

Coach Yourself to Success

by Sharon Juden

Learn about the steps that many professional career and life coaches help their clients take - so that you can apply this approach to your own life!

Step 1: Know What You Want

It's very easy to identify things you're NOT happy with and to get stuck in that negative state of mind. At this stage, coaches often hear comments like "No one at work takes me seriously" or "I need to lose weight, but I can't" or "My boss is so frustrating."

But if you want things to change, then you need to identify what you DO want and WOULD be happy with.

Unfortunately, while "know what you want" is easy to say, a surprising number of us really don't know this – and simply telling us to figure it out won't help. However, if we don't know the direction to take, where we end up may be no better than the place we left!

Others have only a vague idea of what they want, and they never take the time to be more specific. So they have a certain amount of success, but, because they're never fully committed to one particular direction, they can only get so far.

One approach that coaches use to get over this hurdle is to encourage their clients to explore this problem to find its real root cause. For example, Sally may feel that her career is going nowhere because "no one takes me seriously." She might discover that this is because of her behavior – she takes on all of the small tasks in the team, and she's so busy doing these that she doesn't have time to work on the big ideas that would show her potential for promotion.

Often, people start out feeling that they're "victims," and that the source of their problem lies outside their control. For instance, a frustrating boss won't go away, or weight can't be lost. But these people may find that their own attitude or response is contributing to the problem.

With the root cause identified, "what you want" is the reverse of that situation: "I am focused on important tasks," "I am clear about what I should and should not do to lose weight," or "I am relaxed about my boss changing his mind, and I know he appreciates my work to implement his changes."

Step 2: Set a SMART Goal

The next step is to express "what you want" as a clear goal. This might seem like an unnecessary step, but it's really important. A properly defined goal statement will act as a motivator. It will help you prevent yourself from backing out of things you SHOULD be doing, but perhaps don't really WANT to do.

Use the **SMART** acronym to help you structure a goal:

Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant Time-bound

Setting a time frame is particularly important, because it's easy to delay dealing with difficult issues. Choose a time scale that's both realistic and challenging: if it's too easy, you'll get bored and give up, and if it's unrealistic, you'll feel overwhelmed and give up. The secret is to choose a date in the future that you know you can reach - this should be a date that will stretch you a little, but not add to your stress.

Write down your goal. This helps you clarify your thoughts, and it helps you see your progress as you look back over the various steps you've set for yourself. This way, you can see if you're on track or not.

For example, Melanie is frustrated by her boss. She might set this goal: "By the end of the month, I'll have learned how to respond calmly and positively whenever Alex asks me to rework something. Then I'll do the work, understanding that it's an opportunity to impress him."

Step 3: Take Action

- ◆ Determine what needs to happen to move you toward your goal:
- ◆ Do you need to get a particular qualification or sign up for a course?
- ◆ Do you need help from someone like a personal trainer or mentor?
- ◆ Do you need to let go of someone or something?

In Melanie's case, she might sign up for a short course on relaxation techniques so that she can quickly counter her natural reaction of frustration when she's asked to rework something. And she'll look for opportunities to remind her boss about what she does to implement his changes of direction. (If you're struggling with a lack of gratitude from your boss, read our article [Get the Recognition You Deserve.](#))

Choose actions that will take you slightly out of your comfort zone. Allow yourself to take more risks, because the only real limitations in life are the ones we create for ourselves through fear. If you had no fear of failure and you believed that you would succeed, what would you do? What do you need to start doing today?

Step 4: Be Passionate

Make sure that what you've chosen to do is something you really care about, and really want to happen – otherwise, you know you won't do it!

Also, notice if you're holding back a little. We often don't allow ourselves to get too excited about an outcome because we doubt we can do it. If a lack of self-belief or the fear of failure is holding you back, try the following exercise:

Think about how you react, feel, and think when you're worried and uncertain. Notice how you stand, the thoughts that go through your head, the language you use, and the feelings you experience.

Think about how you react and feel and think when you're certain of success.

Notice the differences between the two states – they will be very obvious!

Now think about your new goal. While you're doing this, breathe, stand, and talk the way you do when you're certain of success. You should find yourself approaching your new goal with much more conviction and determination.

Keep replaying memories of successes from the past, and focus on those while you plan your goal. Until you see yourself as successful, and until you remind yourself that you've achieved many things in the past, you're unlikely to achieve your goal to the degree you really want. This is because many of us seem to have a natural tendency to focus on the negative, and on our perceived failures.

Step 5: Be Persistent

Do you tend to give up when you hit an obstacle? Do you see it as a sign that you're not meant to continue, so you stop?

If this is the case, then it's worth remembering success stories from the past – such as Colonel Sanders, who created Kentucky Fried Chicken. He didn't fulfill his dream until he was 65 years old. It's said that when he tried to sell his chicken recipe to restaurants, he was refused 1,009 times before he heard his first yes.

And what about Walt Disney? He was turned down 302 times before he got financing for his dream of creating "the happiest place on earth."

So, if you hit obstacles and doubt whether you should continue or not, decide if your goal is worth having. If it is, then be persistent. If it isn't, go back to Step 1.

Key Points

For complex career or personal issues, there's no substitute for working with a qualified, experienced coach. But for smaller issues, if you understand the approach that coaches use when working with their clients, you can often go a long way toward working through problems and challenges on your own.

First of all, you need to make sure you're clear about what you want – and turn that into a goal. Then you must identify the actions you need to take to make that goal happen. And you need to be passionate and persistent about working on it. Most successful people follow these five steps in one way or another, whether consciously or not.

Adapted from: Mind Tools - **Coach Yourself to Success** Learning to Help Yourself

http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newCDV_27.htm