

January 2019

## An Undeniable Force of Nature

Weight loss, self-improvement, and making better financial decisions. According to survey data accumulated by Statistic Brain<sup>1</sup>, these are the most common goals that people set. Unfortunately, of the 138 million Americans that set goals, only 9% actually reach them.

Reflecting back on 2018, let's ask the tough question: did we reach our goals, and if not, what do we need to do differently this year to hit them? In Michael Hyatt's book, *Your Best Year Ever*, he comically writes, "History doesn't repeat itself, but it rhymes."

As January 2019 comes to an end, how do we fight off our humanistic preference of inertia and continue the never-ending fight towards improvement? After all, this is real life stuff with real life consequences, so what do we need to do to be a 9 percenter?

My mentor always told me that, "Action without a plan is chaos, a plan without action is a pipe dream, but a plan followed by action is a game changer." I have repeated that saying many times since I first heard it; however, I recently realized this is only partially true!

A game plan followed by action is a great start, but life isn't about starting power, it's about staying power, and that is why accountability is so important. More accurately, "Action without a plan is chaos. A plan without action is a pipe dream. A plan followed by action and back by accountability is an undeniable force to be reckoned with."

I don't know about you, but I want to be an undeniable force to be reckoned with. If you do as well, then let's dive into the three steps I believe are needed to get there...

### ***Phase 1: Developing a game plan...***

When it comes to all goal setting, game planning is rather simple...

Step 1: We must first assess and articulate exactly where we are.

Step 2: Paint a clear picture of where we want to be, and when we want to be there by.

Step 3: Develop and implement a strategy to bridge the gap from where we are, to where we want to be.

For weight loss, this is a rather easy task. If we weigh 200lbs with a desire to get down to 180, through a proper diet and exercise plan, we can predictably reach the goal.

For finances, however, it is more challenging. There is no magical scale and there is no simplistic method of telling exactly where we are in respect to where we should be. Whereas society does a "pleasant" job of telling us exactly where we "should" be weight wise, finances lacks clear feedback.

Figuring out where we are financially, and how that relates to where you should be is as relative as it is subjective, and that is just the start of the murkiness. Figuring out where we want to be and when we need to be there by, and creating a strategy of how to bridge the gap between the two points only gives

1: Research was completed by the Statistic Brain Research Institute on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016 titled "New Years Resolution Statistics."

us more reason to quit before we even start. That is why in my opinion, having a professional who has experience with helping many of people reach their goals is almost a necessity.

### **Step 2: Action**

If a plan without action is a dream, then action without a game plan is chaos. Want to see what chaos looks like? Look all around you! Today's trendy term is "busy, busy," as technology pulls us in all directions. Often time's people confuse movement with progress and run around like a chicken without a head.

Yet, don't we all know of the calm, cool, and collected personality who seems to have it all together? This guy/gal has a plan and is executing that plan. If you don't know someone like this, just look at the leaders and rising leaders in any company. Not only do they have more on their plate than anyone, but they also handle it methodically and with grace.

Whereas we might call this prioritizing, Greg McKeown refers to this as the practice of essentialism. In his book *Essentialism: the Disciplined Pursuit of Less*, he writes "Essentialism is not about how to get more things done; it's about how to get the right things done. It doesn't mean just doing less for the sake of less either. It is about making the wisest possible investment of your time and energy in order to operate at our highest point of contribution by doing only what is essential."

In the financial world, an essential action plan looks like a well-prepared budget, setting up automatic savings systems, and a monthly meeting to review progress and to predict the upcoming month's expenses. If losing weight is simply a function of expending more calories than we take in, saving more money is function of spending less money than we bring in. It's just that simple... it's just that hard.

### **Step 3: The differentiator: Accountability**

Sitting on the graduation floor at Mercer University in 2010, I remember President Bill Underwood saying, "The myth of the self-made man is simply that, a myth." Very few people can accomplish their goals without the help and collaboration of others. If they can, then their dreams aren't big enough.

Humans in general hate accountability, and that is the exact reason we need it so badly. Personal accountability is an oxymoron, we need others to help us get to where we want to be. If we don't need help reaching our goals, then we need higher goals. So how can we go about establishing an environment of accountability?

Most importantly, I encourage everyone to continuously work towards being on the same page as their significant other. Not only can you help hold each other accountable when that 5 AM alarm sounds, but overall it's more fun to do it together!

Secondly, we need to set up automatic systems that force us to save the money before we have a chance to spend it. Whether it is automatic deductions into a 401k, or a dollar cost average monthly deposit into a brokerage account, making saving money seamless can be an easy way to remain consistent.

Lastly, I am a big proponent of the believe that we should all have an outside, third party to watch over us to help make certain we stay on track over the years. Is it expensive to work with a financial planner? Not nearly as expensive as continuously missing your financial goals.

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If your finances are a priority this year, I highly encourage you to interview a few financial advisors to see which one fits best with your personality and situation. I think you will be pleasantly surprised by the process of planning, the results you will see, and by how little it costs to get top notch information and accountability from a professional. Happy New Year and here is to becoming an undeniable force of nature!

-Alan Franks

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