
**HOW TO GET MOTIVATED,
CHANGE YOUR LIFE,
AND START LIVING
IN 11 SIMPLE STEPS**

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INTRODUCTION

Maybe you want to get that new business off the ground... double your income... or get the recognition you deserve. You work hard. You want to succeed. But sometimes it seems like your efforts just aren't producing any results.

Here at *Early to Rise*, we understand just how difficult the path to success can sometimes be. And we want to help.

In fact, the focus of our business is helping people just like you fulfill their dreams, achieve financial independence, and become successful in their business and personal lives. The *Early to Rise* e-zine goes out every morning to nearly 200,000 success-oriented individuals who eagerly await our investment tips, business-building strategies, and goal-setting techniques. Each day, *Early to Rise* offers useful advice from experts in health, business, finance, real estate, marketing...and much more.

But one thing we do every single day is provide that extra little push you may need to take action on your goals, to shake off that failure, or to make a fresh start toward living the life you've always dreamed of.

In this special report, we've put together eleven top-notch strategies for getting out of that rut and getting everything you deserve out of life.

Learn success tactics from masters like public speaker and bestselling author Robert Ringer...authority in personal and business success Brian Tracy...business-builder Paul Lawrence...and *Early to Rise* founder and multimillionaire Michael Masterson.

Flip through this report whenever you need a little pick-me-up. Reread your favorite section any time you want to rekindle that desire to get ahead.

We know you can accomplish anything you've ever wanted. Now's the time to take control of your life and make your dreams come true.

STEP 1

Reignite Your Drive

By Michael Masterson

For most of my life, I've been blessed with an enormous surfeit of drive. On a typical morning, I'm brimming with energy and expectation. For the better part of my career, I've literally bounded out of bed – even when the challenges I faced seemed insurmountable.

Is that the way you feel? Or do you wake up feeling neutral or slightly negative about the day ahead?

Not caring about your work is a surefire way to fail. And the only way to overcome this feeling of ennui is to fight your way out of it.

How do you put the drive back in your life?

First, let's take a look at the things that motivate people:

- Guilt

A surprising number of people are motivated by guilt. They spend their lives feeling shamed by what they've done and afraid of erring further. Guilt-driven people like to punish themselves, often by denying themselves the success they have been seeking. A guilty person is a restless person. The worst thing about being driven by guilt is how strong a hold the past has over you. It often makes it difficult if not impossible to move forward.

- Anger

Anger is a very destructive emotion, and its primary target is the person who harbors it. "Resentment always hurts you more than it does the person you resent," says Rick Warren in *The Purpose-Driven Life*. "While the offender has already forgotten the offense and gone on with his life, you continue to stew in your pain, perpetuating the past." The secret to releasing yourself from the bonds of anger is to realize that the moment you forgive and forget, the pain will go away. The only thing you have control over is your future. Don't waste it on the past.

- Fear

You don't normally think of fear as a drive, but it is. Like anger, fear drives us to limit or even damage our future. Fearing failure prevents us from attempting success. Fearing rejection keeps us from finding companionship. Fearing truth leaves us self-deluded. Fearing death makes us reluctant to embrace life. You can't ignore your fears. You can only push through them.

- Material Benefits

The desire for material comforts is natural enough in a material world. But when the drive to acquire things begins to dominate your life, you lose the ability to experience all the pleasures that you once thought material benefits would provide.

- The Need for Approval

We all want to be loved. And we all want to be thought well of. The need for approval is an essential human drive, but the trouble with this drive is that most people don't realize they have it. We live our lives eager to win the approval of others while steadfastly denying that we need it at all. This delusion makes our lives shallow and ultimately unrewarding.

Rick Warren says that, in the long run, none of these drives can be satisfying. If you want long-term, in-depth peace and happiness in your life, you need to be purpose-driven.

I like that idea and believe that knowing your purpose in life has many benefits, including the following four:

1. It gives meaning to your life.
2. It simplifies your life.
3. It focuses your life.
4. It motivates you.

I recently I read a book titled *Life Work*, a memoir by Donald Hall, in which he keeps coming back to one question: "What makes a satisfying life?" Over and over again, the answer was the same. A good life is one that is engaged in good work. And good work is work that you value.

We can't expect to fully exorcise from our psyches fear, anger, and the desire for material benefits and approval. But in thinking about how we want to live, we can create an overall life plan that is based, instead of on any of these temporary and often self-destructive drives, on some worthy purpose.

That purpose can be, for example, writing great fiction or teaching great classes or practicing martial arts at the highest level. I don't believe it really matters what it is – just so long as it's something you truly believe has value.

STEP 2

Discover Your Talents

By Brian Tracy

When we do strategic planning for corporations, we begin with the premise that the purpose of the exercise is to reorganize people and resources to increase the company's rate of return on the equity it has invested in the business. This is done by allocating more resources to areas with higher potential returns, and taking resources away from those with lower potential returns. By developing or promoting newer and better products and services, and discontinuing those that are less profitable, the company can channel its efforts in a way that maximizes its returns.

In doing personal strategic planning, the first thing you want to think about is increasing your personal "rate of return." You need to realize that the most valuable thing you bring to your life and to your work is your ability to think, to act, and to get results. Your earning ability – which is a function of your education, knowledge, experience, and talents – is your equity. And the way you "invest" it will largely determine the quality and quantity of your material and psychological rewards.

A young man in one of my seminars came up to me and said that he was working as a plumber for a large plumbing-contracting firm. He made good wages, but he was envious of the salespeople in his company who made more money, drove nicer cars, wore nicer clothes, and had much better lifestyles. He had completed his training, had his journeyman's certificate, and he was at the top of his wage scale. The only way he could earn more money was by working longer hours. Instead, he wanted to get into sales, where his income could be higher and would not be fixed on an hourly basis.

I told him that if he wanted to get into sales, it was up to him to learn how to sell – and then to do everything possible to get his boss to give him the chance to sell their plumbing services. His future was up to him ... but he first had to learn how to do the new and higher-paying job.

A little more than a year later, he attended another one of my seminars ... and brought me up to date on his situation. He had told his boss that he wanted to get into sales. The boss discouraged him, telling him that plumbers have very little aptitude for the skills involved in selling a complex service. He then asked his boss what he would have to do to prove to him that he could do it. To make a long story short, his boss helped him learn how to sell the company's services by recommending that he study manuals and take extra courses on his own time.

And that's what he did. He bought books and listened to tapes and spent time talking to the salespeople in the organization. As a result, he became a full-fledged salesman.

**WHAT YOU DON'T NEED
TO SUCCEED**

- You don't have to be smart.
- You don't have to be good-looking.
- You don't have to be thin.
- You don't have to be nice.
- You don't have to be right – all the time.
- You don't have to be even-tempered.
- You don't have to be a good listener.

After five months in his new job, he was already earning more than twice as much as he had ever earned as a plumber. But most of all, he was happier.

He was more excited and more enthusiastic about himself and his work than he had ever been. He loved the field of selling, and he considered his career change to be one of the best decisions he had ever made.

This story is typical of countless stories that have been related to me over the years. In every case, the individual had discovered and developed his or her strengths – and, subsequently, improved the quality of his or her life. You can do the same thing.

Thinking of yourself passively as being employed and, therefore, subject to the dictates of someone else, can be fatal to your long-term success. In reality, you're the president of your own personal-services corporation. You're completely in charge of production, quality control, training and development, marketing, finance, and promotion.

Seeing yourself as self-employed forces you to recognize that you also are self-responsible and self-determining. That everything that happens to you happens because of your conduct and your behavior. You're in the driver's seat. You're behind the steering wheel of your life. It's up to you to decide how to utilize your talents and abilities in such a way as to bring you the very highest return on the investment of your time and energy.

No one else is going to do it for you. You're the boss. Others can help you, guide you, direct you, channel you, point you in the right direction, and even give you opportunities. But in the final analysis, no one else can make the critical decisions that will determine your future and your fortune.

To that end, here are four questions that you need to ask yourself on a regular basis:

1. "What do I most enjoy doing?"
2. "How would I describe my ideal job?"
3. "If I could have any job at all, anywhere, what would it be?"
4. "If I won a million dollars in the lottery and I had to pick something to work at indefinitely, what would I choose to do with my time?"

To uncover your strengths and determine your unique talents and abilities, ask yourself:

- "What have I been good at in the past?"
- "What things do I do easily that seem to be difficult for other people?"

- “In what areas of work do I seem to get the best results ... and derive the most pleasure?”

The answers to all of those questions will give you a good idea as to how you might increase your return on the energy you invest.

As a result of your genetic structure, your education, your experiences, your background, your interests and proclivities, you're a unique and rare combination of talents and abilities. You can be extremely good at something. And it's your responsibility to find out what that something is and then throw your whole heart into it, without reservation.

Look at your current job, and ask yourself:

- “Where do I want to be in three to five years?”
- “What kind of work do I want to be doing?”
- “What kind of people do I want to be working with?”
- “What level of responsibility do I desire?”
- “What kind of money do I want to be earning?”
- “What part of the country do I want to be living in?”

Look at your work and at your life in general, and ask yourself:

- “What kind of people do I admire and most want to be like?”
- “Who do I know, or know about, who is doing the kind of work that I want to do and is living the kind of life that I want to live?”
- “What changes would I have to make in my life to be like that person?”

Remember: Whatever anyone has done, someone else can do as well. You'll never be exactly the same as another person, but you don't need to be. You can use the successes and achievements of other people as examples and guidelines to help you decide where you want to arrive at the end of your particular journey. But you can be unique and different and successful in your own way.

You were put on this earth with a special combination of talents and abilities that make you different from anyone who has ever lived. Whatever you're doing today, it's nowhere near what you're really capable of doing. The key to a happy and prosperous life is for you to regularly evaluate your strengths and weaknesses, to become very good in the areas you most enjoy, and then to throw your whole heart into what you're doing.

STEP 3

Reverse the Direction of Your Life

By Michael Masterson

I was fortunate in being born into a family that believed in education. But we were not rich ... far from it. We were 10 people living in a small, \$12,000 house. Throughout my childhood and adolescence, I wore hand-me-down clothes ... drank powdered (instead of real) milk ... and played in the municipal supply yard across the street rather than in the recreation center that required a paid membership.

Since my allowance (24 cents a week at age 8) would not pay for my fantasies, I worked for money – cutting lawns, delivering papers, cleaning kitchens – anything I could get. The moment I turned 16, I was at the car wash wiping down windows.

In terms of material things, I began my life as poor as anyone I know. But I was given two benefits that helped me greatly:

1. I was taught to believe in education – that it made you a better, more capable, and ultimately more worthwhile person.
2. I was taught that the world (and everyone in it) owed me nothing and that I should therefore expect nothing.

These two beliefs left me with but one path to wealth: hard work. So, I woke up at the crack of dawn and worked odd hours, doing jobs that other people wouldn't do and taking crap from arrogant bosses and rude customers.

I never made any really big money during the first 30 years of my life. I did, however, accomplish a great deal and was always financially comfortable because ... because I worked hard.

That's why when I hear people tell me they are suffering financially, I have to wonder just how hard they are working.

What about you? If you're unemployed, are you putting in 60 to 80 hours per week trying to find a good job? If you are working, are you devoting an extra 20 or 30 hours a week to developing a second stream of income?

Are you devoting your early mornings to goal setting and getting yourself organized? Unless you are working hard – really hard – at making your situation better, you have no right to complain about your situation.

So, that's the first thing I can tell you: If you are poorer than you want to be, work harder than you are currently working. Work harder to make more money and then learn to work smarter to make much more money.

The second thing I can tell you is this: If you are willing to work hard and learn how to work smart, you'll make amazingly fast progress. However slowly things may seem to move at first, there will soon come a time when you will begin to start moving quickly in the right direction. After that, as the weeks and months pass, money will come faster and more easily.

About a year or so after I went into business with JSN, my first partner, a bunch of things started falling apart. All our marketing projects were failing, and new ideas weren't working. Our creditors were screaming. One day, I figured out that I was in debt (my share of our business debt) to the tune of something like \$800,000.

I wanted to give up ... crawl into a hole ... shoot myself. But JSN wouldn't let me. He'd been through hard times himself. The gloomier I'd get, the more cheerful he'd be. He pushed me to keep working, keep coming up with new ideas, and keep working harder on reselling our existing companies. We called our creditors and told them we could pay them off over time – take it or leave it. It was a miserable time.

I was afraid I'd be in debtor's prison – or the modern equivalent of it – for the rest of my life. Then, one day, all the hard work and persistence paid off. A mail-order product I created started selling well. In a matter of weeks, the debt I had accumulated was cut in half. A month later, I was in the black!

In the meantime, I kept inventing new products and writing new promotions. One by one, they started clicking. All the fruitless efforts I'd made in the past, all the early morning planning, all the extra reading, and all the late-night brainstorming sessions with my partner started paying off. Our ideas were working.

In less than a year after my darkest hour, I was a millionaire.

Although I've had plenty of challenges and setbacks since then, my financial situation overall has gotten better and better. I'm now in a position where I don't have to worry about money. That's a position you can be in too.

If you are poor and in debt, don't sit around waiting for something miraculous to happen to you. Starting today (not tomorrow), spend 10 or 12 hours earning an income. Then spend another several hours learning how to build wealth.

Spend less than you are spending now. Work harder. Jump at every chance to get a better job and earn more money. And get rid of that burden of debt – day by day.

Before you know it, you'll be debt-free and feeling good. And when that happens, you'll have developed the habit of working hard and will have the advantage of all sorts of contacts, resources, ideas, and knowledge you don't have now.

The money you will make then will be made easier than the money you make now. And things will continue like that, getting easier and easier. Before you know it, you'll be successful in the eyes of the people who know you and even by your own high standards.

If the weight of past mistakes and/or bad luck is pressing against you ... if you feel as if you are pushing a boulder up a hill ... if the strength of your body is gone, all the energy in your blood is depleted, and your feet are slipping on the ground ... don't despair. You need only to throw a shoulder into that boulder and push back against it. Push back hard. And just keep pushing. Eventually, it will give way. Eventually, you will move it up to the top of the hill and then send it down again, rushing forward, in the right direction.

Only hard work can reverse the direction of your life. I know, because I've been there.

STEP 4

Adopt a Positive Outlook and Change Your Situation

By Paul Lawrence

DM was in a foul mood. To be fair, his bad mood was understandable. You see, he'd been in a car accident about six months before. He was stopped at a red light when another driver plowed into his car from behind at 60 miles an hour.

Amazingly, although DM's car was destroyed, he was not killed. But his back was wrenched so severely that he could barely get out of bed the next morning. To make matters worse, his doctor wasn't optimistic about the injury improving without risky surgery. DM consulted two other doctors, but they had the same diagnosis.

DM's frustration grew when he met with some lawyers. They all agreed that he had a legitimate case for damages, but that he would be unlikely to collect more than \$30,000. Considering DM had a business that made him about \$200,000 a year, this amount of money seemed outrageously small.

Now, don't get me wrong. DM knew he was lucky not to be in a wheelchair ... or dead. But he was still unhappy. He'd always been an athletic guy – lifting weights, wrestling, jogging, swimming. He really missed being able to do those things ... probably forever.

I sympathized with DM. I had a similarly life-changing experience about 13 years ago, when the cartilage in both of my big toe joints was destroyed. In the blink of an eye, I became almost crippled. To make matters worse, ballroom dancing was my sole means of earning a living at the time. Not only was I in pain, I was facing a career disaster.

Fortunately, I found a way to get over this major hurdle.

You may have heard the expression “living on a positive tip.” It means having an extremely positive outlook on life. Well, I borrowed this term and redefined it to apply to a practical system for positive living.

After my injury, like DM, I told myself that at least I wasn't in a wheelchair ... or blind ... or dead. But, as DM discovered, that didn't help much. Because it's one thing to say that you'll look at the positive side of things ... have your glass half full rather than half empty. But it's another thing to truly feel that way.

What did help was a process that I labeled with the acronym A.P.E. (Accept, Plan, Execute). By implementing it, I was able to start developing a new life based on my new circumstances. Here are the steps I took:

1. Accept

I not only accepted that something bad had happened to me and that life isn't always fair, I also accepted that it was okay for me to be upset about it. Sure, my luck could've been worse – but this was still lousy luck, and being sad about it didn't make me weak or selfish.

2. Plan

Once I'd gotten past acceptance, I needed to figure out how to overcome my problem and continue to thrive. I took a two-pronged approach. Part one of my plan was to continue to seek out the best possible medical attention. This included doing research and locating specialized sports physicians. Part two of my plan was to develop a career as a writer ... a career that I could pursue even if my feet never improved.

3. Execute

Once I had a plan, I was invigorated and full of hope. I relentlessly sought out medical treatment – almost every type of therapy you can think of, from ice packs to acupuncture to anti-inflammatory medicines. Eventually, I underwent several surgeries. Although that didn't cure the problem, it improved to the point where I was able to resume a light dance instruction schedule. All the while, I continued to work on becoming a writer – both a copywriter and a screenplay author.

When I told DM about my A.P.E. strategy, his eyes lit up. He started thinking about things he could do – even with his bad back – to resume enjoying his life. He decided to buy a new sports car ... get involved in a few charities that he believed in ... and spend more time building his art and coin collections.

The A.P.E. strategy worked for LB, too.

LB had been working as a freelancer in the legal field for 20 years. While she wasn't getting rich from her job, she was financially comfortable. By shrewdly saving and investing her money, she was well on her way to being able to enjoy a secure retirement in only a few short years.

Then LB's main client had a turn of fortune. Business plummeted – and they were doling out fewer assignments. LB suddenly found herself in quite a predicament.

**Four Things to Remember When
Someone Tells You That You Don't
Have What It Takes**

1. MGM's opinion on Fred Astaire's first screen test in 1933: "Can't act. Slightly bald. Can dance a little."
2. Michael Jordan was cut from his high-school basketball team.
3. McDonald's founder, Ray Croc, didn't sell his first hamburger till he was 52.
4. Walt Disney was fired by a newspaper for "lacking ideas."

Now, through no fault of her own, she had reason to worry about her retirement. Sure, she could dip into her savings to help pay some bills in the short term ... but she needed to add to those funds, not deplete them. Yes, she was lucky that she had been smart enough to put that money away. But that didn't change the fact that she was nervous about her future.

Like DM, LB used the A.P.E. system to dig herself out of this hole of negativity.

First, she accepted her rotten luck as just that – rotten luck. She accepted her situation and faced the responsibility of dealing with it.

Next, LB put together a plan to work as much as she could for her current main client ... and, at the same time, approach other people she'd worked with throughout the years to pick up additional assignments.

With this plan in hand, she moved on to its execution. And it was easier than she expected. The work started rolling in.

It's been a couple of years since LB overcame her career obstacle ... and she's only one year away from retiring the way she wants to. She'll have met all her financial goals, and will never have to worry about paying the bills. She has already moved into a very nice community that has many amenities she will continue to enjoy in retirement – and she will soon have plenty of time for international travel (which is her passion).

As DM and LB learned, when you find yourself in a bad situation, “positive thinking” doesn't get you out of it. Telling yourself you're lucky it wasn't worse isn't a practical solution. But the A.P.E. strategy – which calls for adopting a positive outlook AND a specific action plan – is.

STEP 5

Be Relentlessness in Pursuit of Your Dreams

By Robert Ringer

Although virtually everyone agrees that “time is money” is a truism, I’m convinced most people only pay lip service to it. If you’re really serious about the proposition, you need to come to grips with the reality that the key ingredient for converting time into money is self-discipline.

I believe the greatest catalyst for an undisciplined person is pain, and pain comes in many forms.

For instance, physical pain can be the catalyst for becoming self-disciplined when it comes to exercise and healthy eating. Financial pain can be the catalyst for having the self-discipline to work when you’re tired or sick, or when you’d rather be out having fun with everyone else. And then there’s the pain that comes from a lost love, which can give you the self-discipline to be a better partner when love comes your way again.

Years ago, when I was still single, I became good friends with a professional football player – “Bill” – who’d gained national prominence due to his stellar performance in the NFL. He was not only a phenomenal athlete, he was extremely intelligent and possessed extraordinary talents in many other areas.

Bill approached me at the health club we both belonged to and introduced himself. He said he had read my first book, and considered it to be his “bible.” Obviously, I was flattered.

Bill had been working on a book of his own for a couple of years, but was having trouble completing it. As I got to know him over the next three years, it became easy to see why. Notwithstanding everything he had going for him, he was totally lacking in one important area: self-discipline.

At that stage of my life, I was attracted to the proposition of having a good time, but I never allowed that attraction to interfere with my work. I normally went to bed between 8:30 p.m. and 9:00 p.m., woke around 4:30 a.m., jogged a few miles, and was at my Selectric typewriter by 8:00 a.m. or so. As a result, over the three-year period I was friends with Bill, I wrote two more books, both of them best-sellers.

Through it all, Bill was constantly urging me to “live it up” with him. He’d often chide me, saying, “C’mon, don’t be a party pooper. Lighten up. Sometimes, you’ve got to let it all hang out.”

During that three-year period, while I was finishing two successful books, Bill spent his non-partying time moaning and groaning about changing the premise of his book, endlessly reorganizing his material, and tinkering with – of all things – the title. To me, these appeared to be nothing more than self-delusive stalling tactics to avoid the gut-wrenching work of following through and actually bringing his book to completion.

And Bill missed his window of opportunity. Because, as everyone knows, fame is fleeting. The door closes very rapidly once you're out of the limelight. While he was playing in the NFL, it would have been easy for him to find a major publisher for his book. When you get your shot in life, you have to take it.

When I look back on my relationship with Bill, there were two defining moments for me.

The first occurred when I was putting in 14- to 16-hour workdays, seven days a week on my books. I vividly recall Bill looking very frustrated after one of my refusals to party with him. He said to me, in a discouraged tone, "How could I ever compete with someone as self-disciplined as you? You would just wear me down through attrition, because you're so relentless."

It struck me as bizarre that this famous, multitalented person was telling me he couldn't compete with *me*. Ridiculous. The truth of the matter is that he could have written two or three best-selling books in the time I knew him. In fact, with 100 percent effort, he could have beaten me at just about anything. And doors were open to him that certainly weren't open to me. For instance, he would have had a good shot at an acting career ... or maybe broadcasting.

Instead, Bill chose instant, daily, and (worse) nightly gratification over potentially huge benefits down the road.

Maybe Bill was just lazy, right? Sorry, not a valid excuse. The truth is most people are lazy at heart – and most successful people are especially lazy. They become self-disciplined out of necessity.

Dan Kennedy has said: "Every morning I have a little fight with myself, and I have to force myself to haul it out of bed and into the office." Well, I know the feeling. Everyone who has heard me speak knows how strongly I believe in the need to force yourself to take action.

The second defining moment in my relationship with Bill was when he told me he had developed the ability to bluff his way through practice after a hard night out on the town. He said he had mastered the art of going through the motions in such a way that it appeared to the coaches he was working at full throttle.

Unfortunately, Bill carried that same attitude into his aborted writing career and life beyond football. In my view, it's the reason he's not ensconced in the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio, where others with less talent but far more self-discipline will be forever honored.

Self-discipline is about restraining, or regulating, one's actions – repressing the instinct to act impulsively in favor of taking rational, long-term-oriented actions. My short-lived friendship

with Bill was immensely beneficial to me. It made me realize that self-discipline – a trait that every human being has the capacity to develop – gave me the power to outperform people who are far more intelligent and talented than I am.

STEP 6

Practice, Practice... and More Practice

By Michael Masterson

Renato, one of my Jiu Jitsu instructors, has convinced me to get back into grappling in a kimono. “It will be hard at first,” he told me. “But after a few months, when you go back to fighting without the gi, your game will be better.”

I know he’s right. But when he worked with me on it yesterday, I felt like a white belt again. He was slapping arm bars, foot locks, and collar chokes at the rate of one per minute. At the end of my hour-long class, I was ready to cry.

I’ve been practicing this sport for seven years now. But when I put on that kimono, I regressed. Big time. Renato, who competes at 145 pounds, was tossing me around like a rag doll. And I outweigh him by 50 pounds.

I know from experience, though, that if I keep on practicing, I’ll get better. A month from now, after I’ve relearned my gi defenses and have regained a little confidence, I’ll be giving away fewer submissions. And one day, I’ll give none.

I have no great natural talent for submission wrestling, but I am improving every day because I am willing to do what it takes. Making myself a better wrestler is no tougher than improving my Spanish language skills. I simply have to set myself specific goals, put in the time to practice, and keep at it until I succeed.

There is almost nothing you can’t accomplish so long as you are willing to put in the time. This is something we’ve been saying in *Early to Rise* for years – and now there is a substantial academic work on this subject that confirms our view.

K. Anders Ericsson, a professor of psychology at Florida State University, has studied the subject of “expert performance” pretty much his entire professional life. Thirty years ago, he performed an experiment in which he trained people to hear and repeat series of numbers. Untaught subjects were able to remember about seven digits in a row. After 20 hours of training, their memory had improved to the point where they could remember a 20-digit sequence. After 200 hours of training, they could remember a sequence of more than 80 numbers.

Later experiments in this area led Ericsson to conclude that whatever innate capacity a person might have for remembering, that’s nothing compared to how much he can learn by practice.

All of Ericsson's research and findings have been put together in an 800-page book called *The Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance* that will be published in July. The bottom line: "Talent is highly overrated."

Do what you want to do, Ericsson advises. Even if that means pursuing something for which you have no evident talent. "A lot of people believe there are some inherent limits they were born with," Ericsson told *The New York Times*. "But there is surprisingly little hard evidence that anyone could attain any kind of exceptional performance without spending a lot of time perfecting it."

That doesn't mean all people have equal potential. Some people – like my neighbor's child (who is singing opera at age nine) or Renato – seem to be "hard wired" at birth with a facility for certain skills. But in order to realize their potential, they will have to put in many hours of practice. And if they don't, they can easily be surpassed by someone who has no natural talent.

That's one of the important messages in Ericsson's book: Anyone can learn to be good at pretty much anything so long as he has the time and tenacity to practice doing it.

Of course, it can't be just any sort of practice, Ericsson warns. It must be what he calls "deliberate practice."

Deliberate practice involves more than repeating a specific task. To achieve the kind of expert performance we're talking about:

1. You have to set specific goals.
2. You have to get immediate feedback on your efforts.
3. You have to concentrate on technique as outcome.

1. Setting specific goals

The more specific your goal is, the more likely you will be to achieve it. In *The Success Principles*, author Jack Canfield explains how to set ultra-specific goals:

- Instead of "I want a new oceanfront house," say "I'll own a 4,000 sq. ft. house in Malibu by April 30, 2007."
- Instead of "I'm desperate to lose some weight," say "I'll weigh 185 lbs. by 5 p.m. Jan. 1, 2007."
- Instead of "I need to treat my employees better," say "I will acknowledge at least six employees for their contributions to the department by 5 p.m. this Friday."

2. Getting immediate feedback on your efforts

Getting feedback usually means working with a teacher. Expert teachers help you in two ways: They chart a course of instruction for you to follow, they correct you every time you veer off course, and they pretty much force you to keep track of your progress.

Getting expert help when you are learning a new skill will shorten your learning curve dramatically and thus significantly reduce the time (and sometimes money) you have to invest in it. It will also greatly reduce the frustration that comes with learning anything new – and that might keep you from giving up.

A quality learning program can take you a long way toward acquiring the financially valuable skill of your choice. And I said that you can accelerate your progress by spending several months or a year working at the feet of a master.

The very best athletes, entertainers, and business leaders all have someone in their corner that they can go to for advice, leadership, and teaching. So, if you don't already have one, make it a goal to find a mentor who will help fine-tune your game, hold you accountable, and who is not afraid to criticize when necessary.

3. Concentrating on technique as outcome

This is a subtle qualification. What it means – I think – is that, in practicing a skill, you should concentrate on the correct execution of that skill and not so much on the rewards you will enjoy once the skill is fully mastered. In other words, the reward for accomplishing any specific technique should be the psychological satisfaction of knowing that you've mastered it.

This approach makes sense. It is, more or less, how behavior modification specialists work. Jazz master and blues guitarist Howard Roberts claimed that the secret of his virtuosity was to “never practice a mistake.” His theory was that any learning is the biological process of creating neural networks in the brain. Every perfect repetition beats a good path – one that you can travel on later. Every incorrect repetition beats a parallel but incorrect path – one that you can easily slide onto if you aren't careful. The more you practice the right moves, the deeper the memory path. The trick is to make the correct paths as deep as possible and the incorrect paths shallow or nonexistent.

STEP 7

Think Like a Winner

by Brian Tracy

After studying the research done in cognitive psychology over the last 25 years, I've come to a simple conclusion: The degree to which you feel in control of your life will largely determine your level of mental well-being, your peace of mind, and the quality of your interactions with people.

What cognitive psychologists call a "sense of control" is the foundation of happiness and high achievement. And the only thing in the world over which you have complete control is the content of your conscious mind. If you decide to exert that control, even when you are surrounded by difficult circumstances, your future potential will be unlimited.

Your aim should be to work on yourself and your thinking until you reach the point where you absolutely, positively believe yourself to be a total winner in anything you sincerely want to accomplish. When you feel unshakable confidence in yourself and your abilities, nothing will be able to stop you. This state of self-confidence comes from (1) understanding the functioning of your remarkable mind, and (2) practicing the techniques of mental fitness over and over, until you become a completely optimistic, cheerful, and positive person.

In his book *The Act of Will*, Italian psychologist Dr. Roberto Assagioli laid out a series of psychological principles that can help you understand the way your mind works and how you can take control of it. One of his principles is that images or pictures, either from within or from the outside, will trigger thoughts and feelings that are consistent with them. In turn, those thoughts and feelings will trigger behaviors that lead to the realization of the pictures.

This has been referred to as the Law of Reversibility, and is one of the most important success principles ever discovered. Simply put, you are more likely to act yourself into feeling than you are to feel yourself into acting.

For example, when you become absolutely convinced that you are a total winner and you are meant to be a complete success in anything that you really want to do, every picture or image that somehow represents winning to you will trigger thoughts of what you could do to achieve that same state. The picture will also trigger the feeling of excitement that will motivate you to take action.

A friend of mine who was a sales manager had a simple technique to make new salespeople successful, and it worked more than 90 percent of the time. When he hired a salesperson, he

would take that person to a nearby Cadillac dealership and force him to trade in his current car for a new Cadillac. The payments on the Cadillac were substantially more than the new salesperson had ever imagined himself making, so he would strongly resist getting into the commitment. However, the sales manager would insist until, finally, the salesperson bought the new Cadillac and drove it home.

No matter how unsure or insecure the salesperson felt, when his spouse and friends saw the new Cadillac and he experienced the pleasure of driving it down the street, he began to think about himself and to see himself as a big success. And in almost every case, it turned out to be true. Those people went on to become great successes at selling their products.

Take every opportunity you can to surround yourself with images of what success means to you. Get brochures on new cars. Get magazines with pictures of beautiful homes, beautiful clothes, and other things that you could own as a result of achieving the success that you are aiming for. Each time you see or visualize those images, you trigger the thoughts, feelings, and actions that make them materialize in your life.

In her book *Wake Up and Live*, Dorothea Brande said that the most important success secret she ever discovered was this: “Act as if it were impossible to fail, and it shall be.” She goes on to explain that you need to be very clear about the success that you desire, and then simply act as if you already had it. Act as if your success were inevitable. Act as if your achievement were guaranteed. Act as if there were no possibility of failure.

You can control your actions easier than you can control your feelings. So if you choose to exert control over your actions, those actions will have a “back flow” effect and trigger the feelings, thoughts, and images that are consistent with those of the person you want to be, of the person who lives the life you want to live.

Your brain is a multi-sensory, multi-stimulated, extremely complex, interactive organ. Everything that you think, imagine, say, do, or feel triggers something else. It’s like a series of electrical impulses going out in all directions and turning on lights everywhere.

By understanding the way your mind works, you can make your mind work for you as a powerful engine of growth and development. You can consciously surround yourself with a series of sensory inputs that bombard you with messages and cause you to think and feel like a total winner.

And if you think like a winner and do the things that winners do to keep their minds positive and optimistic, you will be a winner.

STEP 8

Maintain the Right Attitude in the Face of Every Challenge

By Michael Masterson

When I travel overseas, I am often less able to solve problems. I attribute that to two things:

1. An increase in my sensitivity to trouble
2. A decrease in my willingness to ask for help

I suppose it's natural. Foreign environments cast dubious shadows. Problems that would seem ordinary back home (I can't get my wireless working) feel critical here (the French will never become modernized!).

I suffer from that stereotypically male problem of hating to ask strangers for help. Asking in a foreign language – even one I'm modestly fluent in – makes my anxiety much worse.

The combination – timidity and sensitivity – can be debilitating.

Case in point: Last summer, rushing to meet K at the cathedral at St. Sulpice in Paris, I couldn't figure out how to buy a Metro ticket from the automatic vending machine. I fumbled, trying this and that. Meanwhile, a line of busy French commuters were fidgeting behind me. Finally, I gave up and left.

I was halfway up the staircase, on my way to getting a taxi, when I stopped and took a deep breath. "What are you worried about?" I thought. "If this happened to you in NYC or Chicago, would you rush out in a panic?"

I instructed my rational mind to think like I would in the States. I told my heart to do what my rational mind said.

When I got back to the machine, there was one person in front of me. Instead of fumbling around again, I asked him, "How do I use this thing?"

He gave me a quick explanation and moved away. It wasn't enough, but it was something. And the young lady behind me, having heard the exchange, then guided me through the relatively simple process. (I had been misinterpreting a word.)

Stepping on the Metro, I promised myself that in the future, when traveling, I would expect such problems and maintain a better attitude about resolving them.

This is true of all such situations. If you are mentally prepared to deal with them, you will. If you have the wrong attitude, you risk ruining a potentially wonderful experience.

The trick I used to overcome my Metro problem is the same trick you can use to get over virtually every barrier in your life, large or small. The trick has two simple parts, one of which I've never acknowledged before.

One part is this: Take action. As Robert Ringer says in his great book, *Action! Nothing Happens Until Something Moves*:

“I am absolutely convinced that neither success nor happiness is possible without action. ... Ideas can be precious commodities that can change the world. Sound preparation is invaluable and knowledge and wisdom are essential when it comes to giving one an edge in the pursuit of great achievements. But ideas, preparation, knowledge, and wisdom are all but useless without action because action is the starting point of all progress. In other words, an idea of and by itself has no intrinsic value. It must be accompanied by action. It is action that cuts the umbilical cord and brings an idea out of the womb.”

The other part, the part I haven't admitted to yet, is this: Change the way you are thinking.

I've always resisted the idea that how you think determines the success or failure of a goal, because I find most positive-thinking theories to be stupid and ineffectual. Most of the people I know who focus on getting their heads right are losers who never achieve anything in life. The most successful people I know are doers ... achievers.

My argument-in-a-nutshell, to date, has been this: Don't worry about what is going on in your mind. If you want to accomplish something, just focus on the specific behavior that will get you there. Find out the exact actions that others have taken to achieve a similar objective, and imitate those actions, step by step.

I still believe this approach is essentially sound. But I have to admit, it's sometimes very difficult to take that first step until you have cleaned out the negative stuff in your head and replaced it with “can-do” thinking.

That's what I did in the Metro. And, now that I think about it, that's what I have done a thousand times in business when I knew I had to change my mind about something or lose out on an opportunity.

In a posting on his blog, Matt Furey Uncensored, Matt had this to say on the subject:

“Whatever you are doing with your words, pictures, and feelings in the present moment – these are YOUR FUTURE. Your future is a result of how you think about your life right now.

“Let me give you a fitness-related example. Suppose you believe you need to work out today – but you're not looking forward to it. You're even dreading it a bit. As a result of this, do you think you will be more or less likely to procrastinate on your workout? Do you think you will be

more or less likely to have a good workout?

“All right, now change your thought to something like, ‘I love how good I feel when I’m done exercising. Exercise always makes me feel so good. I love to exercise – especially on the days I don’t want to. Those are the days that exercise does me the most good.’

“Now – as you think this thought – imagine seeing yourself working out. And as you imagine that scene, see yourself smiling, relaxed, and happy. Remove any trace of a frown from your face. See yourself laughing and having a good time – internally.

“Okay – now answer the same questions I asked earlier. Do you think you will be more or less likely to procrastinate on your workout? Do you think you will be more or less likely to have a good workout?

“My friend, it all boils down to your ‘want’ muscle. If you WANT to do something, especially if you want to do it because you LOVE doing it – well, look out. NO-thing will stand in your way. NO-thing can stop you. Not even YOU.

“Read your own mind. As impressive as it may appear to be able to pick up on another’s thoughts – your focus should be on your own thoughts MOST of the time. See what you’re thinking and make sure you keep it focused on what truly matters to you.”

So, apologies to all those who have for many years argued with me about the importance of positive thinking. Yes, I admit, it is a very important part of success. It can help you get over your fears, toughen up, and take action.

Unless you take action, nothing else will happen. So if it helps to start by clearing out the bad thoughts and replacing them with good ones, do it. Then – as Matt Furey says – you will be able to kick butt and take names!

STEP 9

Think Big to Make It Big

By Paul Lawrence

The director of the sketch-comedy group in Florida was frustrated when he got off the phone with president of the sketch-comedy festival in Los Angeles. She had just politely declined to allow his group to be a participant in her annual event.

She had reviewed a sample tape and said that though she thought his group was very good, what she needed was local groups that could bring audience members to the show.

The director had explained that although his group was based in Florida, they knew quite a lot of people in LA.

Still, she wasn't swayed.

As you've probably guessed by now, the director in this story was me – and after I hung up the phone, I began wondering if this wasn't a blessing in disguise.

You see, I had formed the sketch-comedy group about a year and a half before. Now that we'd been performing locally for a while, we wanted to get into some festivals in LA where there'd be a chance for entertainment industry people to see us. So we applied to a few. But every time I sent in a submission tape, I ran into the same problem.

After this last rejection, I decided I'd had enough. If my group was going to be in a festival in LA where there'd be some important people ... maybe I'd have to produce one myself.

And so I did.

I produced a very successful event called the International Sketch Comedy Competition (sketchcomedycompetition.com). We sold out a major theater in downtown Los Angeles, and groups from all over the U.S. and Canada came and competed in front of a panel of VIP entertainment industry judges and a large crowd. Naturally, my group performed too.

As happens so often in life, when you get some momentum going, one opportunity develops from another. In this case, the event was so successful that a major production company in LA offered me a contract (which I recently signed) to develop the concept into a television program.

You must be willing to Think Big. Although I'd never produced a major competition and lived 3,000 miles away from the festival site, I was willing to do that. And it landed me a contract to be an executive producer on a nationally broadcast television show.

Thinking Big has worked for many others, too.

Danny M. had been a mid-level manager for many years when he made the decision to become self-employed. He had a little capital saved, and he could've opened up a "mom and pop" retail operation – but he wanted to make more than a comfortable living. So he started a retail business that he could recreate over and over and sell to other entrepreneurs ... similar to franchising.

Because Danny Thought Big, he developed a business that has made him wealthy enough to own a giant house in one of the most exclusive neighborhoods in town, drive an expensive sports car, and travel (first-class) all over the world. None of which he'd been able to afford had he stayed with the little "mom and pop" idea.

WHAT RISKS HAVE YOU TAKEN LATELY?

Are you doing the work you want? Have you told your boss how you really feel? And what about your romantic life? Are you brave in love?

Remember, a ship in harbor is safe – but that's not what a ship was built for.

Then there's Jeff Y., a school teacher who was fascinated by the potential of investing in real estate. His friends and family advised him to play it safe – to forget about making a fortune in real estate and to just keep putting his savings into his employee-sponsored retirement plan.

But Jeff was willing to Think Big – so he used some of his savings to buy a "fixer-upper" that he could renovate and re-sell. Within 90 days, he'd made a \$30,000 profit.

Of course, Thinking Big can be frightening. Will I be publicly embarrassed if I fail? Will people think I'm stupid? Will I damage my career? Make a horrible financial blunder?

When I began to promote my sketch comedy festival, I was concerned because I was putting my name out – in a very public way – in an industry where people tend to be highly judgmental. If the event was a failure, there was the very real potential for it to hurt me.

It's normal to have such fears – and as long as they don't paralyze you, they're not necessarily bad. Because of my realistic fear of what might happen if my event failed, I worked relentlessly to make sure it was successful. And it paid off.

Here's how you can break down Thinking Big into a few manageable steps that can make your big idea a reality.

1. Accept the possibility that your dream can happen for you.

The first thing you must do is actually believe that your dream can be a reality ... if you are willing to pay the price to make it happen.

2. Take some initial actions that will set you on a path to making it happen.

This is where many people fall off. You must start to take some actions to achieve your goal. In my case with the sketch-comedy festival, since I lived in Florida and wanted to produce it in LA, I knew I would need a partner who lived there. So I made some calls and found someone. And that got the ball rolling.

3. Use the momentum of tiny successes to strengthen your belief that you can succeed.

Once you achieve that first small success, you'll start to gain confidence that your dream is really going to happen. With that confidence, you will gain momentum ... which, in turn, will result in even bigger successes.

Using my own example: As soon as I had a partner in LA, I began searching for a theater to rent for the event. Once we had a theater and a date, we had something tangible – not just an idea. So I was able to move to the next step, which was to line up a panel of industry judges. A number of prominent executives agreed to participate. This really revved up my confidence level, so I then began inviting groups to submit tapes to our submission committee. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Life is short, and you don't want to let it pass you by. So, Think Big ... and make your dreams come true.

STEP 10

Become the Top Dog

By Michael Masterson

Have you ever been charged up to reach a goal, only to see that charge dissipate over time?

This is a very common problem. In fact, it's the main reason most people never accomplish their lifetime objectives.

Early to Rise reader Dave Jacobs emailed me about that very problem. He said:

Dear Michael,

Thanks for all you do to help those of us just beginning our journeys to more successful lives. I have recently taken a series of significant steps toward achieving my Life Goals. As I see myself moving toward my goals and increasing my productivity, I'm (predictably) excited and energized. But what about two months from now? Two years? How can I maintain the energy and enthusiasm I have now? How do I sustain my current level of focus and productivity? What do you think are the crucial factors to being consistently motivated and focused?

The good news is that Dave is super-motivated now, and he really, really doesn't want that motivation to fizzle out. That's why he wrote to me – so he could learn some trick or several tricks to ensure that he keeps going strong for as long as he needs to.

No doubt you have felt the same way Dave is feeling right now. I've faced the same problem myself several times in my life. I hope the following story can help both you and Dave.

In high school, I was a lazy student. My priorities were sports and social activities. Because I'd inherited some raw brainpower from my parents, I managed to maintain a grade-point average that got me into college ... just barely. But I knew that unless I learned to learn, I wouldn't make it through four years, and I'd probably spend the rest of my life earning \$10 an hour as a manual laborer.

So at the end of my senior year in high school, I made up my mind to quit being a goof-off and become, in college, a much better student. I spent the summer prepping myself by working out a study schedule and doing some background reading. But I was afraid that I would revert to my bad habits, abandoning my studies for sports and partying before the end of my freshman year.

To make that unwanted scenario less likely to happen, I found a "nerd" to share an apartment with and refused to sign up for any sports or pledge any fraternities. I told my friends that I

would be “out of touch” for at least a year. I explained my goals to them and asked them to respect me by leaving me alone until the following summer.

I realized that I needed to make a radical personality change to be able to resist the temptation of regressing to my high school habits. So when school began, I sat in the front row of every class – something I’d never done in high school.

I started off strong by doing at least 50 percent more than I was asked to do. If the assignment was to write a 500-word essay on religion, I’d write 750 words and include a glossary of impressive sources. If the assignment was to read *King Lear* by the following week, I’d read it twice. And then I’d go to the library and read critical essays about the play so I’d be aware of all the major interpretations.

I also made it a point to raise my hand every time a question was asked and to turn in extra work, even when it would get me no extra credit. In short, I turned myself into a straight-out and full-blown brown-nosing student ... and I made sure my instructors – and my fellow students – saw me that way.

In the beginning, many of the other students in my classes did as much work as I did. But as the weeks went by, most started slipping a little bit. Each time they fell behind, I got motivated to work even harder. And I was thrilled when I got those early test scores back. I had never before understood how good an A or B+ felt.

And that feeling motivated me to push even harder. With each passing week, the distance between me and the other good students widened. By the middle of the semester – in virtually every single class – I was clearly the best.

The response I got from instructors and students fueled my ego. Being the best student in a class felt much better than being the class clown.

By the time my freshman year was over, I saw myself as a completely different person. I was no longer the funny screw-up I’d been in high school. I’d changed into the “Teacher’s Pet” who sat in the front and had the right answer to every question.

Once my image of myself changed, my motivation became permanent. I couldn’t screw up any more, because it was simply unthinkable. I was the best student in every class, and I was going to make damn sure everybody saw me that way – no matter how much work it took.

So ... if you see yourself as someone who may be able to start out strong, but never really accomplish anything great, you need to drastically revise your vision of yourself. You have to turn yourself into number one at whatever you do – the person to go to when no one else can get the job done.

To become that person, you will have to:

1. Get up early, and give your day a jumpstart by doing something meaningful ... first thing.

2. Work as late as you have to.
3. Do at least 50 percent more than what is asked of you.
4. Volunteer for challenging assignments.
5. Educate yourself on the side.
6. Become better than anyone else at the essential skills you need to accomplish your goal.

Becoming top dog takes a lot of extra time, so you'll have to make significant sacrifices.

If you are like most people, your biggest distractions will be television, the Internet, friends, and family. Get rid of your TV. Limit your Internet use to one hour a day. And let your friends and family members know that you won't be able to spend much time with them in the foreseeable future.

Work like mad until you've become number one in your class, job, or hobby. When that happens – and it shouldn't take more than six months – you'll feel great about yourself. And once you experience that feeling, you'll never have to worry about motivation again.

Well ... almost never. As I said at the beginning of this article, I've needed a motivational recharge more than once in my life. Everyone does. But after the first time, you'll understand exactly what you have to do to get yourself going again.

STEP 11

The Journey to Happiness

by Brian Tracy

From Aristotle in 340 B.C. through to the thinkers, speakers, and writers of today, the key to happiness has hardly changed at all. It is both simple and complex. And it is the same for virtually all men and women, in all countries and situations, and in all walks of life.

The key to happiness is this: Dedicate yourself to the development of your natural talents and abilities by doing what you love to do and continuing to do it better and better.

Since you can't be truly happy until you are clear about your inherent possibilities, it's very important that you take some time on a regular basis to analyze yourself and identify your strengths and weaknesses. One of the best ways to do this is to start by asking yourself two powerful questions.

The first question is my favorite: "What one great thing would I dare to dream if I knew I could not fail?"

Imagine that you are absolutely guaranteed of success in the pursuit of a particular goal, big or small, short-term or long-term. Imagine that you had all the money, all the time, all the education, all the contacts, all the resources, and everything else that you could possibly need to achieve any one big goal in life. In other words, imagine that you had no restrictions.

What would your goal in life be?

The second question to ask yourself is this: "How would I spend my life if I learned today that I only had six months to live?" In other words, if you could only do one or two things before your time on earth was over, what would they be? Where would you go? Who would you spend your time with?

These questions help you assess your values. They go right to the very heart of the person you really are ... and of what is really important to you.

Getting these insights into yourself is the first step toward understanding what you should be doing with your life. The next step is to find a career that will make you happy. And this is where identifying your natural talents and abilities comes in.

Dr. Viktor Frankl, who wrote the book *Man's Search for Meaning*, suggested that you can do it by dividing the things you could do in life into four categories.

- The first category consists of the things that are hard for you to learn and hard for you to do. An example in this category for many people is mathematics. Many of us struggled with math in school, and still struggle with bookkeeping, accounting, financial statements, and tax returns as adults. If you find mathematics hard to learn and hard to do, this is the sort of activity for which you are clearly not suited. No matter how much of it you do or how good you get at it, you will never achieve any lasting satisfaction or happiness from it.
- The next category consists of things that are hard for you to learn but easy for you to do. Riding a bicycle and driving a car are hard to learn but easy to do once you've practiced enough. Tying your shoes is another example. These are seldom the sorts of activities that make you feel terrific about yourself when you engage in them. They do not demand your best.
- The third category consists of things that are easy for you to learn but hard for you to do. Physical labor falls into this category. Digging a ditch with a shovel or chopping wood with an ax are easy to learn but they are hard to do. And they never get any easier.
- The fourth category is the one you're looking for. These are the things that are easy for you to do and easy for you to learn. You seem to have a natural proclivity for them. When you are engaged in these activities, time flies. These are the things that you should be doing with your life. They indicate where your natural talents and abilities lie and what will make you happy. It is engaging in these activities with your whole heart, and committing yourself to becoming better and better at them, that will give you all the joy and satisfaction you could ever want.

Everyone has an area of excellence. Everyone has something that he or she can do in an outstanding fashion. It may take weeks, months, and even years for you to develop yourself in your area of excellence – but you will be strongly attracted to that sort of activity from the beginning. You will enjoy reading about it and talking about it and thinking about it. You will find yourself admiring people who are already outstanding at doing it. You will look longingly at that field and wonder what it would be like to be in it and to be successful at it. And that's how you'll know that you have found your heart's desire.

You were put on this earth with a special purpose, programmed with unique talents and abilities that have not yet been fully tapped and utilized. When you focus all of your energies on unlocking your true potential, you can claim your ultimate birthright: happiness.

And remember ... excellence is not a destination; it's a lifelong journey. It is when you continue to grow, becoming better and better at something that is important to you, that you really feel alive and in touch with your world.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Paul Lawrence is an entrepreneur who has made his living starting and running a series of profitable businesses. He launched one of the most financially successful independent ballroom dance instruction companies in the state of Florida where he received quite a bit of media attention for his revolutionary business practices (including front page features in the Life Style section of the Sun Sentinel, features in the Miami Herald, Boca News, Center Stage Entertainment, and many others). Paul has since started several other businesses either individually or as partnerships that included a million-dollar video production company, a mortgage brokerage, a home-maintenance business, several mail-order companies, and a business-consulting service.

Most recently, Lawrence has beaten the odds by becoming a produced writer. He is a credited writer for the film *Cruel World* and has signed a development deal for a national television series with one of the world's largest producers of television and films. Lawrence is the creator of the *Quick & Easy Microbusiness Program* and *Dare to Live Your Dreams*.

Michael Masterson has developed a loyal following through his writings in *Early to Rise*, an e-newsletter published by Agora, Inc. that mentors more than 160,000 success-oriented individuals to help them achieve their financial goals.

Masterson has been making money for himself and others for almost four decades. At one time or another, he has owned and managed multi-million dollar companies that were either public/private, onshore/overseas, local/international, service-/product-oriented, retail/wholesale/direct mail, and even profit/not-for-profit.

Masterson is the author of the *Wall Street Journal* bestsellers *Seven Years to Seven Figures: The Fast Track Plan to Becoming a Millionaire*; *Automatic Wealth: The Six Steps to Financial Independence*; *Automatic Wealth for Grads... and Anyone Else Just Starting Out*; *Power and Persuasion: How to Command Success in Business and Your Personal Life* (all published by John Wiley & Sons); and *Confessions of a Self-Made Millionaire*.

Robert Ringer is a dynamic public speaker and the author of eight books, including three #1 bestsellers – *Restoring the American Dream*, *Looking Out for #1*, and *To Be or Not to Be Intimidated?* (the updated and totally rewritten version of *Winning through Intimidation*).

A powerful combination motivator, sales/deal-making strategist, and maximum-performance authority, Robert Ringer inspires and energizes readers and audiences with his thought-provoking perceptions, savvy understanding of human nature, and entrepreneurial techniques for overcoming obstacles and prospering in today's competitive and uncertain world.

Ringer's astute observations of how the world works have helped millions of salespeople, entrepreneurs, business owners, corporate executives, and individuals in all walks of life to achieve their personal and professional goals.

Brian Tracy is the most listened to audio author on personal and business success in the world today. He is a dynamic and entertaining speaker with a wonderful ability to inform and inspire audiences toward peak performance and high levels of achievement.

Tracy is an avid believer in controlling one's own destiny, daily goal-planning, hard work, and perseverance. Prior to founding Brian Tracy International, Tracy was the chief operating officer of a development company with \$265 million in assets and \$75 million in annual sales. He has had successful careers in sales and marketing, investments, real estate development and syndication, importation, distribution and management consulting. Tracy has conducted high-level consulting assignments with several billion-dollar-plus corporations in strategic planning and organization development.

He is an internationally known and respected authority addressing 450,000 people each year on leadership, management, sales, personal development, strategic planning, goal-setting, time management, creativity, and many other diverse topics. Brian has worked with IBM, Arthur Andersen, McDonnell Douglas and The Million Dollar Round Table and is the author/narrator of countless best-selling audio learning programs and the author of 16 books, including *Maximum Achievement*, *Advanced Selling Strategies*, *The 100 Absolutely Unbreakable Laws of Business Success*, and *The 21 Success Secrets of Self-Made Millionaires*.

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