

Organize Chaos ⚡ Prioritize Focus ⚡ Get Stuff Done

CONQUER — THE ENTREPRENEUR'S — KRYPTONITE

Simple Strategic Planning for You and Your Business

James Woosley

Foreward by Chuck Bowen

A message from the author:

WARNING!

Just reading this book won't help you or your business. You have to do something with it!

If you purchased this book:

Thank you! I'm honored by your belief that my book can help you. However, the warning above still applies. Putting a book on your shelf doesn't impart its wisdom directly into your mind. Read it. Apply it. Prosper.

If this book was a gift:

I hope you thank the person who gave it to you. What's the best way to thank them? Read it and let them know what you learned from it. Then show them what you've done with it. Sadly the overwhelming majority of free books never get read. I hope this one does, and I hope you pass it along for others to enjoy.

SOARING PRAISE FOR *CONQUER THE ENTREPRENEUR'S KRYPTONITE*

"It's rare to come across a book that addresses planning and strategy that is so engaging and helpful. James reminds us how to make sure our goal is truly our own, identify fake obstacles, take action, and see our greatest potential released. With this book you can move from planning to seeing the results you've been dreaming of come into view."

– **Dan Miller**

*Author of the New York Times bestselling
48 Days to the Work You Love*

"A really great, well-grounded, easy-to-understand, practical and powerful guide to the basics of strategic planning. If you've never done comprehensive planning work, *Conquer the Entrepreneur's Kryptonite* is a solid place to start. If you've done it for years, I'm confident you'll come out of the book with a number of helpful tips and insights anyway!"

– **Ari Weinzwieg**

*Co-Owner and Founding Partner of
Zingerman's Delicatessen and Author
of A Lapsed Anarchist's Approach to
Building a Great Business*

"Personal accountability is about owning our results. Entrepreneurs require a plan to achieve those results. James Woosley shows us how to create that plan using a simple, flexible strategy that drives purposeful, responsible action."

– **John G. Miller**

*Author of QBQ!, Outstanding,
Flipping the Switch, and
Parenting the QBQ Way*

"If we hadn't started strategizing about Saddleback Leather, a lot more cows would have died in vain. James is a planning stud and this book will definitely get you thinking about your business in ways you never have before."

– **Dave Munson**

El Presidente

Saddleback Leather Co.

"As a lifelong advocate, proponent, guide, and participant in self-employment, I can attest to lack of planning being an Achilles heel of monumental proportions. James has created something new; a planning strategy we can actually digest and implement. Yes, even for those of us who are planning averse and suffering from it. Thank you James. Thanks for living it in your own life, and allowing us to benefit. You're the needed and wise 'safety' for my trigger-happy self."

– **Kevin Miller**

Founder, FreeAgentAcademy.com

"It's difficult to put *Conquer the Entrepreneur's Kryptonite* down without making something happen. This book is a must-read for anyone who hates the planning process but knows they need one."

– **Justin Lukasavige**

CoachRadio.tv

"Dreams and ideas and businesses don't just happen. They take a lot of hard work. That work is much easier with a plan. But many plans only make things more difficult. The Simple Strategic Plan outlined by James will equip you to make things happen, whatever your endeavor."

– **Jonathan Pool**

Strategist & Catalyst for Change

JonathanPool.net

"This isn't a book you read once. It's a guidebook you'll read and reread as you build plans to leave your mark on the world."

– **Alan Jackson**

PowerOfWHY.com

"If you want to be a successful entrepreneur, you have to be intentional and purposeful. *Conquer the Entrepreneur's Kryptonite* offers the plan and strategy to help you show up and shine."

– **Kent Julian**

Author and Speaker

KentJulian.com

"James has a unique ability to make difficult and boring topics (like planning and strategy) engaging, interesting, and easier to understand. More importantly, he helps you put it into practice quickly so you can take action in your business."

– **Deb Ingino**

Strength Leader / Coach / Mentor

StrengthLeader.com

"Wow, James' book is written with wisdom that makes sense for 95.43% of business owners. His real world simple models get the results you need without the complexity most plans seem to drown in. The first three chapters alone are worth it if you easily suffer from over-planning OR hate to plan."

– **Christopher Browning**

Marketing and Business Coach

BusinessSuperPowers.com

"James is the planner—the detail man that pushes everyone to new levels in mapping out their business, their message, and most of all their life."

– **Jonathan Tollefson**

PARXbyJonT.com

"The Simple Strategic Plan is a clearly-defined path that I can follow. It helped me to identify the steps needed to accomplish my goals with enough detail that I could actually 'see' my plan through to fruition."

– **Melodie Kenniebrew**

MochiInTheDesert.com

"When I thought about strategic planning I was thinking bullet points, deadlines, and sterile, bleached lingo. James uses a creative approach to provide a framework to document our plans and move quickly to actionable steps. If you are looking for a way to organize the launch of your business or just get new projects on track, look no further!"

– **John DiMare**

AwesomelImpact.com

"It is without reservation that I can say that the Simple Strategic Plan (SSP) was the key process that transformed my life. I was able to create a step-by-step plan to take me from having an idea to being a successful entrepreneur. The SSP moved me from being overwhelmed by distant, lofty goals to feeling excited and confident. I have successfully achieved my goal of self-employment!"

– **Robert Coburn**

Founder, Total Fusion Ministries

TotalFusionMinistries.org

"James is amazing in helping people understand how to create a plan. Using the Simple Strategic Plan helped my vision for my business truly take shape."

– **Wendy Staas**

NaturalBirthEvangelist.com

EmpoweredMothers.net

"The Simple Strategic Plan helps you break down a seemingly huge task into smaller, manageable bites. James' method also helps to organize your purpose and vision so you can focus on what's most important."

– **Cindy Thomas**

CindysVirtualServices.com

CONQUER **THE ENTREPRENEUR'S** **KRYPTONITE**

Simple Strategic Planning for You and Your Business

JAMES WOOSLEY

FOREWORD BY CHUCK BOWEN

Organize Chaos | Prioritize Focus | Get Stuff Done

FREE AGENT PRESS

*Conquer the Entrepreneur's Kryptonite:
Simple Strategic Planning for You and Your Business*

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To my grandmother, Marjorie Greer:

Because of you my dreams are bigger.

Thank you for always believing in me.

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FOREWORD

There are a plethora of great books (in an equally abundant number of formats) on the subject of starting up, building, and growing businesses. My recent Amazon search on the topic of “business” yielded almost 6,000,000 search results; a “business planning” exploration gave me almost 91,000 results. “Simple business planning” coughed up just a tad over 500 responses; “simple strategic planning” gave me 275, less than 0.005% of all business-related media on Amazon.

Could it be that strategic planning ain’t that simple?

From my experiences coaching hundreds of small business owners over more than a decade, that’s what the vast majority (okay, all of them) would testify. Far too many entrepreneurial dreams have crashed and burned for lack of a solid, thoughtful action plan birthed from a mission and vision important enough to inspire confident steps forward.

Stephen Covey helps us get things done through balance (*First Things First*), John Maxwell guides us to be principled and influence others (*Becoming a Person of Influence*), Jim Collins shows us how to make the leap to greatness (*Good to Great*), Seth Godin implores us to lead (*Tribes*), while Tom Peters’ *In Search of Excellence* (one of the most important business books of our time) reveals principles that made America’s best-run companies the successes they are. These are absolutely must-reads, without question. However, who’s going to show the small business owner the “how” (to plan and execute) behind the “why”?

A plan, a plan, my business for a plan...that I can work confidently! If you can make your business work on paper, you can likely make it reality. If it won’t work on paper, what you have is a pipe dream. A “good planner” is one who creates a thoughtful plan. A great planner (with the bank account to prove it) not only creates his thoughtful plan ... he ACTS on it.

In *Conquering the Entrepreneur’s Kryptonite*, James outlines his SSP (Simple Strategic Plan) method for getting the right things done. “You don’t need a business plan. You need a plan for your

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business.” He begins with helping you learn why your mission must drive your actions.

Passion (from the Latin *pati*) means “to suffer.” So, in more modern thinking, I define as passion “to care so much about something that you’re willing to suffer with near infinite energy to achieve it.” There have been very few who’ve been so passionate about planning that they’re willing to suffer through, including myself. James is going to reveal to you how to simplify your planning, pump up your confidence, embolden your actions...while conserving your passion for *the* thing that truly matters—your business!

Good plans help us take responsibility for our results on paper before we have to do that in real life. So, in one perspective, plans help us live out our dream on paper *before* having to take the ultimate risk—doing it. A good plan ensures your mission is viable, not a slam dunk. It’s good enough to pursue with everything you’ve got *and* make adjustments as you learn that things aren’t going exactly like you thought they would.

“The concept of creating something alone and revealing it to the world is a lie.” (*Conquering the Entrepreneur’s Kryptonite, Chapter 1*). Influence for good, and seek to be positively and powerfully influenced by others. James will come alongside you to break it down into simple steps, and then put it all together to give you the confidence your business deserves...*and you dream of.*

Chuck Bowen,
Business Coach and Serial Entrepreneur

INTRODUCTION

This is a book for people with ideas. If you have lots of ideas (or just one really good idea), this is the book that can help you bring them to life. But you have to move beyond ideas and dreams...it's going to take a plan.

Do you make plans that never get implemented? Are they so complicated they fail because you simply can't make them happen?

Or do you resist planning because you just want to get things done, but end up failing and reworking things more than accomplishing your goals?

Let's find the happy middle ground, the sweet spot that combines planning and action!

What is it that you want to achieve? Whatever it is, it's not going to be easy. Not if it's something BIG worth doing right.

The goal is for this book to make it easier, and in doing so, make it look like it was easy to anyone who didn't see the blood and sweat you poured into your idea.

While it is written and addressed to the individual who wants to start a business venture or is already running a business, it can be used in a variety of ways.

It can be used by small teams to chart a course that uses everyone's input in order to get all the players on the same page (though it may require an external facilitator, even if there isn't already internal conflict).

It can be used by an individual who wants to organize and take control of their life. It's an excellent tool for anyone who has recently been through a LifePlan or other personal coaching process to capture decisions and structure follow-up actions.

It could be used by a family to structure their collective dreams and goals, and to help them support each other as they pursue them.

It could be used by an individual to structure their efforts for a job search, including doing a real evaluation of what kind of job you want instead of blindly sending out a thousand resumes.

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It could be used by an organizational leadership team to manage significant change initiatives. [However, for most organizations or churches I would recommend a more intense and comprehensive facilitated process known as StratOp¹. You can learn about StratOp at WoosleyCoaching.com/stratop.]

Basically, it's for almost anyone that needs a plan more comprehensive than what fits on a napkin, but less complicated than a binder overflowing with pages of details.

What is the Entrepreneur's Kryptonite?

I will admit at the beginning of this book that I am not the world's biggest Superman fan—I don't dress up in tights or go to conventions. But I am a fan.

I grew up watching Superman movies and Justice League cartoons. But I didn't read the comic books and missed out on a very important part of the Superman story.

Kryptonite—the shattered fragments of his home planet, Krypton—isn't always green.

In its first appearance, Kryptonite was red. And through the years there have been many kinds of Kryptonite, with each version affecting the Man of Steel differently.

Somehow this otherwise invincible superhero has a weakness caused by a rock. It's kind of silly, but at the same time, it makes it easier to relate to him. He isn't a god. He's a man with special powers.

I have special powers. Seth Godin helped me discover that in his book, *Linchpin* (a must-read).

You have special powers, too! Even if we don't always know *what* they are, there are superpowers inside each of us. But those

¹ The Strategic Operations Plan (StratOp) process was developed by visionary business guru, Tom Paterson. The Paterson Center continues his legacy by training and equipping a growing community of facilitators of the Paterson Processes (LifePlan and StratOp) who guide individuals and organizations to discover and realize their missions and visions in life (PatersonCenter.com). I am a certified StratOp Facilitator.

powers must be discovered and exercised. They must be developed into true strengths we can use.

With great power comes great responsibility...and fatal flaws. Kryptonite. And just like in the lore of Superman, it comes in many colors.

For the entrepreneur—anyone with dreams and ideas they wish to share with the world—there are many kinds of Kryptonite. There are procrastination, pride, stubbornness, and many more. But there is one that arches over all of these Kryptonites. The big green Kryptonite for entrepreneurs is improper planning. Planning too little or too much opens the door to failure, allowing a flood of other types of Kryptonite into our lives. They choke our dreams and ideas. They keep us from using our superpowers to benefit mankind.

Kryptonite is real and cannot be banished from existence. But there is a solution. It can be controlled. It can be placed in a lead box so that its impacts are minimized.

This book will help you find the sweet spot between planning too little and planning too much. And when you can do that, you'll realize your super powers and change the world!

My Story

Planning has always come easy for me. It's the execution and follow-through that prevented me from reaching my potential.

My mind is very logical and analytical. I'm a natural planner and creative problem-solver. Bring me a challenge and before you've finished describing it I'll already have several ideas in mind (and several that came to mind but I've already realized three steps ahead that they won't work!).

So how did I get to this point, writing a book on strategic planning?

It started from a very dark place in 2008. I was working for a consulting company on a very difficult project. The work environment wasn't very rewarding, and I had been passed over for promised promotions twice in two years. But in that dark

place I was able to see the small spark that changed everything.

I had been teaching Dave Ramsey's *Financial Peace University* for several years, and through his radio program heard about Dan Miller's book, *48 Days to the Work You Love*. I didn't love my work at that moment, so I read the book. The Ramsey/Miller one-two punch was enough for me to realize that I didn't want to work 80 hours a week to become a partner in the company and make \$300,000 a year. If I was going to work that hard, I was going to own the company! Owning my life was more important than the money.

Because of Dave's influence, I had started doing financial coaching, helping people pay off debt and build a financial plan of attack. Dave's Baby Step strategy clicked in my mind and I could translate the process to other people (even if I wasn't doing it fully myself).

At the same time, Dan was launching his own FPU-style course, so I drove to Nashville to get certified. I was nervous because even though I travelled 50 weeks a year for work, I rarely took a trip for myself. I'm cheap and rarely invested any money in myself. So I was uncomfortable and worried that this was just another boondoggle on my part or a scam on his part. Gladly, it wasn't anything like my worries!

Dan and his family treated me like family from the very beginning. I felt welcome and I was instantly more comfortable. Many of the people I met at Dan's home are still my friends today. They encouraged me and inspired me to join an online community that would eventually become the Free Agent Academy (founded by Dan's son Kevin Miller and Chuck Bowen). That was March 2009, just over four years ago at the time of this writing.

I started attending Free Agent Academy events in Tennessee and Colorado. I was so active in the online community and engaged at the live events that people thought I was an extrovert (I'm definitely not!). The passion for my future had been lit, but I still had no real direction. I was doing a lot of self-discovery exercises and evaluations, but I wasn't getting any traction.

That was a time of significant personal development, yet little growth. It was as if the seeds inside of me were planted and growing roots, but no sprout had appeared from the earth.

I have many people to thank for “feeding and watering” me throughout that time, but there are three key stories that I need to share about Chuck Bowen to help you understand my personal transformation:

1) The First Meeting:

I met Chuck at the first FAA event in June of 2009. Chuck is an incredible coach and has a reputation for diving deep into a person’s mind and soul and making water pour from their eyes! He didn’t make me cry at that first event, but he sensed the wall I was putting up and taught me how I was dismissing my own greatness.

When people would offer me a compliment, I would dismiss it by saying it was “no big deal.” Not only was I missing out on the benefit of a sincere act of appreciation internally, I was throwing it back in their face. My attempt at humility was in fact self-destructive and hindering my ability to develop deeper relationships.

Through a little role playing, Chuck taught me how to accept a compliment and that doing so is a gift to the giver. Deflecting a compliment is rude; it’s the same as throwing their gift in the trash as they look on, making them feel bad. It’s best to sincerely accept the compliment and say how great it is to be appreciated.

It also pointed to some real self-esteem issues. I felt very egotistical on the inside, but I was dismissive of any and all earned honors and appreciation. I put down my greatest work, believing it to be inferior to what others could do, simply because it was easy for me (sometimes our greatest strengths are like that).

2) The 2x4 Incident:

A few months later, I flew to Colorado to attend another FAA

event. This was the one where Chuck hit me between the eyes with a 2x4.

Okay, that's not what literally happened, but it sure felt like it on the inside!

After months of interaction in FAA, I was well-known amongst the leaders and the hundred or so members. They respected what I had to say when I offered my opinion or advice on their questions. Meanwhile, I was worried that I came across as a "know-it-all," especially at events when I seemed to have to hold back comments when others were telling their stories or trying to solve a problem.

Just before dinner one night, after I was sharing a bit of my story, Chuck looked at me and said, "James, you are the biggest underachiever in the room."

That sentence burned all the oxygen from my lungs. My heart stopped beating and there was no blood moving to my brain anymore. How could he say that? I was hurt and trying to understand what he meant.

Five minutes later we were in line for dinner. I was talking with him and said something like, "I don't know if I'm an underachiever. Sure, maybe I'm not meeting my potential, but..."

And he said, "What's the difference?"

At that moment it clicked. He wasn't putting me down. He was lifting me up. He was believing in me, just as everyone else in the room was believing in me. I had a gift I was using, but I didn't see it.

It was as if Superman was flying all over the place saying, "What? It's no big deal."

Dude, you're in tights and flying all over the place. It's a big freaking deal!

While it took a lot of time to process what I learned that night, it was the point at which I really did start to believe in myself.

3) A Strategic Realization:

In February of 2010, Dan Miller hosted his first annual 48 Days cruise. I was in full learning and buying mode now, so I jumped at the chance to spend more time with him and Chuck, as well as fellow coaches Justin Lukasavage and Kent Julian.

It was my first cruise and I went without my family, so there was a lot of quiet time to reflect. I'm not a morning person, but I was awake at dawn each day, energized to get going and growing.

I think it was the fourth day of the five-day journey when Chuck struck a chord with me again. He was teaching a session on strengths based on the research of Markus Buckingham and Donald O. Clifton in *Now, Discover Your Strengths*, which was later refined by Tom Rath in *StrengthsFinder 2.0*.

I had already taken the StrengthsFinder exam and my top five were Futurist, Achiever, Relator, Strategic and Ideation. These concepts rang true, though I always wondered if Strategic was correct.

My background in the military meant I had a pretty solid connotation of the word strategy. It summoned up mental images of binders full of war plans covering every possible contingency. I just didn't see that in myself.

Yet there in Chuck's presentation was a chart I'd never seen (or hadn't noticed) before. It categorized the 34 Strengths into one of four domains. As I captured the chart's contents into my notes, I saw that three of my Strengths fell into the Strategic Thinking domain.

I was confused. I didn't see myself as a strategic thinker. But I didn't have a good definition of strategy, either. My mind was muddled with thoughts of military war plans and not open to much else.

As I talked with Chuck about it after the presentation, I realized that I am in fact a very strategic thinker. I could see threads reaching back in my life that served as further

evidence of this truth.

Why did I like Dave Ramsey's Baby Steps? It outlined a simple strategic process to get out of debt and build wealth.

Why did I like Dan Miller's 48 Days process? It outlined a simple strategic method to finding work that you love.

Why did I overanalyze every situation I found myself in, paralyzed to move forward until I sorted through all the possible scenarios in my mind? Strategic thinking was working against me in those situations! Action is key and I was searching for mine while eighteen keys jingled in my pocket. I just needed to pick one and see if it worked.

It was later that night when Chuck and I met again after dinner to discuss joining the Free Agent Academy faculty as the Roadmap Professor. Now I had an expertise I could share, and a platform from which to do it.

And that's where not only this book began to take shape, but the rest of my life along with it.

I hope this book hits you in the same way Chuck's 2x4 hit me, and allows you to expand your potential and accomplish more than you currently believe is possible.

No Big Deal

Your success will often appear to be "no big deal" to those who meet you only after you find success. They will not see the before, during and after, only the after. They will think you had it easy...a natural talent or a benefactor clearing your path.

Some will know you before and after, but will not know the struggles and efforts you went through to find success. They will be jealous, but some may still be inspired—believing that they may be able to find success if you did.

Only those who walk with you or have walked the path before you will appreciate the work you have done. They will know it wasn't easy. They will know the pain and the struggle, the doubt and the fear. They will understand how many times you almost gave up, and they will know the perseverance it took for you to

keep going.

It only looks easy to the outsider. So if you want this thing called success, get ready to work hard. It won't be easy and it isn't guaranteed. But if you dream big and give it your all, it will be worth it.

The Big Deal

Because of its routine nature and his constant practice, a doctor may dismiss his efforts during surgery as no big deal. A patient may do the same, saying he had no other choice but to do what was required, yet it took significant effort not to simply accept his fate but to do something about it. Following through is not as easy as it sounds.

It is at this point that many of us talk ourselves out of our greatness. Don't do that! Give thanks to God for the entirety of what He has given you and then go do great things with it!

It is a BIG DEAL!

The Simple Strategic Plan

The Simple Strategic Plan, or SSP, is a tool developed by Chuck Bowen that he used in his coaching practice.

My first exposure to it was confusing, even though it was just a simple document with nine sections. There was very little formatting and I wasn't quite sure what to do with it. I had a sense that it was something powerful; I just couldn't figure it out.

When I finally heard Chuck do a presentation on it, the lights came on! I saw firsthand how it could be used to funnel high-level, foundational concepts like mission and vision into action steps.

When I became the Roadmap Professor at Free Agent Academy, I reformatted the SSP document to make it more visually appealing. I also added instructions to help others "get it" faster than I did. I started teaching the tool to FAA members, guiding them through it, and reviewing their plans. That effort

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was the starting point for this book (Part 2 of the book walks through the SSP in detail).



The Layers of the SSP Pyramid

Some people took to it more quickly than others. Some abandoned it. But I believe everyone who took the course gained new knowledge and awareness of the importance of planning. The SSP is critical to my planning. And even if it isn’t fully adopted, it will at least create more focus and intentionality for all who make the effort to use it.

Today the SSP is my primary planning tool. Once I got a solid version of it completed, the quarterly review and updates became much easier to do. I now have a quarterly plan that is broken into weekly mini-plans and tasks. I am focused and getting more done than I ever have before—and I’m working on the most important

things first.

This book may take a while to read and digest. It may be a struggle to complete your first SSP and feel confident that it will work. Trust the process. If you stick with it you can have the power and focus to realize your dreams and ideas, and, ultimately, put your potential to work!

How to Read This Book

Planning can be a boring topic, so I worked hard to keep the book flowing and as engaging as possible. Hopefully this is the most exciting book on business planning and strategy you've ever read!

To get the most out of it, I recommend that you read the book from cover to cover (as quickly as you can while still comprehending the concepts). It's a fairly fast read.

Make some notes along the way, but resist the urge to complete each step of your plan in Part 2 until you have an overall perspective of the planning process. This will help you to keep from getting stuck on any single step.

Once you've finished the book, go back through it more slowly, starting at Part 2 to begin planning. Do what you can in each of the nine sections and move to the next one. Go back if new ideas occur. Approach it in a linear fashion, but bounce around to capture all of your thoughts. Move quickly and develop your full plan within two weeks.

Download the Simple Strategic Plan (SSP) template at ConquerYourKryptonite.com (the diagrams in the book are to help comprehension and familiarization...you'll need more space to capture the contents of your plan).

Once your plan is complete, get to work! Use the advice and concepts from Part 3 to guide your efforts. The important thing is to start using a plan to structure your work. You will learn what works and what doesn't as you execute. Read it again as you build your next quarterly plan and continue to use it as a reference for future plans.

Have fun and go do good work!

PART ONE

PREPARING TO PLAN

Before you can build an effective plan, you need to attain proper perspective. Examine exactly what you are trying to do and why. You need to know what motivations are driving you to take on the challenge. If you can't, those motivations won't be there to help you through the difficulties of execution.

In Part One, you'll learn the value of building an effective foundation before you start the planning process, and learn how to drive through either a lack of planning knowledge or previous failures.

Most people are not natural planners. But if you're willing to learn and experiment, you can develop a Simple Strategic Plan that works for you.



Chapter 1

Desire and Paralysis

This chapter outlines the desires people have to start a business, implement an idea or achieve a goal, along with the reasons that so many people look back and see a collection of unexecuted ideas. Their dreams may be dead or dying, all because it seemed too difficult or overwhelming once the need for action (the act of doing) began.

Kryptonite is real and will paralyze you. It will take your powers before you even start if you let it. Don't.

What is Desire?

I believe there's a burning desire buried in the heart of every person. It exists in various forms: ideas, dreams, goals and visions. The motivation may be selfish, altruistic, or somewhere in between.

Desire is the word we give to that thing buried deep within our hearts. You know that thing? It's that persistent longing for something or someone. Nothing can make it go away, and even if we give up on it with our minds, we can still feel the scar of it on our hearts.

There are good desires and bad desires. This isn't a self-help book, so I'm not going to create a manifesto on telling the difference. Just focus on the good desires, the God-given desires, as you work your plans.

**Take delight in the Lord, and He will give
you the desires of your heart.**

– Psalm 37:4 (NIV)

The Struggle of Planning

There are some rare individuals who find planning as easy as breathing. They revel in it. Complex plans seem to come as easily to them as mud pies to a four-year-old. But for the rest of humanity, planning is intimidating and stressful.

Stress manifests itself differently for different people. Some become hyper, some become paralyzed. Many times it's because we aren't clear on what we really want...then we feel the pressure to plan just to get something done, and those plans rarely produce results. They are either planned and re-planned without any execution, or sit unfinished (also without any execution).

But successful plans do not necessarily require complexity. While planning comes more naturally to some than others, it can be learned.

Action Required

Planning can be very similar to prayer. You can lift up your heart to God, sharing your desires...often in great detail. But if you simply sit back and wait for God to make it happen, you're missing the point.

God tends to show up once you're on your way. It is the same with planning. You cannot build a plan and expect it just to happen.

You have to do the work! You have to execute! You have to make it happen!

Planning for a business or idea isn't that different from planning a vacation or where to have dinner. Without some kind of plan in place, you are completely reactionary (shiny object syndrome). Without a plan it's easy to move aimlessly from one task to another.

The key is not to prioritize what's on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities.

– Stephen Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*

Think it's really as simple as time management? You have to do more than manage your time. You must control your *priorities* and what you do with your time.

Some people naturally think long-term, while others only think in the short-term. But if we are only focused on the long-term, we forget to act today. And if we only think about today, we have no vision for a greater tomorrow. You need to find the

middle ground in order to get traction. Better yet, you have to find the place that gets you the results that you desire...that is when you begin to discover your **sweet spot**.

But how do you find it? How do you marry the long-term vision with short-term action? What you need is a planning framework that delivers a funnel to go from the big picture to actionable details. You need a plan that allows you to avoid the paralysis of perfectionism—building a perfect plan that never sees any action.

**All you need is the plan, the road map, and
the courage to press on to your destination.**

– Earl Nightingale

What you need is to get your thoughts out of your head and heart and onto paper, and to act boldly to make things happen. A blank sheet of paper is no good...just as an overwhelming plan is no good.

Not every decision is life and death. As my mentor Chuck Bowen says, “The only life and death decisions are...life and death.”

Don't over think or over plan. Find the balance...prudent risk taking means that we don't know how everything is going to work out, but we know enough to know that we have a good chance (or that it's our only option for success).

Let's explore some of the biggest hurdles in planning:

Never Planned Before – If you've never made a plan, it's a foreign concept and you don't know what it's supposed to look like. Yet most of us have made plans without knowing it.

Little girls dream of their wedding day for years...it's basic planning in some ways, probably closer than what we do when we dream of being successful in business.

Plan enough to have a few things known in advance, and have a big picture, but just enough to get going and not be stuck. It may seem contradictory, but simple and strategic can go together.

Doing It Alone – Most people who want to start a business or pursue a goal try to do it alone. The concept of creating something alone and revealing it to the world is a lie. You need support, input, and feedback to make things work best. You can use focus groups and test markets, but at a minimum find like-minded and like-hearted people who will support you and give you honest feedback.

Beware if you find yourself so head-down that you never come up for air. The world may change and not need it anymore by the time you release it. (Pity the man who perfected videotape after DVD technology became ubiquitous.)

Finding a community is powerful. Finding a partner is powerful. Don't go it alone. Often what we struggle with becomes the foundation of our greatest success. There's power in the network (more on this in Chapter 16).

BE Before You Can DO – Zig Ziglar is famous for many reasons, including his "Be, Do, Have" philosophy. You have to BE the right kind of person (character, beliefs, etc.) and DO the required work to HAVE the things in life that matter most. Be-Do-Have.

Doing the work connects who you are and the results you'll have. Action glues BE and HAVE together to get BEHAVE! Your behavior (character plus action) dictates what you have.

People struggle with goal setting even though it's incredibly important. Doubt sets in because we don't have clarity on what we're supposed to be. What is our purpose? What is our style or strength or passion? It shakes our foundation when we don't know what God or even other

people know about us already.

We want to find a way to escape (maybe a job or financial situation) and we jump into any business opportunity, even if it doesn't fit. The truth is that once we know ourselves, we can find something that fits. Running away can be as bad as the "get rich quick" mentality.

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

– Matthew 7:24-25 (NIV)

Begin with a foundation of knowing yourself and behaving in a manner that fits who you are—this will launch you into action better than anything else.

Along the way, be careful not to ignore what you learn about yourself...accept it and use it. Build the plan using other resources or people you need to balance out your business. Maximize your strengths and compensate for your weaknesses—even Superman had Kryptonite to worry about, and you have more weaknesses than he does.

If you hate details, you probably shouldn't be managing inventory or accounting (though someone has to do it). If you love details, go for it (but don't miss the big picture).

Speaking of foundations, make sure that your foundation is solid. Set it firmly on the key areas needed in the business. If you don't, you may find some success at first, but eventually it

won't stand anymore. It will crumble and instead of disappearing, it'll be a tattered mess and a constant reminder of your failure. (If that's already happened to you, know that you can clear the wreckage and rebuild bigger and better on a solid foundation.)

It's a Journey, Not a Destination – Planning at its best is an ongoing process. No one can plan for every possible contingency. Plans lay out the roadmap to a destination, but a map won't always show that the bridge you see on paper is out in real life. Eventually you'll need to take a detour in order to reach your destination.

Gardens grow fruits and vegetables...and weeds. There's no avoiding it...to be successful, a gardener must remove the weeds. In the same manner, you will need to adjust your plan along the way.

No plan of operations extends with certainty beyond the first encounter with the enemy's main strength. [AKA: No plan survives contact with the enemy.]

– General Helmuth von Moltke,
On Strategy

If you're seeking to do something more than a static accomplishment, then you need to accept the fact that your destination is probably not tangible. It's not a place you arrive at and stop. It's the place you want to go to and never see the finish line. But there is accomplishment along the path. In fact, this attitude will likely see you accomplish more than you could have imagined when you set out. You'll look back and be amazed!

Dreaming

Dreaming is not the same as planning. A plan is the physical manifestation of your intention. The plan is going to give the dream legs. It gives confidence and boldness.

After laying out your plan, if you still want more information and detail before you can move forward, something probably isn't right at your core. You aren't clear on the dream

People with passion have infinite energy to make it happen, regardless of the information they have. They will have ups and downs like anyone else, but they figure it out along the way.

You can either learn to live with your Kryptonite or you can conquer it. Do what others don't and you will have a distinct strategic advantage.

Don't Be Intimidated by the Plan

Building a plan can be overwhelming—even with a template like the Simple Strategic Plan (SSP) that's only a few pages long. But if you know your core, your journey will be easier.

I needed more than a process and a tool when I started. I also needed a guide like Chuck Bowen who could help me wrap my mind around what all the SSP was trying to do. I needed someone to explain the nuances. Honestly, I needed someone I trusted to walk me through it before I could believe that it works.

And it does.

Optimism and Pessimism

How you think matters. How you act matters more.

Whether you see the glass half full or half empty is not the only indicator of your future success. Some people are full of hope

and believe things will always work out for the best. Others see doom and gloom around every corner.

However you see the world, realize that you can be successful if you do the work. Being positive and doing nothing will generate nothing. Being negative and fighting everything that crosses your path can still lead to success.

The truth is that no one is always optimistic or always pessimistic. There are slices of life and in different situations we react differently.

One exercise that helps is to think unrealistically by imagining the best and worst case scenarios.

In a best case, nothing you do can go wrong and everything works out for everyone no matter what. Unrealistic? You bet, but it's good for dreaming and visioning. It gives you something to aim at, and can fuel you to overcome the challenges that arise.

In the worst case, nothing you do matters or makes a difference and everything falls apart. It's also pretty unrealistic, as some things are bound to work out from time to time (even if by accident!). But once you know what rock bottom looks like, it helps you move forward knowing that 1) it isn't likely to be that bad and 2) the worst case is generally survivable!

So aim for realism while being aware of the unrealistic extremes. Do your best to analyze a situation or opportunity or problem and determine the most likely outcomes. Fight through your fears and obstacles and defend against overconfidence.

The Destroyer of Ideas

Remember Medusa, the tragic figure from Greek mythology with snakes for hair? With one look she could turn any living thing to stone.

Too many good ideas die before they even get to battle Medusa. The fear that she may gaze upon them is enough to make someone keep quiet or neglect to fight for their implementation. And while it's true that some ideas and dreams are destroyed in the attempt to give them life, it's also true that some succeed. Let's

figure out how not to look back on our lives and see the frozen statues of failed dreams or, worse...those that were never attempted.

We all have dreams. In order to make dreams come into reality, it takes an awful lot of determination, dedication, self-discipline, and effort.

– Jesse Owens

Why We Fail

Understanding why we fail is the first step in learning how to change our behavior and start succeeding. As we examine the reasons we fail, the reasons we succeed are also evident.

1) Procrastination/Fear of Failure

Inaction is stagnation, and stagnation is degradation. There are times when we can decide *not* to decide, but when executing a plan, “waiting” is rarely a valid strategy if something is a top priority. So if we’re frozen with indecision, we aren’t staying where we are—we’re actually moving away from where we want to go!

Procrastination is the constant delaying of activity (when mixed with the planning process, my friend John DiMare calls it “plancrastination”). It’s finding distractions or pretending that the work or a bad situation will resolve itself. The world doesn’t work like that, so why do we fall into that trap? Break out of it and you can break free to achieve your dreams.

Fearing failure can cause the same kind of paralysis as procrastination. We must act or we will fail. Most people fail every day at all kinds of things. Think of it as trial and error, not failure. Keep trying and keep doing until you find

something that works. At least you'll be busy learning, and not sitting on your butt wishing all day (or cowering in fear and living in regret).

Failure has been correctly identified as the line of least persistence.

– Zig Ziglar, *See You at the Top*

2) Lack of Hope or Self-Confidence

The Bible states that “Hope deferred makes the heart sick.” (Proverbs 13:12). Why would we perform an activity if there wasn't at least a small hope for success? We wouldn't. But with hope, we can storm the beaches of Normandy to fight tyranny. With hope, we can run into a burning building to save a child. With hope, we can do amazing things. So we have to have hope.

But how do we get hope? I think it comes from both logic and emotion. We can logically assess a situation, no matter how complicated, and find a path that has a positive result, even if it rests upon several unlikely factors turning our way. Unlikely is different from impossible. Unlikely implies possible. But logic alone isn't enough to move us. We have to get our hearts in the game. Maybe it's anger. Maybe it's the potential for joy. When we find it, we can act.

Let's Go!

Logic provides the map. Emotion fuels the engine.
Together they take us where we want to go.

Self-confidence is similar in that it's a lack of belief in our ability to do something we want or need to do. We have to find a way to believe. We need to have some success doing something similar first, or we need to gain some new knowledge or experience before we tackle the thing that steals our confidence. Confidence can be grown.

Sometimes we just have to make a leap of faith. We may believe that something won't work, but sometimes, if we try anyway...it does!

3) Don't Know How

We also fail because we don't know how to do something. I have no talent for most mechanical tasks. I've even managed to mess up simple tasks like changing the oil in a car (I pay someone to do it now). But if I wanted to, I could find someone with the knowledge who could teach me (desire to learn is the key). Not knowing how to do something is very different from not having the ability to do something. I can't throw a 100-mph fastball. But I can learn how to throw a strike.

Most of the things that stop us aren't things that we can't do, but the things we refuse to learn. Not knowing is an excuse, and one that can be overcome. So go learn something! (Or, like changing my oil, hire it out and move on to bigger priorities.)

4) Not Written Down

There is a strange power in having something written down. I'm not saying it's mystical, just that when we write something down instead of only thinking about it, it becomes real. Words on paper stare back at you. They challenge you. They encourage you. And you are much more likely to work to make them happen.

One of the most amazing stories about this power comes from my friend Alan Jackson (no, not the country singer). This Alan Jackson is from Paducah, Kentucky. He had attended a

seminar where everyone was encouraged to write down 50 things that they wanted to accomplish in their lives. It wasn't really a bucket list, just a list of 50 things. While doing the assignment, he quickly wrote down 49 items but then got stuck. Someone else in the seminar wrote that he wanted to learn how to fly an airplane, so Alan put that down, too. After all, he needed 50 items, and that sounded as good as anything else.

After the seminar, that list, along with the rest of the conference materials, went into a box. It was hidden away until Alan found it several years later while packing for a move. He dropped the box and out popped the list.

Remembering the assignment inside, he started going through the list to see how well he had done. To his amazement, Alan found that he had accomplished every goal on the list except one...learning how to fly!

Here was a list that he hadn't even looked at, yet every goal was completed except for the one. How is that possible? It's the power of writing them down! (I highly recommend reviewing them from time to time anyway!)

Reduce your plan to writing. The moment you complete this, you will have definitely given concrete form to the intangible desire.

– Napoleon Hill, *Think and Grow Rich*

5) No Personal Ownership

So what happened to Alan's goal of learning to fly? Why did he accomplish every goal on his list except for that one? He certainly had the ability and the resources. (It's not a cheap thing, but taking flying lessons isn't out of reach if you budget for it.)

The reason Alan didn't learn how to fly is because Alan

didn't want to learn how to fly. It wasn't really his goal; it was someone else's. His heart was never set on flying, so writing it down didn't make any difference.

You have to have personal ownership of your goals. If it's a goal worth attaining, and one that will take considerable work, effort and sacrifice, it has to be something you want to do. So own your goals. Pursue the things you want to do. No one climbs a mountain just because it's there...they climb it because they want to climb it. They want to own it.

He who would accomplish little must sacrifice little; he who would achieve much must sacrifice much; he who would attain highly must sacrifice greatly.

– James Allen, *As a Man Thinketh*

6) Not Specific and Measurable

Zig Ziglar says that if you aim at nothing you'll hit it every time. Put another way, how can you know you've arrived at your destination if you didn't know where you were going in the first place?

Losing weight is the classic example. Simply saying you want to lose weight isn't enough. You have to state how much. Ten pounds? Twenty? One hundred? Until you know how much, you can't know how well you're doing. If you lose one pound, you've lost weight...but did you realize the change in your life that you wanted? Probably not.

Document a number AND define the change you desire so you know when you get there. Make your goals specific and measurable. Otherwise they get lost in the fog of improvement.

7) No Deadlines or Accountability

The other side of being specific and measurable is the deadline. Losing ten pounds is a great goal, but if it takes you 30 years, did it really impact your life that much?

Having deadlines helps to hold you accountable. It helps you to say “**yes**” to the things that are hard and move you forward, and “**no**” to the things that are easy (lazy) and move you backward.

Share your goal with others so they can remind you and hold you accountable. Accountability isn’t always fun, but it can be the difference between achievement and failure.

Every day, even your days off, you are either moving towards or away from your dream.

– Catalyst John

Understanding the Journey Ahead

If your dream or goal or wish or idea is big, then your journey will have to be big, too. This isn’t about mapping out a strategy for getting milk and bread from the grocery store five miles from your home. This is more like Frodo carrying a ring of power to Mt. Doom. There will be obstacles. There will be a sense of impending failure. This will not be easy. But if you’re committed to seeing it through, it will be worth it!

One January, I celebrated my birthday at a Free Agent Academy event in Woodland Park, Colorado. My friend Kevin Miller started FAA, and he and his wife Teri got me a little present. It’s a simple ceramic wall hanging that states: “*Success is not a destination, but a journey.*”

It reminds me that although it may be hard, I need to enjoy the everyday moments of the journey and not just the fleeting moment of success to come in the future. That moment will come and go, but the journey and the lives I touch (and am touched by)

along the way are much more important.

Don't Be An Action Figure... Be Action!

Action is the only thing that makes ideas happen. Not dreaming or wishing. Not talking or contemplating. Action!

Generally I'm not a proponent of doing something just to do it. I'm more the natural planning type. But I can also easily fall into the trap of analysis paralysis—the process by which planning overtakes any and all action, leading to the death and destruction of an idea or project. Too much planning will kill ideas, just as not having a plan will.

If you're reading this book, you probably want to start a business, improve a business, implement an idea or achieve a big goal. Noble and just causes, all!

The trick is that our pursuits to achieve lofty goals quickly become bogged down by reality. Sure, it's great to sit back and dream about owning a business, driving a nice car, and experiencing all the perks that come with being the boss. It's fun to think about how your brilliant idea will improve the world or save lives. But at some point you have to move out of the dreaming phase and into the doing. Again, action makes things happen.

**We cannot totally control the future, but we
can accomplish some pretty amazing things
if we plan, focus, and act on them.**

– Deb Ingino

When we get to the work of making it happen, we soon realize what hard work it is. And hard work isn't always fun. Passion will take you a long way, but you're going to need more than passion. You're going to need a plan.

Strategy is Hard

Most people don't like to plan. Planning is hard, and strategy is harder. For most, strategy means knowing every possible move from beginning to end. They think of chess masters staring at the board as they watch their opponents. From memory they utter strangely-named strategies to protect the King and slay the enemy!

The truth is that strategy is nothing more than thinking more than one step ahead at a time. If you can think a few steps ahead, great. That will help you. But one step ahead is the beginning of strategic thinking and strategic planning.

We fall into the trap of believing we have to know every possible path and every possible outcome. The truth is that there are probably an infinite number of outcomes and paths to those outcomes. Don't let that discourage you...let it encourage you! If there are really that many paths, then there's probably more than one that can take you to your destination.

Moving forward means that you instantly begin eliminating possible paths. Looking forward means you are strategic about the paths that lie ahead, and can attempt to pick the best one.

Why Plan in the First Place?

Zig Ziglar once told a story about a man getting braces on his teeth. When asked why he would do such a thing, he replied that it's not about getting braces...it's about the smile.

A plan should not exist for itself... there has to be a result! That result is why you plan in the first place.



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