

## Find Your Passion Chase Your Dreams

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## SETTING A STRATEGY FOR YOUR LIFE

Life is all about strategy. How we strategize our lives determines how successful we become. Strategy is a subject generally taught in business schools and associated with managing corporations. Yet our everyday lives are filled with opportunities when applying strategy becomes a crucial requirement. The distinction between success and failure boils down to the strategy that we use in these situations. Strategy can be defined as follows: The approach you take to close the gap between where you are and where you want to be.

Though this is a broad definition, it essentially means that we need to consciously plan the approach we take to achieve our goals. As simple as it sounds, very few people actually take this approach. It is a skill that has to be developed. The world around us has been built because people strategized and executed to their strategies. How much we consciously strategize defines our successes and failures. There are many business books written about the subject of strategy. To put it simply, strategy is your “approach” to your goal.

Strategy is the primary tool for success. It is with strategy that you can get a hold of destiny and make it happen. In your arsenal of tools for success, strategy should be the one that will help you most. It is what brings choices into action. The reasons for strategizing are numerous, but here are a few of the top reasons why you need to master it.

- Achieving big dreams is difficult and complex. Having a strategy in place helps turn each of your dreams into reality. Dreams are always high-level ideas. For most, dreams remain dreams because it is very difficult to bring them down to a day-to-day level. Instead, we would rather be doing urgent and unimportant tasks, such as vacuuming the floor or changing tires on the car rather than working on dreams. Strategy enables us to bring our dreams to the level of other day-to-day realities.
- One of the main challenges we have with goals and aspirations is knowing the next logical steps needed to achieve them. When goals become complex, knowing the next logical step becomes very difficult. As a result, we put off most of our goals. To make anything happen, you need to know the next logical step. Strategy helps us determine the next logical step.
- Strategy becomes an action plan to achieve your goals. Once you have a breakdown of the next things to do, you can then add details around each action step. You even can further strategize each step in your overall strategy. Once you are finished, you will have an action plan to execute.
- Most important, once you have each of the subsequent tasks broken down and planned out, you will have the confidence that your dreams are in fact achievable. This is something that differentiates most high performers from the rest because high performers believe that anything is achievable. They have the confidence to work on goals and dreams. You will have the same confidence because you will have a plan to make your dreams come true.



Most of us put off our dreams. The sheer size of our dreams and their complexity are often what deter us from acting on them. Subconsciously, we fear complex projects and actions, though we justify our procrastination with other reasons at a conscious level. As a result, most of our dreams go unaccomplished in our lifetimes. We start believing dreams are just dreams. Contrarily, I believe that dreams can be reality. You need only to give good thought to making them reality. Strategy enables us to do this. Strategy breaks down our dreams into manageable chunks that we can visualize, feel, and execute on a day-to-day basis, just as we would do laundry or go to the grocery store.

Everyday tasks are easy to do because we can see them, feel them, and we know what their outcome will be. Strategy brings your dreams to this level, which is extremely powerful.

Right now, the dream of owning a dream house, becoming a millionaire, or becoming a CEO might seem like something out of this world. You might be even embarrassed to talk about it fearing that your friends and family will write you off as a dreamer. But, if you have the right strategy in place and keep on working on it, I am telling you that your dreams are achievable. They are as real as the shirt on your back.

Stop for a second and think about how you would approach a journey to a friend's place that you don't know the way to.

1. First and foremost, you know that you have to go to your friend's place – you have a goal!
2. You need to figure out how to get there. Are you going to ask another friend, or are you going to look at a map? This is your strategy.
3. You decide the route (Select your strategy).
4. Finally, you take the road, follow the turns, and complete the trip (strategy implementation/ execution).

I know this sounds like common sense. This is the natural thinking process that would take place in approaching any task. Our limitation is that we rarely apply this process to complex tasks and the goals we

want to achieve. It is easy to have goals; it is equally important to have a strategy to achieve these goals.

Everything that we do in life requires an approach, from brushing your teeth in the morning to building a skyscraper. The difference between a normal person and a high performer is that a high performer knows how to approach complex goals, i.e., strategize. High performers consciously strategize their goals.

Strategy is a very simple skill. The higher you go up the corporate ladder, the less technical you get. One of the few skills that remain with you is your ability to strategize. Leaders at the top of any corporation know the principles of strategy and know how to apply them, while employees at lower levels know the principles but don't know how to apply them. When it comes to life, you need to start thinking like a CEO.

You would not be able to get up in the morning and come to work if you didn't know how to strategize. As humans, strategy is how we think. It is a natural process for us. However, CEOs know how to consciously apply this ordinary skill to very complex problems and attain large goals.

One of the prime reasons that our plans fail is we don't spend enough time strategizing and fine-tuning our strategy. A goal is not the same as a strategy. Just because you have a goal does not mean you have a plan. You need to have a strategy for each goal. When you do, then you can break down the strategy into individual tasks and execution plans. This is part of strategy formulation.

Have you ever wanted to lose, say, 50 pounds? Each year, you make a New Year's resolution to lose the excess weight. And at the end of each year, you have little or no success. One of the reasons you are in the same place is you haven't strategized your weight-loss goal. When you don't have a strategy, you are more reluctant to approach any complex problem, primarily because you don't know how to approach the goal; so, you put it off.

To be great, you have to get things done. To do great things, you have to set goals and organize your time. Strategizing on achieving great things is something that each of us needs to do. We can set goals and learn a spectrum of techniques, but if we don't know how to apply



the techniques to achieve goals, we don't get anywhere.

Sometimes, strategy comes to us by sheer chance. One thing might lead to another, and you have a strategy in place. Whether in the business world or the personal, strategy happens a lot by chance. We find out that sometime is working out for us and we start going down a certain path. A lot of us take this route. But, of course, you're leaving your destiny to chance.

There is actually no formula for strategy. Each goal is unique. With strategy, there is almost no formula or procedure to apply. We need to figure out how to get from point A to point B. The strategic framework certainly helps to formulate the strategy.

Each of our dreams and goals is different. They are as personal to you as your personality. Each of your goals will differ from the next in terms of its complexity, time required to achieve, difficulty and circumstances. Each goal and dream should be governed by its own set of criteria. Because of this complexity, it is impossible to have one formula to strategize your goals. If you encounter a prescription for achieving your goals, be skeptical because no two goals are the same, whether they are yours or those of two different people. You can never prescribe a formula to achieve your goals.

However, when working on your goals and dreams, you will notice that the approach has similar components, no matter how big or small your goal is. These components are common to your approach whether you are trying to go from your house to dinner or you are trying to grow a multinational bank from \$60 billion profitability to \$100 billion profitability. Based on these components, we can build a framework for you to strategize your goals and, ultimately, your dreams.

These components in the framework are the primary components of any plan. Yes, strategy is a plan. They form logical steps to breaking down any problem and executing a plan to solve it. In fact, these components form the logical thinking process in the human brain. Skipping any of these steps would make it difficult for you to achieve your goals. We use this approach on a daily basis. The only difference is that we are going to use these steps consciously rather than subconsciously.

The steps in the framework are interrelated. They are in

logical order, and each is dependent on the previous. Most of the time, this planning process becomes recursive as well, which means that steps within the strategy might become strategies themselves. You need to strategize complex goals at different levels. Each level is a strategy on its own.

In the example below, as a VP, you will need to strategize how to get a promotion at each level. These ideas, these subcomponents, will combine to become a collection of strategies.

In the world of software design, this is the same approach used to build complex software programs such as operating systems and transaction-processing systems. Before a single line of code is written, the very first step is to break down the design objectives into the different major components. These major components are then given to different teams that go and break down the major components into even smaller components. They are planned to the smallest detail. Only in the final step does the code get written.

Your dreams are similarly complex. That is why it is important to break down the actions into smaller steps to ensure the execution of your plans. The strategic framework will help you to do this with your goals and dreams.

### **Strategy in Detail**

There are many definitions of strategy. In the world of business, strategy is a concept that many management gurus have written about. Some definitions claim that strategy is an art for devising plans, while others refer to strategy as a more structured approach. Whichever definition you prefer, strategy is about achieving goals and planning.

When we think about doing something, we essentially need to answer five questions: what, why, when, where, and how. "What" is the actual goal itself. It is the target. For example, you might want to obtain your MBA. "What" refers to earning an MBA as your goal. Once you've answered the "What" question, you need to answer the "Why." For you to have a goal, you obviously must know why you want something. The questions "when" and "where" are your tactics for achieving your goal. "How" is your strategy.



Having read many definitions of strategy, I like to think of strategy simply as the approach to achieving goals. It answers the question “How do I achieve a goal?” How to achieve a goal is the next question to ask after you know what you want to achieve and why you want to achieve it. It follows the same natural thinking pattern in our brain, and it is a very important component.

Similar to the different definitions of strategy, there are different versions of defining a plan. However, most of these versions have five primary components. These components answer the what, why, when, where and how questions. This framework is what I call a Strategic Planning Framework, something that can be applied to any problem, goal, or dream that you have.

It is sometimes easy to confuse strategy and tactics. Sometimes, tactics in a large plan might turn out to be smaller strategies themselves. Yet it is important to keep strategy and tactics separate. In order to solve complex problems, you need to know the difference between strategy and tactics. When devising a plan, think first about strategy and then think about tactics. In each plan, the level of planning is different. Thus, your definition of strategy and tactics will be different for each plan. When planning, you need to know at what level your strategy starts to become tactical. In order to solve complex problems, you need to know the difference between the two.

The action items for your strategy are the lowest level of your plan. They are not necessarily your tactics. Once you start breaking down the work required to achieve your goals; you will come to a point where you cannot divide them further. In your dream of becoming a CEO, your tactic might be to get a job at the next level. Completing your resume for that next-level job is an action that you cannot break down further. It is steps as small as these that constitute your action plan. Typically, individual actions take less than one hour to complete. Thus, your tactics might not be your action items. You might need to further strategize and break down each tactic until you know the individual action items.

When devising your strategy, it is likely that you won't be able to foresee most of your tactics at their individual task level. Do not worry too much about

it because it is typical in devising strategy. As long as you have the approach and the next immediate steps required to strategize your dream, you have a good strategy. What is important is the next step that is required. Always having a firm idea of the next few steps will keep you moving. Not knowing the next step and not giving adequate thought to it is what keeps people away from their dreams. You can elaborate as you move through your strategy.

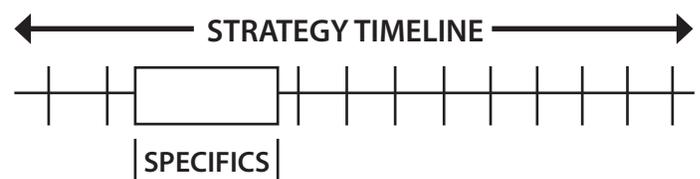
Once you have a strategy in place, it becomes a project. Projects typically get elaborated on as you move through the project. This means that the details for the strategy become clearer as you move closer to those steps and tactics. Life is full of uncertainty, and plans have to be changed. This is why it is important to elaborate on your strategy as you move on, when the circumstances for each step become clear. As you go on, what you planned just a few weeks ago might change. You need to account for this uncertainty. You achieve this through continuous elaboration.

As should be clear now, strategy is the process of taking what you want to achieve and breaking it down to a level that becomes actionable. The hierarchy of a strategy can be illustrated as follows:



As we go down the hierarchy, we add the details. Only once we determine the actions we can start adding the specifics such as when and how to do these actions.

Even if you look at your strategy over time, the window in which you will have the specifics is quite narrow.



Though you might know the specifics only for your current window of work that you are doing, you will have an idea of what high-level activities need to take place.



Goals are often problems that need solutions. Strategy is your solution to the problem and tactics are how you go about implementing the solution to the problem. Application of strategy can be illustrated by example. Let's make a plan.

### **Situation**

I'm currently a junior financial analyst. I want to be successful in my career and make a difference in my day-to-day work. Therefore, I want to become a vice president (VP) of finance for my company. A financial analyst is a level 6 in the corporation, and a VP is a level 11. A move from one level to another represents a promotion.

### **Goal/Problem**

- I want to become a vice president (VP).

### **Data**

- There are several promotions required to become a VP.
- I am currently a level 6, and a VP is a level 11.
- I want to become a VP by the time I am 42 years old.
- I am 29 right now.
- Requirements for promotions at each level are different.

### **Strategy**

- Get promoted from level to level.
- Set target timeframes and work toward initiating each promotion.
- Be proactive in working toward each promotion.
- At each level, strategize the next promotion.
- Have contingency plans, as the right opportunities might not come.
- At each level, develop the requirements for the next level.

### **Tactics**

- Focus on promotion to a senior financial analyst (level 7) by the time I am 30 years old.
- To achieve a level 7, I have to be technically very competent.
- Develop the technical competency.
- Focus on getting promoted.

- Talk to my manager about what I need to develop to achieve this promotion.
- After achieving level 7, re-strategize for level 8.

As you can see, strategy is your approach to attaining your goals. As a junior financial analyst, you might have felt it was impossible to become a VP. However, by having an approach, I managed to break the problem down into smaller problems. After I achieved the first sub-goal, the ultimate goal of becoming a VP seemed more and more plausible. Tactics such as developing individual skills and competencies now fit into the total picture.

Another way to look at strategy is to think of it as the framework. Think of the human body. The spine or backbone holds everything upright. Everything else connects to the backbone. Your strategy is like the backbone of your plan. Everything else connects to this strategy. Once you know your strategy, you know what areas you need to focus on and what areas not to focus on. It is easier to solve any problem if you first think of the strategy.

### **Importance of Strategy and Strategic Planning**

Strategy is the difference between success and failure. Without a good approach to a problem and a firm action plan, there would not be a solution. Your approach is your solution to the problem. This is why strategy is very important in our lives.

Thus, it is important to get your strategy correct before you proceed with your most important goals. If the strategy is not correct, attaining the goal is going to be a very difficult task. Compared to the time you spend working at your goals, the time taken to strategize is minimal, yet it is the step that has the greatest effect. Once you strategize, you will head in the correct direction toward the goal. Strategizing is the 80/20 principle in practice – you spend 20 percent of your time strategizing and planning, but the 80 percent of the work toward your goal. Strategy is the backbone of any goal. Once the strategy is correct, handling the tactics and the details will be an easy task.

Most of the effort involved in attaining your goal is overcoming the emotional resistance. Once you start and engage in making your dreams a reality, you go



with the flow. Overcoming this emotional resistance is what we achieve by strategizing. Though it does not require an ounce of physical effort, our emotional selves keep us away from our dreams. We like our dreams, but the sheer detail of them keeps us away.

By front loading the thinking and strategizing, we overcome this emotional barrier. Though thinking is less than 20 percent of the effort involved, it is the most difficult part. The more time spent thinking about how you are going to execute this strategy and the more detail and specifics that you can outline, the easier it makes the execution. The 20 percent effort might actually feel like the 80 percent of the effort because this is actually the part that we resist most when trying to achieve something.

By thinking through the details, we know what to expect with the realities of the strategy. For example, you might think you can do a certain job, such as senior financial analyst, but once you think through the specifics, you realize that before you get to the senior financial analyst, you need to gain more confidence. This might require you to become a financial analyst for two years before you even attempt to become a senior financial analyst. It is very important to be realistic about the details. While dreams might not be realistic, we have to be realistic about the details. While dreams might not be realistic, we have to be realistic with the details of achieving them.

Successful people don't call their dreams unrealistic. For them, dreams are realistic. But when it comes to actions, they know what is unrealistic and what is not. This is why strategy is so important. Strategy will give you the realism required to achieve your vision. It brings your vision to reality.

Every one of us has challenges that need solutions. For you it could be marriage, a financial situation, a time-management problem, or simply your physical shape. All our lives have challenges. In order to solve these problems and challenges, we need to strategies. With a Strategic Planning Framework, we can start to break down these problems into solutions. This is why strategic planning is crucial in our lives.

We need to think within the Strategic Planning Framework, especially when our challenges are

complex. Our human brains sometimes have difficulty breaking down complex problems. A framework helps us break down a problem into manageable parts. The Strategic Planning Framework works the same way.

The Strategic Planning Framework is like a level or a set of pulleys. We apply the same level of thinking to complex that we apply to simple problems. It helps us isolate the approach.

### **How Do You Strategize?**

Strategizing is not a new skill. We all know how to strategize. What we need to learn is how to apply the same framework that we are familiar with to more complex problems. When there is a complex problem, strategizing skills do not come as naturally to us. We need a framework that will take us along the correct path.

A Strategic Planning Framework is a framework to plan your goals. The framework will guide your thinking toward a strategy rather than a list of action items. It will help you think about complex problems and attain complex goals in your life.

You might be able to follow this thought process without any writing. However, for more complex goals, it is best to write down your thoughts in each section to create a record of your strategy. This way, you can always refer to it at a future date. Sometimes goals take a while to achieve.

### **Strategic Planning Framework**

The framework consists of five thought components, or processes.

- **Definition:** Defines and visualizes what you want to achieve.
- **Data/Analysis:** What you know about the situation.
- **Strategy:** How you want to achieve your goal.
- **Tactics/Resources:** What has to be done to execute the strategy.
- **Monitoring:** How to ensure you are successful.

**Definition:** Write down the problem that you are trying to solve and the goal. This will act as a reference point for your planning. For example, your problem



could be your current level of debt and the goal would be to get out of debt completely. Or it could be that you are not satisfied with your current salary and want to get to a higher position.

Writing down the problem will remind you why you are trying to attain the goal. It will provide a purpose for the effort. Sometimes we forget our purpose for doing something. Often, we lose the motivation to go toward a goal when we lose sight of the purpose. Writing down the problem helps prevent this.

There are also times when we want to attain a goal but have not really thought about why. For the longest time, I've wanted to become a CEO and never gave a thought to why. Using the framework, I now understand why.

Knowing what motivates you and understanding the reason behind your goals will give you a lot of clarity. For example, I might want to become a CEO. What motivated me to become a CEO is to make a difference. By articulating the reason for my goal, I realized that there are other ways, not just through becoming a CEO. As you can see, by defining your goal, you will really be able to understand what you are trying to achieve. It also will assist you in selecting the most appropriate path to achieve your goal.

Defining your goal is about knowing your end state. Even if your goal is complex, it is imperative that you know what your end state looks like. Many authors have written about visualizing your end state. When you can visualize and feel your end state as if it is here today with you, it becomes a powerful motivation to achieve your goal.

You need to do something to achieve your goal every day. You can do it once you clearly define it. Knowing the end state and constantly reminding yourself where you want to be is the very first step to attaining it.

Data/Analysis: Write down what you already know about the problem or the goal, any analysis you've done to determine the problem, and any assumptions. This will help you strategize better as you will decide which data to consider. Furthermore, this will help remind you later on what assumptions you have made when strategizing.

Another piece of information that needs to be recorded here is your Critical Success Factors. Critical Success Factors are what need to be done to ensure the success of the goal. For example, if you want to become a VP, it is critical for you to maintain an excellent track record of credibility.

Knowing your Critical Success Factors is important. There will be a lot of things in your plan of attack that might or might not be critical. But you need to understand what is critical and focus your energy on those activities. Critical activities are activities that make or break your strategy. These activities have to be done well in order for your strategy to be successful. You need to work very hard to address the factors that will be critical for your strategy. Working on critical factors can be difficult. It requires you to push yourself beyond your comfort zone. But if you don't get the critical aspects of your strategy worked out, your strategy will sit in limbo for a long time.

Strategy: This is the important section that requires a lot of thinking. After knowing the problem and goal, you need to think of an approach to attaining the goal. This is the solution to the problem. However, you don't have to worry about the details of the solution at this point. Just think about the high-level solution. How would you approach the goal? That is the question that you have to answer.

Sometimes you might arrive at several different solutions or approaches to attaining the goal. Don't be judgmental; just write them down. The moment you become judgmental, you lose the creativity required in the process. Strategy creation is a very creative exercise. Don't worry if you think you are not creative. Creativity for strategic thinking is in all of us. The only thing we have to do is harness it. Learning to harness the creativity is a skill that can be learned very easily.

Society tells us to subdue our creativity in different ways. Becoming risk averse is one way of subduing creativity. At the same time, we sometimes fear the acceptance of one of our ideas. Because of this fear, we become very judgmental about our ideas. When we are strategizing, we need to turn this self-editor off for a moment.



Be creative and generate as many ideas as possible. Once you have exhausted all the possible approaches, you can decide on the best solution later on. The idea is to brainstorm as many solutions as possible.

Strategizing is all about creating. All of us have the ability to create, but very few of us let our imaginative mind create things. Generating ideas for your strategy requires you to let your mind run free. We teach our children how to do this, but as adults we hardly do it ourselves. I was amazed to see that these very concepts that I am writing about were in a children's show my four-year-old daughter was watching, yet when we really need them, we rarely use these basic skills that we have. When we were children, we all learned these things, but life got to us and overshadowed them. We need to go back to them, because that is what we need to be successful.

You need to be creative and generate ideas. We need to think as much as possible. Let your mind run free and generate as many ideas as possible. You have to stop evaluating them. It is then that your mind starts running free. The process of evaluating and judging your ideas when you get them actually hinders this process. I know it will take training when you are not used to doing it. Once you are used to generating ideas, keep going. Your mind will give you lots of ideas. Don't stop, write them down, and go on till you have exhausted all your thinking. Let your creative self come to life.

To be a good strategist, you need to make yourself an artist. Artists let their minds run free. They don't judge the ideas they get, and they don't evaluate what comes to their mind. They express these ideas on whatever work they are doing. There is no dampening effect between their idea creation and action. This is what you need when you are generating your ideas. There should not be any dampening.

You would be amazed by the fabulous ideas that you can generate, no matter what you think of yourself. When you let your mind run free, it takes on a life of its own, and it will give you fabulous material to work with.

Once we have a list of ideas and options, we need to start evaluating each of our ideas in a very objective manner for the best solution. We need to select one idea out of this list. The criteria for selecting the best course of action could be anything.

When your list of ideas is in front of you, you can then start evaluating them. This is the time when you start judging your ideas by weighing the pros and cons of each.

The criterion for selecting could be what appeals to you most. It could be the most financially viable solution or the fastest solution. It also could be a combination of criteria with different priorities. Whatever the criterion is, you need to pick the one that feels most right for you. There are many problems and solutions in life that you can never measure quantitatively. People who hide behind reams of analysis will never make decisions. They just fear taking responsibility by making a decision. Selecting the solution and moving forward is the most important thing they will do.

This is the time when you need to make a decision. The choice that you make will define you. You cannot hide behind reams of quantitative analysis. You need to take a risk and move forward. I have had conversations with people who buy houses who come to me for advice. It amazes me how much analysis they do before they buy.

Some measure the distance from the public transit in minutes and seconds and even calculate the heating bill. While I agree that you need analysis to make an informed decision, I also have the feeling that they are just frightened to make a decision, take the risk, and be responsible for their decision.

You need to make a choice that will make you happy. These are your dreams. I'm not against quantitative analysis, and it is required before taking a giant leap. But you need to trust your gut and select the idea that will make you happy. It all boils down to your purpose. It is very important that you make this connection.

When I was considering whether to buy my current house, I decided that as long as I could afford it and my



gut agreed with the decision, I should go for it. I needed to be happy in that house. As a result, I always got the house I wanted and never regretted a single decision.

You can sense when you are about to make the correct choice. You just need to trust that feeling and make that choice. The choice that you make is usually the correct choice. I know you would have that edgy feeling that this could be the wrong choice. But contrary to that feeling at the time of making it, I have always experienced that the choice I made is the best possible choice I could have made. I have a wonderful life today because I do that and I trust myself.

**Tactics/Resources:** Once you select the best solution to your problem or the best approach, you can add the beef to it. You can start answering the questions such as when, where, and how. Tactics are the smaller details of our plan.

It is great to think about the approach. However, you also need to think about the smaller details of the plan in order to implement it. Most of the time, when we get great ideas, we fail to implement them.

In most strategies, the difference between strategy and tactics is a very fine line. It is often a gray area. Don't worry if you have difficulty differentiating strategy and tactics. In such situations, think of both the strategy and tactics as one unit.

Most of the time, we fail to think through the details of the idea. Thinking through the details requires us to do two things:

1. Evaluate the feasibility of the idea.
2. Think through the implementation tasks.

Because we fail to think through these two aspects, one of two things happen that makes us procrastinate. We either feel reluctant to start working on it because we don't know how to go about the task, making us anxious about the goal, or we underestimate how much work the task is going to be. As a result, the task ends up being a failure as we put too little time and energy into it.

While strategy is important for us, it is also important to think through the details behind the strategy and the idea.

Let us take an example of thinking through the details. You want to renovate your kitchen. Strategy would be to first work on the floor and the cabinets. You have decided on the design of the cupboards. You are going to do it in three months' time, and you have decided to limit the spending to \$5,000.

Now let us think through a few of the details. Since this is a large project, let's take just a component – the floor. First you need to know what tools you would need, and then you need to figure out how to obtain the tools. If they are going to cost you something, they must be part of the budget. Then think about where you are going to purchase the tiles and how you are going to bring them home. Do you rent a truck, or can you manage with your car? Similarly, think through the details.

The best way to think about the tactics is to visualize what you are doing before you actually do it. This not only helps you to find answers to the two things but it also helps you prepare mentally for the things that you are going to do. This is going to save a lot of time when you are doing it, as you will know what you are going to do.

In the same process, you also need to think through the resources you will need: things such as money, nails and people.

Don't worry if you don't have all the details correctly nailed down. There will be things that you will not know. Also, don't delay starting because you don't know all the details. There will be things that you'll have to think about once you start. The idea is to start and not to hide behind the details. You need to use the details to help you get started, not as a hiding place from starting. Even if we do manage to get all these details correct, most of us still hide behind the details to avoid starting. We are scared to start a new venture.

Once you get most of your details, you can start executing the plan.

**Monitoring:** While having plans and tactics is good, we also need to monitor how we progress in these plans. You need to step back and see how things are going. There would be no way for us to know whether we are progressing well if we don't compare against our



original goal. Most of the time, we get so caught up in the day-to-day urgent tasks and put off the important strategies and plans. When this happens, we delay achieving our goals. So, it is important to sit down and consciously monitor how we are doing against the plan.

It could be that you have to make changes to the time line. For example, say you had a goal of losing 20 pounds this year; it is already September, and you have lost only 5 pounds. You need to accelerate your weight loss or else rethink your goal. You might need to look again at the tactics and adopt a more aggressive set of tactics to increase your weight loss.

Maybe you require a complete change in direction. You might discover that going down this path is simply not feasible, even though you thought initially that it was going to work out. So now you have to think about the overall strategy and re-strategize.

Don't be afraid to make changes to your plans. The idea is to move forward in the things that you do. If the plan and strategy that you made is taking you backward, then you have to re-strategize. As normal as it is to have plans, it is also normal to change plans. When you are making plans, you rarely know all the details. This is why changing plans is important. The fact that what you are doing is taking you to a better place and is making you happier is the most important thing. Strategies and plans are ways of fulfilling your dreams and aspirations. It helps to think of achieving these dreams in a structured way. However, just because you made a plan does not mean that you have to stick with that dream if the dream does not work out.

There are times when changing plans also does not work. Sometimes keeping at the plan is what you need. This is not a formula-based determination. It should be based on individual circumstances. If you know that the goal you are trying to achieve is the right thing to do, and you are convinced the strategy is the correct approach, then keep at the same strategy. Persistence is very important when you are convinced that you are

doing the right thing. The whole world might disagree with you, but if you are convinced that you are doing the right thing, then you have to keep at it.

## Conclusion

Though this whole process seems complicated, everything in life is strategized using the same natural process. Strategy is our natural way of thinking. When our brain cannot apply the same thinking pattern to more complex problems, we need to help the brain to apply the thinking process to more complex problems. We need to help the brain do what it does well – think. The framework helps you do that. It puts more complex problems in reach of the brain. Think of it as a lever. You can use bare hands to lift light weights. Our brains are built in the same way – to do light thinking. Similarly, when lifting heavy weights, we don't lift with our bare hands; we use pulleys, chains, and levers. However, we still apply the same pressure and principles, but we are lifting a much heavier object using the tools. This framework is a similar tool. It is not new. We are just taking it to the next level. By using the framework, we are assisting the brain in applying the same level of thinking to more complex tasks.

The essence of this time management is to make the most of our lives. In order to do this, you need to have a strategy for each goal. Most time-management gurus in fact miss the core essence of time management by failing to talk about strategy. Without an approach, you would not know how to go about a goal.

Strategy is the core of getting things done. Everything in life can be strategized. You don't have to own a business or be a CEO to know about strategy.

Using the framework above is like breaking a stack of sticks. If you try to break the whole stack at once, you will never achieve it. However, you break one stick at a time; you will then be able to break the whole stack. The Strategic Planning Framework helps you do exactly that.

## Need Help? Have a Question?

Call Greg's "Wonder Woman" assistant Christal. She will assist you in with booking information or answering your questions. Call her at 304.400.4703

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