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WORK LESS
MAKE MORE

The counter-intuitive approach to building a profitable business, and a life you actually love

CHAPTER 2

PLANNING AND GOALSETTING

When you're busy taking care of business, it can easily take you for a ride. You know you're on this ride when you become very reactive—constantly putting out fires and responding to whichever customer or product is screaming loudest for your attention.

This is how most people are when they come to me for help. They're so caught up in the day-to-day *doing* that they've lost sight of where they're *going*.

Why planning is important

When I go surfing, it's tempting to jump on the first wave that comes along. If I do, I may well get a half-decent ride. But if I can wait a few more seconds there will often be a better-shaped wave just behind it. Riding the better wave will be more satisfying, and take me closer to where I want to be as a surfer.

In business, opportunities are like waves. They come along all the time. Always jumping on the opportunity right in front of you will see you spending a lot of valuable time on things that aren't your core business. (This also decimates your EHR.)

Worse, you'll be missing opportunities that can take your business where you want it to go.

This is why planning is important. It allows you to decide what type of opportunities you want so you can recognise them when they arrive. Planning also gives you the space and time you need to give these opportunities your all when they arise.

Clearing your Brain

If your business was about to crash to the ground and you could only execute one idea, what would it be?

I'd recommend starting with whatever's working for you already.

That's easy to say, but harder to do.

Why? Because most entrepreneurial types find it hard to execute 'just one idea'. They have a million in their head at any one time, and keep adding to them by the day. Those ideas create a lot of noise, clog up the brain's processing capacity, and provide an easy avenue for distraction.

Escape from boredom is a serious enemy of focus.

When I was in my late 20s, it felt like my brain was always so full of information I needed to clear it. I found that a pen, some paper and a bit of quiet time at the breakfast table was a great way to purge all that information.

Purging those ideas doesn't mean getting rid of them forever, or saying you'll never pursue them. You're simply getting them out of your head *for now*.

Here's how to do it:

1. Using a whiteboard or a big sheet of paper, write down everything that's on your mind. Don't stop until you can't think of anything else to write.
2. Take a photo of your whiteboard or piece of paper and file it away for safekeeping.
3. See if you can delete or cross out any items that aren't worth worrying about—ever.
4. Score the remaining items according to their impact (i.e. how important or urgent they are to your mission).
5. Circle *the top three items* that must remain in your sphere of focus, and transfer them (in order of importance) to your daily action pad, a Post-it note on your workspace, your refrigerator, or whatever.

You can now safely clean the whiteboard, or tear up/shred/bin that piece of paper. And with your head now freed from all those ideas, you can start thinking about where you want to go.

The three layers of planning

When I'm working with coaching clients to get them on track and moving forward, we work through three layers of planning:

Layer One: Goal Setting

I often see people go to event after event after event. Webinar after webinar after webinar. Course after course after course. And two years later, all they've achieved is having attended those things.

All that attending, consuming and buying means they're burning up so much energy they never implement or execute anything. In fact, they become so overloaded they don't even know where to start.

This is where I find the railway metaphor useful.

Imagine you're at Grand Central Station, and you want to get somewhere.

Maybe that 'somewhere' is starting a new business. Or achieving a significant profit change for your existing business. You may want to build a few days off into your weekly schedule, travel somewhere exciting, or have time to develop a new skill such as cooking.

Whatever it is, close your eyes and really imagine it. Walk around in your future reality. Take in the sights, sounds, smells, tastes and textures. Get intimate with the idea.

Next, make sure you're happy with it.

- Are you happy with the constraints that come with this future reality?
- Are you comfortable with the associated risks?
- Do you know someone else experiencing that kind of reality? What kind of life do they have? Do you want that life?

- Are you prepared to pay the price and do whatever it takes to create this future reality?

Remember, very little ever comes without effort or input. You will need to expend energy to get results.

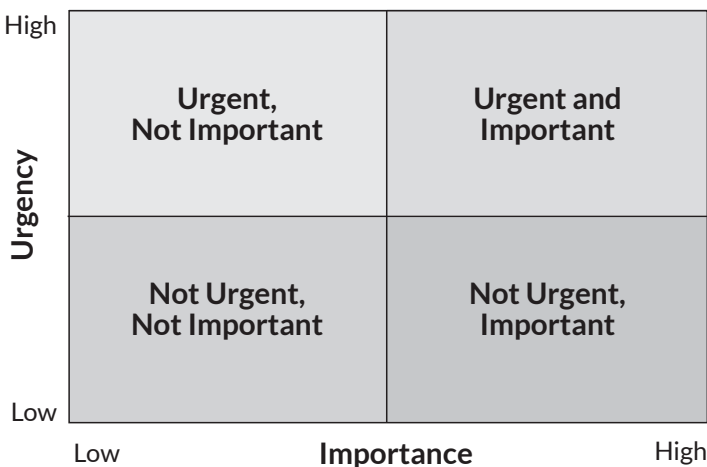
Now that you know where you want to go, and what it might be like, you can lay down tracks along the easiest and most direct path to the next station.

Layer Two: Time blocking, scheduling and checking in

Often, I see people set the goals for their plan and then kind of stop. It's as if they believe they can achieve their goals simply by having them.

Going back to the train and tracks metaphor, knowing where you want to go won't actually get you there. You need to both lay down some tracks and then roll your train along those tracks.

You may be familiar with Eisenhower's Urgent/Important Matrix:



Laying down the tracks to our destination falls in the 'Not Urgent, Important' quadrant—the quadrant people only go to when they 'have time'.

To 'have time' for these activities, we must *make time* for them.

A powerful way to do it is to block out the time in our calendars. We're effectively 'paying' ourselves by reserving the time we need before others have a chance to take it.

Deadlines are also useful for ensuring you get things done. Parkinson's Law states that 'work expands to fill the time available for its completion'. Therefore, having lots of short deadlines to focus on high-impact activities will increase the effectiveness of what you do.

When I set the date for a live event, that's a deadline. I have no choice but to have everything organised for that date. It's the same if you're travelling to another country. The flight is booked for a specific date, and you need to get packed and to the airport with your passport and all the documents you need before the plane takes off.

I do regular training calls in my coaching programs that involve me sharing specific insights. That's a deadline.

When people expect you to show up, you make things happen.

In my highest-level coaching community, I check in with my students once a week on a group call. That weekly tune-up is fantastic because we can really plot what they're doing well, and where they're getting great results. And seeing each other setting goals and deadlines, and getting things done, encourages them all.

Having 40 to 50 check-ins a year is far more effective than having two or three live events where people fly in, spend a day or two talking about their business, then disappear and get sucked back into life.

These frequent check-ins force you to re-visit your progress as you move along the tracks. If you're straying, you can quickly get back 'on track'. And by measuring and plotting your progress you'll know you're taking the most direct route.

So make sure you set a weekly calendar reminder to check your progress.

Layer Three: Major reviews every 12 weeks

The third layer of planning is having a major review point every 12 weeks.

These reviews are like stations you can stop at along the way. They're milestones where you can celebrate your success, and use as motivation to keep you moving forward to your ultimate destination. You can also check whether your original plan still makes sense, and clarify what the next station looks like so you can lay the tracks to get there.

For example, if your final destination is a business that makes \$20,000 a month in recurring income and lets you work no more than 30 hours a week, then your first station may be:

- identifying a market of hungry buyers
- creating or sourcing a product or offer you can sell to them
- building a website page or flyer ready for potential prospects.

It's important to limit the 'distance' between each station to 12 weeks. People often make a plan and then give themselves a year to execute it. When do they do all their execution? Usually in the final month, if not the final weekend. Parkinson's Law in action.

Shortening timelines forces you to be direct, and removes a lot of the 'analysis paralysis' that can stop perfectionist types in their ... well, tracks.

If you want a visual incentive, chart your progress by colouring in a bar graph or using magnets on a whiteboard.

Fun fact: In my first year as a sales professional selling BMWs I'd stick a magnetic Troll Doll on the refrigerator for every car I sold each month. As my skills improved, I had to buy more troll dolls. My system was highly visual and quite fun.

Creating solid systems around planning and goal setting is essential. The systems keep you honest and, most importantly, let you closely track the metrics that are important to you (which for this book is your EHR).

ACTION ITEMS TO INCREASE YOUR EHR

1. Clear your brain. Purge everything from your mind, delete anything that won't have an impact, score the highest impact ones, and transfer the top three. File the rest away somewhere safe. Then forget about them (for now).
2. Figure out your destination: identify your ideal future reality.
3. Lay down the tracks: figure out the steps that will take you to your destination.
4. Create stations along the way at 12-week intervals. These milestones will provide the momentum to keep going.
5. Block out time in your schedule to execute the plan.
6. Set an alert to check your progress weekly.
7. Create a 12-weekly review point.

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