense, truth is immaterial. So whether what we think about ourselves is actually true or not, if we think it is, it is. We become what we think.

Consider the case of baseball Hall of Famer Ted Williams, the Boston Red Sox great. Williams' was driven by

"The most splendid achievement of all is the constant striving to surpass yourself and to be worthy of your own approval. "

Denis Waitley

the dream of being the best hitter there ever was. Granted, he was gifted with outstanding eyesight and hand-eye coordination. But those ingredients alone would hardly be enough to allow him to become the game's greatest hitter. Williams was willing to put in the effort to achieve his dreams. Toward that end, he practiced relentlessly, often taking so many swings that his hands bled. But as he practiced, Williams did not perceive himself as a man trying to get better at his craft. He saw himself already as the best hitter in the history of baseball. As he took batting practice, he would scream a profanity-laced mantra to the effect that he was the best hitter in the Major Leagues. In his 19-season career, Williams hit .344 with 521 home runs. He hit an astounding .407 in 1953, making Williams the last player to

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hit .400 for an entire season. Williams, clearly, made himself what he thought.

If we are what we think, then it becomes obvious that we can change who we are by changing the way we think about ourselves. Whether we see ourselves as poor performers, as average, or as God's gift to the world, we can change who we are, for better or worse, by the way we think.

Changing who we are is essential if we hope to make our dreams come true. We all have room for improvement, and vast potential for growth. And yet we all limit ourselves by the way we think. Our self-image has the ability to push us up or pull us down, depending on what it is we're thinking.

An example might now be in order. Let's say I sell cars for a living. I'm not the greatest but I'm not the worst, either. In my mind, I'm average. I make a decent living and do a decent job, or so I tell myself. In a good month, I'll sell 10 cars, whereas in a bad month I'll sell 5. Let's say one month I've only sold 2 cars with only two days left in the month. My self-image starts to freak out. I better pick up the pace. What usually happens? I'll sell 2-3 cars over the last two days to get me within my range. It's not like me to sell less than 5 cars in a month, at least according to my self-image.

What about the flip side of this example? What if I've jumped out to a great start to a month, selling 8 cars by the 15th? What will usually happen? My self-image will throttle me back, reminding me that it's not like me to sell that many cars that quickly. If I stay on this pace, I will sell 15-16 cars, which is beyond my capability because a good month usually yields 10 sales. Even if by some miracle I hang on and sell 15 cars, if I don't truly believe that I'm capable of doing this all of the time, then I won't. I will start to make

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excuses for my success, choosing instead to believe that I got lucky this time. My inner ear will buzz with excuses; factory incentives, arrival of tax refunds and the like put a bug in consumers' ears, that sort of thing.

For some perverse reason, it's much easier for us to start to accept "reality" when we underachieve, rather than when we overachieve. For most of us, it's okay to lower the bar, but we are reluctant to raise it. If we raise the bar, not only do our own expectations increase, so do those of the people around us. Now a little thing called accountability comes into play. We have to hold ourselves accountable and if we've told anybody what we're trying to accomplish, they also will attempt to hold us accountable. If you tell colleagues you're trying to lose 10 pounds, then they're likely to raise an eyebrow when you walk into the office with a sack of donuts.

What would happen in the car sales example if I raised my personal bar by announcing to my wife that I would now sell 15 cars every month? Frankly, she is going to expect me to do it. And I promise you, she will hold me accountable. The easy thing to do is not to raise the bar. But if you don't raise the bar, you'll never get better and you will never achieve your dreams.

Because you're reading this book, you're not a quitter. You sincerely want to improve yourself and seize the destiny that is waiting for you. You understand the need for personal change. You know in your bones that the changes you need to make in order to experience your dreams begin with a change in self-image. The key, however, is in raising the bar. In order to change your self-image, you have to demand more of yourself, inculcate within yourself a culture of high expectations. You will have to step out of your comfort zone and venture out into the unknown.

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I know it's scary. Been there, done that. But you know what? I loved every minute of it. Maybe not at the time, but looking back I would have it no other way. Growing up the way I did, I had a certain self-image. It would have been easy for me to live up to, or rather down to, society's expectations. Sure, society will tell you that you can make it, but nobody really believes it's true. People like me, people that come from where I do, usually don't make much out of their lives. That is, unless they do something about it.

My journey from where I was began with dreams. I began to gain traction and advance in the direction of my

"The principle is competing against yourself. It's about self-improvement, about being better than you were the day before."

Steve Young

dreams when I changed my self-image. I had to change the way I think. We all do. Whether we were born with silver spoons in our mouths or in the lowliest stations of life, we have to demand the most from ourselves in order to succeed. We can't be content with the average or substandard. While demanding our birthright, we must demand our own utmost. In short, we all have to change the way we think.

The best way to change the way we think is through daily personal development. Motivation, after all, is not a one-time thing. It's just like a shower; you need one everyday. You can't just read a book or go to a seminar and think your whole life is going to change. It's a start, but it can't end there. It doesn't matter what it is in your life that you want to change. If you're going to get the changes you need and

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desire, you're going to have to commit yourself to daily personal development. It can come in many shapes and forms. Again, change is not easy and it doesn't come without a price. Just keep in mind that making this investment in yourself will pay you rewards greater than you could ever imagine.

Getting into the habit of making time daily for personal development is simultaneously one of the easiest things to do but also one of the hardest. I try to spend as much time as I can each day gathering knowledge that will help take me to the next level in my journey. I read in the

"Formal education will make you a living; self education will make you a fortune."

Jim Rohn

morning when I get up, I listen to CD's when I'm driving in the car, I read when I'm in the restroom, and I read before I go to bed. The time allotted to each varies from day-to-day because my schedule varies. I may read for 15-20 minutes on some days and 2-3 hours on others. Sometimes I spend hours in my car and on those days I get my knowledge from CD's.

What do I read and what do I listen to? I read and listen to many, many things, but it all starts with the Bible. For my money, there's no better source of information out there on how to change your life. Sitting there thinking that change is okay for some people but that your life will never change? Try reading the stories of some of the great people in the Bible. David and Jacob come readily to mind. And

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how about Paul? He castigated Christians before having an epiphany that led him to be one of the brightest lights of the early church. If ordinary people like these can rise to do great things and receive God's blessings, so can we.

In addition to the Bible, I own hundreds of other books that I read. It really just depends on what kind of mood I'm in, or whether there's a particular area that I'm trying to grow in. The topics of my books range from sales to motivation to leadership to customer service to parenting to entrepreneurship to business to anything and everything in between. Of course, the three books that changed my life were, *Think and Grow Rich*, by Napoleon Hill, *How To Win Friends And Influence People*, by Dale Carnegie, and *See You At The Top*, by Zig Ziglar. If you're not sure where to start, you won't go wrong starting with those titles. Of course, any kind of reading is beneficial. The daily newspaper offers a summary of world events that might somehow provide you with insight on a personal problem or give you an idea for a product or service the world is crying out for. A good novel can give you a window on a difficult personality in your life, or insight into how to unlock a personal conundrum. A book is like instant soup for the brain. It's just sitting there waiting to nourish you.

When I'm in my car, I listen to lots of training CD's. But I also enjoy audio books. Not just any books, but books that will help me grow. As you can see, I thirst for knowledge. Of course, I know that knowledge alone is not power. It is applied knowledge that is power. But you can't apply it if you don't have it, and I find myself in a constant quest for more knowledge.

Of course, there are other avenues for personal development. Training seminars can be highly beneficial.

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Extension courses at local universities or junior colleges can also help us grow. The fact is, we can learn and grow wherever we happen to be. The world is our laboratory, and with discipline, we can be our own professors as we seek constantly to improve ourselves.

In the Mental Mapquest® Outline found in the back of this book, you will find guidelines and suggestions on what you should expect of yourself and what is realistic when it comes to daily development. Next to having a good mentor, daily personal development is the one thing that can have the biggest impact on your life.

Even if you don't dream big at the moment, you might be inspired to grand aspirations by something you read or hear. That's what happened to me. I was a big dreamer, but I didn't have big dreams, if that makes sense. Reading *Think and Grow Rich* opened my eyes to a whole new reality.

When it gets right down to it, nobody can make you want it, no one can make you strive for success. You have to want it and seek it on your own. If you truly want it, make a promise to invest in yourself. And then do it each and every day.

Chapter Fourteen

“Believe in yourself, and the rest will fall into place. Have faith in your own abilities, work hard, and there is nothing you cannot accomplish.”

Brad Henry

Be Your Own Biggest Fan!

Most of us have probably all done it at one time or another, imagined ourselves at the center of popular attention with thousands screaming our name. Maybe we’ve thought about coming up to the plate in the bottom of the ninth inning of Game 7 of the World Series with the bases loaded, two outs, and our team trailing by three runs. We see ourselves hitting a grand slam, winning the game and the series, while thousands of delirious fans roar for us in joyful bedlam. Or maybe we imagine ourselves as the lead guitarist for the hottest new band. Whatever our Walter Mitty fantasy, we see ourselves as the recipient of fan love.

Most of us, of course, don’t find ourselves in such situations in real life. But that does not mean we don’t have fans. As a matter of fact, we need to be our own biggest fan. Being our own biggest fan is essential to success, and has meaning on several levels.

Be Your Own Biggest Fan!

First, and foremost, we have to believe in ourselves even if nobody else does. If we truly desire to make something happen in our lives, we have to prepare ourselves for the fact that not everyone will be on our side. Sometimes no one will. But even if no one is lined up in our corner, we cannot let the way other people think dictate our response to the situation. It is essential that we never let someone else's mentality become our reality.

I have a friend who ran cross-country in high school. He was a serviceable runner who took up cross-country after he suffered several concussions playing football. As a novice, he was able to make steady improvement in both his times and place. One meet, he felt particularly good. His legs felt strong, and he began to make a move. He passed a number of runners and soon found himself alongside a teammate who consistently finished among the top 15 runners at every meet. The teammate looked at him and said, "What are you doing here?" After the shock of the comment wore off, my friend was deflated. He began to doubt his ability to be where he was. His legs lost their spring, and the teammate inexorably pulled away and went on to medal. My friend ended up with a personal best time, but was never able to medal in a cross-country event. In that instance, he allowed someone else to shape his reality. He wasn't ready at that point to be his own biggest fan.

I've had a similar experience and I suspect you have, too. As I mentioned earlier in this book, the first job I really loved was selling insurance in a minority section of Fort Worth. However, when someone posed a simple question to me, my whole sense of the job changed and caused me to lose the joy and passion I had for it. Someone else distorted, changed and reshaped my reality. Without intending to,

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this person rained on my parade. Instead of marching on, I lost faith. I vowed never to let that happen to me again.

But what exactly is it that allows you to continue on even in the face of criticism or doubt? Imagine yourself being a diehard Dallas Cowboys fan. True, they are America's team, but the flip side of that accolade is that they also are the team many Americans love to hate. That can be especially true when the team is playing poorly. But if you are a diehard Cowboys' fan, there is nothing anyone can say

"To be a champ, you have to believe in yourself when nobody else will."

Sugar Ray Robinson

to make you jump off of the blue and silver bandwagon. They could go 0 and 16 and it wouldn't matter. They're da' boys and you're gonna stick with them through the good times and the bad.

You must feel the same way about yourself. You've got to believe in yourself the same way the diehard fan believes the Cowboys are going to win the Super Bowl every year. You fanatics know what you do every year when the new schedule comes out. You calculate the odds and see a blue and silver lining everywhere you look. You tell yourself things like, "If they just win these games, they can still lose these others and boom, they're in the playoffs," and "Once the playoffs start, it's a brand new season, and anybody can win!" Let someone dare say it's not possible. That will light a fire under you faster than anything. You'll even go back to

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last year and begin to re-live the entire season, noting how another Super Bowl trophy barely eluded the team. Even if you're not like this yourself, you surely know someone who is. Maybe it's not the Cowboys who bring out the eternal optimist; it could just as easily be the Longhorns, the Sooners, the Packers, the Yankees, or Cardinals. The point is we must have the same sort of faith and confidence in ourselves. We must have passion for ourselves, the same sort of fervor that runs through the rabid sports fan.

One of the most basic yet powerful lessons in the Bible is the lesson of Love. We've got to love ourselves. If we don't, how can we expect to love anything or anyone else, and how can we expect to be loved in return? To get love you've got to give love. If you don't know how to love yourself you'll never be able to give it to anyone else. Being your own biggest fan begins with love, which fuels the self-confidence to stay centered and focused even when naysayers pooh-pooh your ideas or dreams.

This brings me to my other meaning of being your own biggest fan. You've got to be a wonderful self-promoter. I'm not talking about beating people down with tales of your success every time you're around them, but rather a tactful "tooting" of your own horn when the time is right. A Fort Worth entrepreneur tells a story about his grandfather, who advised him, "If you don't toot your own horn, someone will use it as a spittoon." Of course no one loves a braggart. But it can be hard for people to appreciate you if they don't know what you can do.

We've all heard the phrase, "It's not what you know, but who you know." That's true, but there's another piece that is equally important. It's not only who you know, but who knows you. You may know lots of people, but if they

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don't know what you bring to the table, they're not likely to think of you when an opportunity arises. And if they don't think of you then, the fact that you know them is of little importance.

Leonardo da Vinci was the epitome of the Renaissance man. A truly gifted artist, da Vinci had a restless, inquisitive mind that helped him to be an inventive genius. He became especially interested in developing military applications for some of his inventions, and made sure to get the introduction of appropriate leaders to let them know of his blueprints for new weapons. Sometimes he walked away with a commission to paint portraits instead, but he went ahead and did them anyway so that he would remain in his patron's consciousness. Such moves eventually paid off as da Vinci became military engineer to the Duke of Sforza in Milan. The duke was impressed by da Vinci's creativity, which was expressed in a range of military gear from portable bridges to an enormous crossbow. Da Vinci even designed a tank, a military vehicle that would not come into use until some 400 years later.

I can vouch for the fact that I did not get the positions I enjoyed in corporate America simply because people think I'm a nice guy -- even though I am! Quite the contrary. I put myself in those positions by making sure I met the right people and by making sure that they knew my accomplishments and what skills and talents I possess. There's really no substitute for making sure people know why you are the proverbial "man for the job." In essence, you create your own breaks, and you do that by marketing yourself.

This kind of thinking is only for "big" thinkers. If you don't think big then please don't try this at home. Even

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if you've changed the way you think and made great strides in becoming a new person, people will not know it unless you tell them and show them.

Changing from the inside out, which is what this whole book is about, is not like losing 25 pounds. People are not going to come up to you and automatically notice anything different. True enough, actions do speak louder than words, but time is of the essence, and there's nothing wrong with letting the people that already know you know that something's up. Especially if you're someone like me and weren't born well connected, you have to let people know why they should know you.

"Believe deep down in your heart that you're destined to do great things."

Joe Paterno

After all, people don't know what they don't know. If they don't already know that you're a superstar, you can't wait for someone else to tell them for you. Please understand. I'm not talking about bragging or boasting. I am talking strictly about marketing yourself. Whether it's in business or in other areas of your life, you've got to take matters into your own hands.

A book that really helped me in this area was Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. It is difficult if not impossible to open doors in your life if you go around making enemies and having them slam them in your face. Make friends, and lots of them. I'm not talking about one-sided friendships either. I've been on both sides

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of a couple of those. I'm talking about being a true friend first, without any expectation of anything in return. Zig Ziglar says it best, "If you help enough people get what they want in life, you'll get what you want."

For years, the comptroller of the state of Maryland was a man named Louis Goldstein. Even though his position was essentially that of the state's chief tax collector, he was one of the most popular public figures in the state. Goldstein always said that he lived by a simple credo that stressed service to others. He liked to recite a poem for visitors that he said encapsulated his life philosophy:

*There is a destiny that makes us brothers,
None goes his way alone.
All that we bring to the lives of others
Comes back into our own.
What we are is God's gift to us.
What we make of ourselves is our gift to God.*

Goldstein always added, "Thank you, God, for the privilege of serving you by serving others."

Some caveats are in order. While it is essential to believe in yourself and to market yourself, you must at the same time be honest with yourself and others. It will be counterproductive for you if you claim to be fluent in Farsi if in reality you've just checked out a Berlitz book at the library. As Shakespeare's Polonius said, "To thine own self be true." Always be truthful in everything you say. If you claim to have certain qualities and skills, make sure you can back it up.

Remember, too, that success takes time. In an earlier chapter, I stressed the importance of patience and persistence. Popular culture is full of references to the

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“overnight success,” but in truth most of the time those overnight successes were years in the making. Your dreams won’t happen overnight, either. But they will happen, especially if you remember to be your own biggest fan, and cheer yourself on every step along the way.

Chapter Fifteen

*"Winning isn't always finishing first.
Sometimes winning is just finishing."*

Manuel Diotte

Win Big!

The moment seemed like it would never arrive, but now that it's here, I can hardly believe it. Here we are in the final chapter of my first book. Clearly, dreaming big really does work. Just like everything worthwhile that we seek, this book started with a dream. Publishing a book is no small task, I can assure you, but by dreaming big, developing goals, putting my plan into action and showing persistence, my dream has become a reality.

One of my goals in writing this book was to share with you my life's experiences and what I've learned along the way. In so doing, I want to help you strive for your dreams and achieve them. Closely related to that is my desire that you feel you have company on your journey of self-improvement and dream fulfillment. There is no doubt in my mind that God has given us all a gift. Some of us have many gifts and some of us just a few. But the point is He has given us all gifts and we always need to be mindful of them. One of the greatest gifts we can give to one another is the gift of our testimony. So many times we find ourselves

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in a situation that looks hopeless. We think and feel that we are the only ones who have ever gone through what we are going through.

I will never forget the time when I gave my personal testimony in front of my entire church. It was one of the most incredible feelings I have ever had. What made it even more special was what my pastor shared with me the next day. He told me about a man who was visiting our church and heard my testimony. It meant so much to him to hear

“Never expect people to treat you any better than you treat yourself.”

Bo Bennett

my story, and because he had walked down many of the same paths I have, it gave him hope. For me, that is what this is all about. At one point, I was you. I was looking to rise above where I was, refusing to accept the role society had chosen for me. I was looking for a way to live the life of my dreams. You're not alone, and it is my hope that together, we can both dream big and win big.

For me, winning big is giving people hope. If you've pulled nothing else from this book, I hope you know deep down in your bones that to change your life, you need only change the way you think. This method works whether you seek to launch a new business enterprise, improve yourself, better your job situation, enrich your family life, or strengthen your relationship with God. It doesn't matter what area of your life you wish to improve. The possibilities are unlimited. The bottom line is that you can win big in everything you do. The choice is yours.

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Keep in mind, this book isn't only for people like me -- people who have struggled on the lowest rungs of the economic ladder and battled the attendant demons that poverty engenders. The things discussed in this book can be applied to myriad situations and circumstances. You can be a six-figure income earner with a Ph.D. or someone who is unemployed and a high school dropout. You can be trying to revitalize your marriage, seeking to become more integrally involved in the lives of your children, or looking to invent the quintessential mousetrap. We all like to win, and to Win Big!

"A winner is someone who recognizes his God-given talents, works his tail off to develop them into skills, and uses these skills to accomplish his goals."

Larry Bird

Sometimes we can win big simply by making the most of a less than ideal situation. All of us at one time or another has been admonished to make lemonade when life serves us lemons. That's pretty much what oysters do. A grain of sand gets lodged within and the oyster can't expel the irritant. The oyster turns that adversity into beauty, creating a luminescent pearl.

The lowly oyster is not the only creature that can win big. Even people who are already millionaires can dream big and win big. Consider the case of Kemmons Wilson, who died in 2003 at the age of 90. Wilson was a highly successful real estate agent and homebuilder in Tennessee, a card-carrying member of the millionaire's club. One summer in the 1950s he took his family on a road trip to Washington,

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and was astonished and disheartened that roadside motels added a room surcharge for children. Though he could certainly afford it, Wilson was angered by the unfairness of the charges and realized that other families less well off than his could be particularly hard hit. He vowed to launch a chain of motels where kids could stay free. The result was Holiday Inn, which at its height was opening a new motel every two and one-half days and now boasts some 1,000 locations.

Indeed, Wilson is a case study in how both the wealthy and impoverished can win big if only they dream big. Wilson's father died when he was just nine months old, and his mother did the best she could. But when the Great Depression hit and she lost her job, the family was in dire straits. Wilson dropped out of high school, borrowed money to purchase a popcorn maker, and set up shop in a local theater. He eventually made enough money selling popcorn to moviegoers to purchase a home for his mother and himself. But Wilson, who never got a high school diploma, wasn't done dreaming big. He later purchased a Wurlitzer franchise before moving into the real estate and homebuilding industries.

Whether he was poor or a multi-millionaire, Wilson understood that his dreams would not come true without hard work and effort on his part. Indeed, in one of his 20 tips for success, Wilson said: "Only work half a day. It doesn't matter which half you work -- the first 12 hours or the second 12 hours."

The key, of course, is to work smart. Keep your perspective while maintaining mindful of your ultimate goal. The ancient Greeks urged moderation in all things; a bit of advice we'd do well to remember today. A Buddhist tale illustrates this point nicely. In the tale, a neighbor invites

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a fool to his home for dinner. The fool found the food bland, so the neighbor offered some salt. After sprinkling some on his food, the fool now found the food exceptionally tasty. The experience set his feeble mind to thinking. If a little bit of salt made the food taste this much better, he reasoned, a whole lot of salt would be scrumptious. The fool pushed his plate to the side and began to devour the salt. Soon he was in tears as his mouth burned in pain.

Like the fool, we sometimes can take a good thing and make it bad. Let's assume that your dream is to spend more time with your children. True, it is important to have a blueprint for bringing that about, a plan of action with definable goals. But it would hardly make sense to hunker oneself away for a week away from the children to develop the plan. So work smart.

One thing to bear in mind, of course, is that winning -- and more specifically, winning big -- is subjective. What may be a minor victory to you -- or even a step backwards -- may be a huge triumph to me. What may be no big deal to me could be a life-changing experience to someone else. My point is that we should never underestimate the value of our own victories and should never downplay the significance of someone else's. It also bears repeating that we should never let someone else determine what winning big means to us. Winning big could mean starting our own business, saving our marriage, spending more quality time with our children, giving more to our church, getting a promotion or raise at work, or quitting cigarettes and booze. Winning big is what you want it to be.

Big is relative. At one point, landing a man on the moon seemed impossible. As NASA put all the pieces together to make a moon landing possible, the whole

Win Big!

idea of sending men to the moon became the epitome of dreaming big. When it finally happened, it was beyond big. It was huge! On the other hand, if it were to happen again today, it's possible that some people wouldn't even notice. The point is that you shouldn't worry that your dream may seem small to someone else. As long as your why is big enough for you, go confidently in the direction of your dreams and don't look back, making sure you continue to dream big along the way.

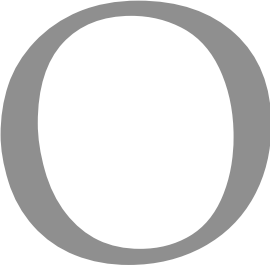
Whether you apply everything I said in this book or take a more a la carte approach, utilizing only bits and pieces, that's okay. The most important thing to me is that you are here right now, reading this. By making it this far, it is clear you are committed to a life of change and personal betterment. I hope and pray that everyone who picks up this book walks away with a minimum of two to three things that he or she can use immediately. And if readers can share what they've learned with other people, we can set off an avalanche of life change. That would be awesome, as well as yet another example of dreaming big.

Summary

"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

1 Corinthians 15:10

We Were "Touched By Fire"

ne day a child found a cocoon in her backyard. As she studied it, she noticed that a butterfly was trying to come out. Clearly the delicate creature was struggling. The girl thought she should help, so she gently peeled away bits of the cocoon to make it easier for the butterfly to emerge. When the creature soon after did come out, it seemed disoriented. The butterfly fluttered about but was unable to fly, and died in a matter of minutes.

The girl was brokenhearted and didn't understand. She sought to discover what had gone wrong. With the help of a kind teacher, she learned that the painstaking struggle of the butterfly to wrest itself from the cocoon was necessary for the creature to develop the strength to stretch its wings and fly. To bypass this struggle would mean the butterfly

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would never be able to survive and thrive, would never be able to do for the world all the beautiful things butterflies do.

In a similar way, the struggle is key when we seek to make positive changes in our lives. If it were easy to change, perhaps we wouldn't place such a high value on it. In any event, the struggle lets us know we are getting closer to realizing our goals. In struggling, we know that we are alive.

The idea of rebirth after struggle is shared across the globe and across cultures. Mythology brings us the story of the Phoenix, a great bird that consumes itself in fire every 500 years, only to rise to new life from its own ashes. It is hardwired into the human psyche that struggle is essential for change and rebirth. And reborn is precisely what we are when we make positive changes in our lives. We become new people. First, however, we must struggle.

There's no way around it: Change is difficult. Changing who you are by changing the way you think will require struggle. It will take time to overcome years of habit and ingrained ways of thinking and viewing the world. It will take confidence, faith and ego strength to persevere when others try to crush our dreams. But just like the butterfly emerging from its cocoon, your struggle will bring beauty to you and to the world.

It happens in nature, and it happens in societies. The United States was convulsed by Civil War as North and South battled over issues ranging from racial justice to state sovereignty. The struggle was ugly, brutal, and deadly. But the nation that emerged from the struggle was better and stronger than the one that began the war, not perfect by any means but closer to the ideals conveyed by the words “We the people....” For the men who lived the war and survived

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it, the experience of struggle likewise changed them. Oliver Wendell Holmes, the future Supreme Court justice who was wounded several times by gunfire, said, "We have shared the incommunicable experience of war. We have felt, we still feel, the passion of life to its top....In our youths, our hearts were touched by fire."

Our hearts were touched by fire. For Holmes and his fellow soldiers, the Civil War was a time of great passion. As we embark on our journey of change, our hearts, too, must be touched by fire. Our passion will give us the strength to see the journey through. Let's face it. It's not exactly fun to struggle. It's hard work. It can be painful. It's almost always exhausting. That's why it is so essential to fully understand why it is you want to change and succeed. Unless your why is big enough to fuel your passion, it is unlikely you'll have the fortitude and stamina necessary for positive change. As Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm."

We've spent a great deal of time here discussing the difficulty of change. Just because it is difficult, however, doesn't mean it is impossible. Indeed, true-life success -- winning big -- is within the grasp of everyone. We all were placed on Earth to do great things. Achieving great things begins with big dreams. True, we may stumble along the way. As Ilka Chase observed, "The only people who never fail are those who never try." Through persistence and hard work, we can, and will, prevail. We can, and will, achieve the life of our dreams.

President John F. Kennedy one day met with esteemed scientist Werner Von Braun to discuss the feasibility of sending men to the moon. The president asked Von Braun what it would take to accomplish the feat within the next 10 years. Von Braun could have listed all the scientific breakthroughs

We Were “Touched By Fire”

that would have to take place, but he didn't. He could have laid out a budget detailing the enormous amount of money that would have to be invested in the space program, but he didn't. Instead, Von Braun gave Kennedy a much simpler, and much truer, answer. All it would take, he said, was “the will to do it.” How right he was.

You are now just that close to changing your life in ways you can't even begin to imagine. All it takes is the will to do it.

Once you embark on this journey, of course, you'll find that it is never ending. As legendary golfer Arnold Palmer put it, “The road to success is always under construction.” You'll find that one successful dream begets another.

This is one fact of being human: We'll never be perfect. But that just means we can spend a lifetime dreaming big, and winning big.

About The Author



Utilizing lessons and skills he learned on the streets, Bobby Minor catapulted himself to success in corporate America. From a first job reading meters for a utility company, Bobby went on to achieve phenomenal success in sales. Driven by his dreams, Bobby wowed Fortune 500 companies with his hustle and can-do spirit, earning top salesman status. Along the way, he also helped large companies enter profitable new ventures by identifying new niche markets and developing successful plans to exploit them. The experience ignited an entrepreneurial fire within him, and Bobby eventually went on to found several highly successful specialty publications even though he had no previous experience in publishing. Today, Bobby is helping others achieve their dreams through a full-time consulting and public speaking business. Using his proven methods of success, Bobby is helping thousands of people achieve the life of their dreams by showing them that if they dream big, they can win big. Bobby is a life-long resident of Fort Worth and is happily married with three kids.

Mental Mapquest® Outline

I believe in keeping things simple and making them as easy to understand as possible, and this outline will be no different. Creating your own Mental Mapquest consists of only a few key steps. Everything else will come from putting your roadmap into action.

To begin, find a small notebook or journal. This will become your Mental Mapquest and does not have to be fancy. I personally like something small enough for me to take most places without getting in the way. In this notebook you will document everything about your journey. You need to do this no matter how big or small the task. Do not take short cuts, or your journey itself may get cut short. Remember the pig from chapter three and make the commitment.

The next step is to honestly assess where you are right now. Think about where you are and why you want to change. Be 100 percent honest. Lying to yourself will only throw up roadblocks to success. Write your assessment in your journal.

Once you've figured out where you are, you need to figure out where you want to be. As in the previous step, it is important that you be specific, and write it in your notebook. For example, in your assessment of where you are, you might write something along the lines of, "I am the 20th ranked salesperson out of 30 and I'm making \$50,000

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a year.” In assessing where you want to be, you might write, “I will become one of the top three salespersons in my company and earn \$100,000 this year.” Note that in our example, we wrote “will become,” not “want to be.” Note also that we indicated a specific salary goal for the year. Don’t say, “I want to earn six figures a year.” Instead say, “I will make \$120,000 this year.” See the difference? It’s huge. Write it in your journal.

Now it’s time to answer the question, “How long will it take me to get there?” Be realistic. If I know it should take me three hours to drive from Fort Worth to Austin, then I can’t believe I’ll get there in 45 minutes. Not without hopping on a plane or zooming down I-35 at 200 miles per hour. If my goal is to go from being a middle-of-the-pack salesperson to one of the best, how long will it take me? It all depends on me. For sake of argument, let’s say six months. For me, that would be realistic. It could happen sooner, but we are trying to be realistic. What if I were to say 12 months? Certainly, that would be realistic. But because we know it should happen much sooner, we would be doing ourselves a disservice by stretching out our timeline. I wouldn’t tell someone it’s going to take me 12 hours to get to Austin. Which all goes to the point that, part of being realistic is also being willing to push ourselves. This is more about stepping out of our comfort zones and doing something different with our lives. More half-hearted effort will get us more half-hearted results. Once you’ve determined a realistic time frame, one that is attainable but that also encourages you to move outside your comfort zone, write it in your journal.

Finally, you need to develop three sets of three action steps each. These will become the directions for your trip. Because change is not easy, we’re going to break the journey down into smaller, more attainable steps. In this step, you will

Mental Mapquest® Outline

develop three daily action steps, three weekly action steps, and three monthly action steps. In each group, one step should be fairly easy to accomplish, another harder, and one should challenge you. We develop a relatively easy goal to ensure we are making progress everyday, every week and every month. It is psychologically critical to know we are getting closer to our destination and to experience what it's like to take steps to get closer to reaching our goals. Likewise, the reason for having a goal that challenges us is to get us to push ourselves and move outside that comfort zone I keep harping on. The step that will help us the most, however, is in the middle. It's not too easy and it's not too hard, and ultimately will help us develop the most.

Why have daily, weekly and monthly steps? If we focus exclusively on our final destination, it can seem impossible to get from where we are to where we want to be. However, if we do something everyday, every week and every month to help get us there, we have constant hope of arriving at our destination. Once you've developed your steps, write them in your journal.

You'll still have plenty of blank pages in your journal at this point, but don't worry. You'll need the space to chart your daily progress. It is essential that you write down accomplishments everyday. Focus only on what you have done, not what you haven't, because we want to build on a positive experience.

Let's take a look at an example. Assume I want to go from being a mediocre salesperson to a superstar salesperson. My Mental Mapquest would start with a self-assessment stating, "I am the number 15 of 25 salespersons in my office and earn \$48,000 a year." Looking at where I want to end up, my journal entry might be, "I will be in the top 5 in my office and earn \$75,000 a year. Examining how long it will take to

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achieve my goal, I might write, “I will be in the top 5 and on pace to make \$75,000 for the year by June 1.” Assume that today is January 1. I’ve given myself six months to get there. I can do that. Notice that I’ve selected a specific date six months out. It’s six months either way, but the specificity matters.

As for the three sets of three action steps, I might write down a plan as follows: Daily I will make a commitment to myself to do the following: Get up 20 minutes earlier everyday and get into a winning mindset by thinking positive thoughts about the upcoming day; I will call on five more customers than I usually do; and I will read something for at least 30 minutes everyday that will help me grow as a person. The first goal is pretty easy, the second a bit harder. The third sounds easy, but may be the most challenging. Why? Because life happens, and after I get home from work there will no doubt be other things that demand attention. The reading, however, is important, and must be done.

Weekly steps may be something like closing two additional deals, eating lunch with someone in my office who can help me get better as a salesperson, and uncovering 10 new prospects. Monthly steps or goals could include being in the top 10 in sales in my office, making the most cold calls on my team, and setting up the most appointments.

These are merely examples, of course. If this were a real Mental Mapquest, I would spend a lot more time in creating action steps and setting goals. The main thing to remember is that what you do daily is not only the easiest to do, it ultimately will be what gets you where you want to be. Your daily activity should help you reach your weekly goals, and your weekly goals should help you reach your monthly goals. At the end, all of the steps should lead you to your final destination -- success!

Mental Mapquest® Outline

Because I made a promise to myself to help as many people as I can experience positive change in their lives, and as a bonus to you for purchasing this book, I will give you a free, 30-minute consultation to help you get your Mental Mapquest started. Just e-mail me at bobby@bobbyminor.com and put Mental Mapquest in the subject line. I'll then e-mail you back and set up a time for us to speak by phone. Good luck in your journey.

My Favorite Quotes

In addition to the quotes I used throughout the book, these are some of my other favorite quotes. To me a good quote is a golden nugget of information, a shot of inspiration. I hope you get as much from these as I have. In my opinion, the Bible is the ultimate book of quotes. Here are just a few of my favorites:

"Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding. Acknowledge Him in all you do and He will make your paths straight."

Proverbs 3: 5-6

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

2 Corinthians 5:17

"I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move."

Matthew 17:20

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails."

1 Corinthians 13:4

My Favorite Quotes

"We would accomplish many more things if we did not think of them as impossible."

Vince Lombardi

"Man, alone, has the power to transform his thoughts into physical reality; man, alone, can dream and make his dreams come true."

Napoleon Hill

"Turn your wounds into wisdom."

Oprah Winfrey

"Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power."

Abraham Lincoln

"There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure."

Colin Powell

"Failure doesn't mean you are a failure it just means you haven't succeeded yet."

Robert H. Schuller

"I get to play golf for a living. What more can you ask for - getting paid for doing what you love."

Tiger Woods

"One secret of success in life is for a man to be ready for his opportunity when it comes."

Benjamin Disraeli

"The way I see it, if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain."

Dolly Parton

Dream Big, Win Big!

"Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome."

Booker T. Washington

"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal.'"

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

"Don't measure yourself by what you have accomplished, but by what you should have accomplished with your ability."

John Wooden

"The best index to a person's character is how he treats people who can't do him any good, and how he treats people who can't fight back."

Abigail Van Buren

"The best vitamin for making friends is B-1."

Unknown

"Optimism and humor are the grease and glue of life. Without both of them we would never have survived our captivity."

Philip Butler, Vietnam POW

"When written in Chinese, the word 'crisis' is composed of two characters. One represents danger, and the other represents opportunity."

John Fitzgerald Kennedy

"I want to put a ding in the universe."

Steve Job

My Favorite Quotes

And last but not least, one of my all-time favorite ads:

Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They're not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can praise them, disagree with them, quote them, disbelieve them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them. Because they change things. They invent. They imagine. They heal. They explore. They create. They inspire. They push the human race forward. Maybe they have to be crazy. How else can you stare at an empty canvas and see a work of art? Or sit in silence and hear a song that's never been written? Or gaze at a red planet and see a laboratory on wheels? We make tools for these kinds of people. While some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.

Apple Computer Advertisement

Request Bobby



Bobby is a wonderful communicator and a master motivator. What he teaches and speaks on comes from his heart based on his experience, not some classroom theory. Whether speaking to a group of troubled teens about overcoming adversity or to major corporations about leadership and making things happen, one thing is for certain, you will love Bobby's entertaining and humorous style. Bobby likes to "keep it real" so expect nothing less from him. Bobby's most requested topics are: Leadership, Taking Action and Making Things Happen, Youth Enrichment, Overcoming Adversity, Sales and Motivation. To schedule Bobby at your next event or training, please email bobby@bobbyminor.com or visit www.BobbyMinor.com.

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