

Create Your Future In Five Easy Steps

Your Personal Development Plan

A goal without a plan is no more than wishful thinking

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INTRODUCTION

IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU ARE GOING, YOU'LL END UP SOMEWHERE ELSE

ARE YOU FULLY IN CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE?

IS YOUR CAREER AND LIFE HOW YOU ENVISIONED IT WHEN YOU PUT YOUR FIRST STEP ON THE LADDER?

Perhaps you are one of the professional casualties of the COVID-19 crisis and are now looking for new clarity of direction. Whatever is the case you need to have a clear, inspiring vision of what you want your future to be and take decisive steps towards your objectives; otherwise you may be disappointed and disillusioned.

If you leave your future to fate or put it into the hands of others – your school, your boss, your partner, or even your parents – you jeopardize getting where you want to go and doing what you want to do. As somebody once put it "if you're not working to realize your own dream, you're working to realize someone else's".

You and you alone are responsible for what you do with your life. If you want it to be different tomorrow from what it is today, you have to start doing things differently right away. Do the same thing today as you did yesterday, then chances are all your tomorrows will be exactly the same as all your todays!

Want to avoid that rut? Be proactive. Don't be a victim. Change how you think. Take charge and be in control. You will quickly realize the only way to achieve what you want from life, personally or professionally, is to think about where you are today, where you want to be tomorrow, put a plan in place and action it.





have you heard the expression? 'LUCK IS WHEN PREPARATION MEETS OPPORTUNITY'

Think about that for a moment, and then ask yourself if you have the skills and mindset needed to take advantage of opportunities when they arise. And opportunities will arise, and with a plan in place you will be able to recognize them. As long as you have determination you will have a clear idea of how to best use them as stepping-stones to where you want to be. A personal development plan enables you take a systematic approach to developing your vision of the future; it will help you to be mentally prepared for each step of the journey and have the right tools available when you need them.

This document guides you through the various stages of creating your own personalized plan. It's a step-by-step process, with templates and instructions, which will lay the foundations for a thoughtful and well-considered development plan. This will help you achieve your goals for a happy life and a successful career. Each section builds on the previous one, so work through them in order.

You will use your imagination and creativity to picture an inspiring vision of your future, one that concurs with your values and beliefs. Then, you will examine your current situation to assess what needs to be done to achieve this vision, setting meaningful goals in terms of how you want your future to be. Finally, you will identify the skills and mindset you need to have to take effective action towards achieving your ultimate goals.

You can fill in the worksheets by hand although you may want to create your own Word document templates that can be filled out directly on your computer screen. That way you can maintain your plan as a dynamic, living document and keep it relevant and updated as you go along. You can work on your own, although for the best possible outcome I strongly suggest you work on this with the support of your personal coach.

Remember, your personal development plan is for you and you alone. It's personal, so think about what 'satisfaction' means to you: after all, each of us gets fulfilment and happiness from different things. That's why you need to think about this for yourself, rather than following someone else's pre-prepared plan. You are about to embark on an important and potentially life-changing personal journey by taking an honest look at your life today; and create an inspiring vision for your future!





STEP ONE

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR VALUES & WRITING A VALUES STATEMENT

We are all governed by underlying values that determine how we feel in any given situation and why we find some things more important than others. These values are fundamental to our psychological make-up and our identity. We make value-based decisions all the time, which define us and influence everything we do. Some values are shaped by shifting circumstances as we move through life, but a handful are core to our very being, unchanging over the years and lying deep within us.

A good set of personal values is constructive and supported by our emotions, our experiences and by evidence. When we act in accordance with these, they will motivate us positively and drive us forward. When our actions are in alignment with those deep-seated core values that's when we feel a true sense of purpose and meaning. For this reason it is vital to start your journey by considering what your core values are, because your final development plan is unlikely to work for you if your objectives are incompatible with your values.

This initial step in the process is therefore to examine your values and to write a personal values statement. It will require introspection, honesty and probably take some time to complete. I recommend you do not rush through this part and revisit this section regularly over the next few days as you work through the rest of the process. When it comes to creating your final development plan you will find that gaining a deeper understanding of your own identity, through identifying your fundamental and sincerely held core values, and articulating your beliefs and desires has been time well spent.





ACTION POINT ONE: CORE VALUES

Take some time to think about situations in your life when you felt (1) completely happy, (2) really excited, (3) totally at ease, and (4) thoroughly annoyed and angry. Let your mind wander freely and use memories that spring easily to mind. Based on these recollections ask yourself the following questions and take careful note of your answers.

- What do I do that is really important to me?
- What excites me?
- What brings me joy?
- What gets me really hot under the collar?
- What do I really enjoy doing?
- What gives me fulfilment?
- What am I willing to dedicate my life to?
- What about myself do I value the most?
- What qualities have other people noticed in me?
- What do I want to be remembered for?

With these questions and answers in mind work through the provided list of core values and tick the ones that you feel apply to you. Pinpoint values that you can truly identify with; do not choose values because you think you *should* believe in them. Go back and repeat the process again as many times as needed until you have reduced your list to three values that are genuinely important to you. You might identify more than three, however, I find there is usually three deeply held personal values that stand out over and above the others. Please note that the pre-prepared list is only intended to prompt your thinking; it is by no means exhaustive, so add as many of your own values that you can think of before you start ticking. (If necessary you will find a more extensive list of values in the resource section.)

Just as it is important to know *what* your core values are it is also vital to understand *why* they are important to you. Having identified your three leading core values use the second template to write down your reasons for choosing them. This will lay the foundation to step two of the values exercise—writing your persona Values Statement.





CORE VALUES EXERCISE:

Acceptance Friendships		Religion	
Achievement	Fun	Reputation	
Advancement	Grace	Respect	
Adventure	Growth	Responsibility	
Authenticity	Happiness	Security	
Authority	Health	Self-Development	
Autonomy	Honesty	Self-Respect	
Balance	Humor	Service	
Beauty	Independence	Spirituality	
Boldness	Influence	Stability	
Challenge	Inner Harmony	Status	
Citizenship	Innovation	Success	
Community	Justice	Trustworthiness	
Compassion	Kindness	Truth	
Competency	Knowledge	Uniqueness	
Competiveness	Leadership	Variety	
Contribution	Learning	Vitality	
Control	Love	Wealth	
Courage	Loyalty	World Peace	
Creativity	Meaningful Work		
Curiosity	Nurturing		
Determination	Openness		
Dignity	Optimism		
Elegance	e Order		
Excellence	Peace		
Excitement	Performance		
Fairness	Pleasure		
Faith	Poise		
Fame	Popularity		
Financial security	Power		
Freedom	Recognition		





ACTION POINT TWO: CREATE YOUR VALUES STATEMENT

"EVERY PERSON ABOVE THE ORDINARY HAS A MISSION THEY ARE CALLED TO FULFIL." JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE (1749 - 1832)

Now that you are clear about your values it's time to articulate the collective intentions these values represent, that will serve as a signpost for your decisions and actions. Your personal values statement should express who you are, what you want to be and why you do what you do. It is similar to a sales pitch, but on a very personal level. Its purpose is to express your identity and sense of integrity and serve as a guide and inspire you, so it is important to keep drafting your statement until it feels absolutely right.

A personal Values Statement takes time to create and may evolve over time. To make your statement assertive be brave and use bold and confident language. It should communicate a clear goal that expresses your ideal self, your aptitudes, your purpose and your legacy. These questions will help to prompt your thinking:

- What do you want to accomplish in your life?
- Why is this important to you?
- How does your core values lay the foundation to your decisions?
- How will you be making a contribution to other people?
- What deep emotional meaning does this have for you?
- How do you want others to perceive you?

BELOW ARE EXAMPLES OF PERSONAL VALUES STATEMENTS THAT MAY INSPIRE YOU:

"To serve as a leader, live a balanced life, and apply ethical principles to make a significant difference." **DENISE MORRISON, CEO OF CAMPBELL SOUP COMPANY**

"To be a teacher. And to be known for inspiring my students to be more than they thought they could be." **OPRAH WINFREY, FOUNDER OF OWN, THE OPRAH WINFREY NETWORK**

"To have fun in [my] journey through life and learn from [my] mistakes." **SIR RICHARD BRANSON, FOUNDER OF THE VIRGIN GROUP**

"To use my gifts of intelligence, charisma, and serial optimism to cultivate the self-worth and net-worth of women around the world." **AMANDA STEINBERG, FOUNDER OF DAILY WORTH**

"To constantly be striving to be the best version of myself—in my job, with my health and fitness, with my relationships with family and friends, and with my emotional well being." **KATIE ARNOLD OF TALK LESS, SAY MORE**





The examples above are brief one-sentence statements. Your values statement may be a little longer, but my feeling is that a couple of sentences is about the right length. Too long and it easily becomes muddled. There are plenty of inspirational examples to be found on the Internet.

Based on your three most dominant core values use the box below to start the process of drafting your personal Values Statement.

MY FIRST MOST IMPORTANT VALUE IS:

MY SECOND MOST IMPORTANT VALUE IS:

MY THIRD MOST IMPORTANT VALUE IS:

THESE VALUES ARE IMPORTANT TO ME BECAUSE:





STEP TWO

PERSONAL SWOT ANALYSIS

"HE WHO CONQURS OTHERS IS STRONG. HE WHO CONQURS HIMSELF IS MIGHTY." LAO TZU

You may not yet have identified specific goals and career objectives but you may already have a broad vision of where you are heading. So before you settle on a detailed long-term plan you need to reflect on your current situation, i.e. what you are good at, what areas in your life or career you need to improve on, what opportunities are available to you and factors that could have a negative impact on your aspirations.

For this we will use a classic business tool, the SWOT Analysis, to uncover strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. However, for the purpose of this exercise we will apply it on a more personal level.

Your SWOT Analysis will help you gain a better understanding of yourself. Knowing your strengths will enable you to focus on the things that you're good at, and awareness of weaknesses and how you may risk standing in your own way will help you work on areas of professional and personal development that needs attention.

Taken together strengths and opportunities allow you to identify potential long-term objectives particularly suitable to you: weaknesses and threats detects issues that need to be managed, mitigated or planned for to ensure that those long term objectives remain achievable.

This exercise will require a fair degree of personal honesty, and the courage to take an objective view of yourself, both in a positive and a not so positive light. But the self-awareness you will gain will be invaluable when moving on to goal setting and planning.

ACTION POINT:

The following section will guide you through the process. Use the four-quadrant grid to list your answers in the corresponding boxes.





YOUR UNIQUE STRENGTHS

Here, your goal is to uncover what sets you apart from other people and the qualities you have that make you stand out from them. When thinking about your strengths, don't limit yourself to your professional skills. Explore all of your experiences and opportunities that you have had to grow and develop. This includes your education, aptitudes, personality factors, and interests. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What are you really good at?
- What skills do others recognize in you?
- What do you get rewarded for?
- What do you do better than most people you work with?
- What are you most proud of?
- What experiences, resources or connections do you have access to that others don't?

You may want to ask your family, friends and colleagues to list what they see as your strengths as well. We often tend to be overly self-effacing and downplay our own abilities; asking others is a great way to get a more rounded picture. And learning where others think you excel is a terrific boost to your self-esteem!

YOUR PERSONAL WEAKNESSES

Here you should think about the things that you're not so good at and areas where you know you can improve your performance. When you become more aware of your weaknesses you can reduce or manage them to minimize their impact on preventing you from achieving your goals. To complete this section use the following questions as prompts:

- What skills do you struggle to master?
- What do you do only because you have to, in order to satisfy other people or job requirements?
- How might you stand in your own way and hold yourself back?
- What do other people most often identify as your weakness?
- Where do you feel vulnerable?
- Where do you lack experience, resources or connections?

Unlike the Strengths section, don't feel compelled to list every little weakness you can think of. Limit yourself to the ones that are relevant to your all-over objectives. The idea is not to 'beat yourself up' about your shortcomings, we all have them, but to recognize and manage potential issues appropriately.

Also, don't be too self-critical.

If you're fair and forgiving to other people's weaknesses make sure you forgive your own too.





OPPORTUNITIES AND OPTIONS YOU WANT TO PURSUE

Now that you've reflected on your strengths and weaknesses you need to focus on understanding the opportunities that your strengths open up to you. Ask yourself in what ways can you take advantage of your strengths—and don't be too modest.

- What opportunities are open to other people who do these things well?
- What would you love to do that you are good at?
- If nothing held you back, and you knew you'd be successful, what would you do?
- Where do you see the most potential personal growth: in your current job, in a different organization, or in another career entirely?
- What trends are having an impact on your current career, or on the one that you're thinking about pursuing?

THREATS TO YOUR SUCCESS

Finally, reflect on things that could sabotage your success. Although outside threats often cannot be controlled, their impact can be vastly reduced if you are ware of what they may be and therefore managed and planned for properly. That's why it's important to identify as many of them as possible. The more you know about them, the less likely you are to be 'blindsided' by something unexpected. It is also important to become aware of any negative influences in your close personal environment that might affect your chances of success.

Thinking about these issues might make you feel anxious, but you are likely to experience much more stress and worry if you *don't* face them, especially if they start to become more significant. Some questions might be:

- Are there any general outside threats that you need to be aware of?
- If you don't address your weaknesses what would be the knock-on effect?
- Are there people in your environment that have a negative influence on you?
- What competition are you likely to encounter?
- What kind of things causes you stress and anxiety?
- What sort of event or person might knock your confidence?





PERSONAL SWOT ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

Your unique strengths:	Personal weaknesses:
Opportunities & options:	External threats to your success
	EXternal threats to your success.
opportunities & options.	External threats to your success:
	External tilleats to your success:



STEP THREE

OPPORTUNITY & OPTIONS ANALYSIS

YOUR LIFE IS THE SUM OF ALL THE CHOICES YOU MAKE: THE BETTER YOUR CHOICES, THE BETTER YOUR CHANCES TO LEAD A HAPPY LIFE.

So far you have explored your core values and identified some of the things that really matter to you; you have examined your personal strengths and weaknesses in the SWOT analysis; and you have started on the process of creating a values statement in line with your core values that communicates who you are and what your sense of integrity. As a next step, before moving on to the planning stage, it is a good idea to take a closer and more objective view on what external opportunities may currently be available to you, and which options you chose to focus on.

To get a sense of how suitable your strengths and interests are for the various opportunities you uncover it may be necessary to do some research, possibly read reports or articles dealing with the direction you want to pursue, or talking to people who are already doing what you want to do, or who are in a job that interests you. In doing this research you will discover that some opportunities seem more exciting and suitable than others, and that some are not worth pursuing at all.

ACTION POINT:

Using the worksheet write into the first column a number of potential options that you have discovered and find interesting. In identifying opportunities and choosing your options think about your strengths, weaknesses and available resources as well as any outside trends and factors that may, or may not, work in your favor.

In the second and third columns write down the supporting and opposing factors for each opportunity. Finally, by scoring each opportunity on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being no good at all, and 10 being absolutely perfect) narrow them down to just three or four preferred options that you feel truly enthusiastic about and that you can fully commit to. Make sure your final choices represent the very best and most suitable path for you, with the least amount of obstacles to overcome. The more you pare things down at this stage, the more effort you can devote to your best choice when it comes to taking action.





OPPORTUNITY & OPTIONS ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

PRINT AS MANY COPIES AS YOU NEED.

Opportunities & options:	Supporting factors:	Opposing factors:	Score
	Your strengths, skills, interests	Your weaknesses and skills gaps.	
	and available resources.	Outside influences and events	
	Outside trends.	beyond your control.	





STEP FOUR

GOAL SETTING

GOALS ARE DREAMS WITH DEADLINES

The effect of goal setting on motivation has been the subject of countless research projects, the outcome of which provides us with a remarkably consistent picture with a few points worth noting:

- The process of goal setting directs attention and therefore affects behavior.
- Setting goals improves performance and the more explicit the goal is the more effective it is likely to be.
- Stretching goals are more motivating than easy ones.
- Goals that have intermediate, measurable steps are highly effective.
- Goals that build on strengths are more motivating and effective than goals addressing a weakness.
- Learning goals, which are about improving skills, are highly effective in enhancing self-esteem.

The quality of your goals will determine your chances of success. Setting well-defined goals is therefore imperative when creating your personal development plan, so take your time over this section.

S.M.A.R.T. GOALS

With your preparatory work and research done it is now time to start converting this into a proper plan by designing concrete S.M.A.R.T. goals. This acronym stands for:

SPECIFIC MEASURABLE ACHIEVABLE RELEVANT AND TIME BOUND

A goal must be expressed SPECIFICALLY, and not ambiguously and open to interpretation, to provide clear guidance as to what needs to be done. A goal must be MEASURABLE to allow you to track progress and let you know that you are moving in the right direction, which will also boost your confidence. A goal must be ACHEIVABLE and within your power and control to accomplish, or you will become frustrated and lose motivation. A goal must be RELEVANT and serve your over-all objectives, or it will be a pointless exercise. Finally, it has been proven that a goal that is TIME BOUND, with a completion date, is infinitely more likely to be completed than one without.





Here is a simple example of a SMART goal for someone wishing to establish him or herself as an expert on dog grooming:

S: To write a 150-page book, of 10 chapters, on dog grooming, ready for publication in ten months time.

M: One chapter per month or three to five pages per week.

A: I know my subject and can make time for writing. (2 hours per day/5 days per week)

R: Publishing this book will establish me as an expert in my field.

T: The manuscript will be ready for publication in 10 months.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

SENSIBLE – SIGNIFICANT – SINCERE

Your SMART goal must also be *Sensible, Significant* and *Sincere*. It should make you feel proud and excited so pay attention to how your goals make you *feel*. It must not only provide purpose but it must also have true meaning for you. In other words it is not only a *sensible* objective but also something *significant* that you *sincerely want;* rather than something you think you *should* do. The goal should be big and audacious enough to make you feel slightly in awe of it. It should make you feel: *that would be amazing!* But it also needs to be realistic and achievable so that you feel strongly motivated to work on it. The carrot should be dangling just within reach. Setting goals should be fun and exciting. Pick goals that will make you proud to even just work on them.

ACTION POINT:

Your next work sheet is for goal setting. Print or copy as many of these that you need.

In creating your major career goals you should be ambitious in your aspirations, don't hold back. In your final planning document, you will break these large ambitious goals down into manageable smaller objectives and actions that you can achieve one by one and celebrate regularly. As with your values statement keep drafting your goals until you are totally happy with them, making sure your goals 'tick' all the boxes in the SMART acronym.

Research has demonstrated that one of the most effective ways to maintain motivation and increase your likelihood of successfully completing a goal is to let people who you trust know what you are doing, and why. So, use family and friends as your personal support network. So for each separate goal appoint someone as your personal goal–setting champion to keep you accountable for your progress. This will greatly increase your chances of success.





REWARD YOURSELF

Last but not least, for each goal or part goal successfully completed include a reward for you. To keep motivated and have some fun along the way it is very important to acknowledge your own achievements. So give yourself a treat each time you reach an important milestone on your path to success.

PRINT AS MANY COPIES AS YOU NEED.

Major SMART career goal number								
Check Lis	t -							
S		М		А		R	Т	
Complet	ion date:							
To keep	me accoun	table my c	hampion v	will be:				
My reward for achieving this will be:								





STEP FIVE

PUTTING YOUR PLAN ON PAPER

You are now ready to pull all your preparatory work together into a measurable, actionable format that will keep you on track. By the end of this section you'll have everything in a single document that you will be able to refer to regularly, and update as necessary, to make solid progress towards where you want to be:

- Values Statement
- Long-term Goals
- Short-term Objectives
- Actions Steps

ACTION POINT:

Print off the final work sheet, the Personal Development Plan, or copy it into a Word document. Write down your name, current position and today's date (these last two items will help you remember how far you've come as you progress). Next, add your Vision Statement and your Goals and their target dates.

This document will make seemingly impossible Goals become possible by breaking them into small, simple steps, each one a practical positive action. By this process the task of completing your Development Plan will feel less daunting and more manageable, which will give you a feeling of control. By tackling each small Action separately, one by one, you will soon have completed all your short-term Objectives and achieved your long-term Goals.

OBJECTIVES: For each major Goal carefully evaluate separate Objectives that needs to be completed within your planning period. List as many Objectives you can think of. However, do not over complicate your plan by identifying too many. Limit yourself to those that will have real impact on your potential for success, and make sure they lie within your control and capacity to achieve or you will soon become frustrated and demotivated.

ACTIONS: Next, plan relevant Actions for each Objective. Anything from making a phone call to learning a new language. For example, if your Action is to complete a course, you might have to write your line-manager justifying why the organisation should pay for it.

OBSTACLES & SOLUTIONS: List any difficulties that you foresee. Think about how you'll overcome these. Write down possible solutions.





EVALUATION & SUCCESS CRITERIA: To evaluate your progress, and determine whether you are working effectively, identify precise criteria that indicate successful completion of a task.

COMPLETION DATE & PRIORITY RATING: A task may be of high or lower priority, it may require an approximate or a definite completion date, or it may simply be an on-going routine or process that needs to be maintained.

Whilst you are working on your step-by-step action plan refer back to your earlier notes. Ensure you include all opportunities and challenges you have identified; as well as any new options that spring to mind as you work. It may have emerged there are gaps in your skill set that need filling and threats that needs to be managed if you are to succeed.

Remember to include "soft" skills too, such as team management and communication, as well as specific technical skills directly related to your profession. Soft skills are important and become increasingly so the further you go in your career. Finally, make sure to align your objectives and actions with your core values, as this will increase your chances of being successful.

Organise your planning document in an approximately logical sequence. However, keep in mind that personal development does not necessarily progress in a linear fashion. Some steps will be impossible to list in chronological order. Many tasks will overlap and priorities will change as you go along. This is where a priority rating will be useful. A rating can be from low to high, a numerical rating from 1 to 5, or you can colour code the entries to indicate how important they are to you. Chose the system that works best for you.

Finally, commit yourself to your plan, date it and sign it off. By doing this you have already taken the first critical step toward making your vision for your future a reality.





MY PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Name:	Current Position:	Date Started	
Values Statement:			
Major Career Goals:			
Goal 1:			Target Date:
Goal 2:			Target Date:
Goal 3:			Target Date:
Goal 4:			Target Date:
Goal 5:			Target Date:
Goal 6:			Target Date:





Objectives	Actions	Obstacles & Solutions	Evaluation & Success Criteria	Date & Priority



Objectives	Actions	Obstacles &	Evaluation &	Date &
		Solutions	Success Criteria	Priority

ADD ROWS AS NECCESSARY

I AM COMMITTED TO THESE GOALS AND ACTIONS AND WILL REVISE MY PLAN ON A REGULAR BASIS AND UP-DATE IT AS NECESSARY.

Signature:

Date:





FROM PAPER TO PRACTICE

BONUS HALF HOUR ZOOM SESSION WITH MATZ

For your free strategy session send me an email at: matz.skoog@gmail.com

Well done, you now have something that very few people have; a well-thought-through Personal Development Plan. Now you have made it to this point I would be pleased to schedule a half-hour conversation for us to explore options for positive actions that will guarantee progress towards your goals.

Creating a vision and planning your goals are important steps. However, your next challenge is taking action. Only you have the power to take your plan to the next stage— EXECUTON. You have to commit to working on your plan and take at least one positive action every day that will move you closer to your goals.

But remember that your Personal Development Plan is as dynamic as you are, so schedule regular reviews. As circumstances change so must your plan and you will need to adjust it. As you make progress your perspectives will change. You will discover new skills to learn and new objectives to attain. By updating your Personal Development Plan regularly you'll keep it relevant.

A constant reminder of what your ultimate goals are will increase your chances of being successful. So to help keep your eye on the ball and maintain motivation and a sense of purpose keep your Values Statement and your Career Goals at the forefront of your mind. Write them on a piece of paper and place it where you can refer to it every day: in your wallet or perhaps alongside the bathroom mirror so you will see it when you brush your teeth.

To help you take the self-organizational steps necessary to bringing your plan to life head over to my website <u>www.matzskoog.com</u> and download my free eBook called: *"99 Easy Ways To Find Focus And Get Shit Done"*. It contains some great ideas and strategies that will keep you organized and focused.

Finally, don't forget to acknowledge your progress and reward yourself along the way. Sure, it's nice when others recognise your accomplishments but you need to do this too.

For your free strategy session send me an email at: matz.skoog@gmail.com



