Seven Steps to Personal Excellence and Achieving All Your Goals in Life

By John Wood

To achieve something that you’ve never achieved before, you must become someone that you have never been before.”

— Motivational speaker Les Brown

Have you committed to personal excellence?

Do you strive toward it, but find obstacles in your way that leave you short of your goal?

These obstacles can be costly.

Because personal excellence is directly tied to how much money you make.

In his book Goals: How to Get Everything You Want – Faster Than You Ever Thought Possible, success expert Brian Tracy talks about the three main factors that affect your earning potential:

1. **What you do** – As a copywriter, you've got a leg up on most occupations as you directly contribute to a company's bottom line.

2. **How well you do it** – If you consistently write copy that results in more revenue for your client, your services will always be in big demand.

3. **The difficulty of replacing you** – The better you are at something, the less likely it is that you'll be replaced by someone or something.

All three of the above are directly tied to determining where you're at in your quest for personal excellence.

Because this is so important, especially to freelancers working on their own, I've put together seven steps to help you "be all you can be" (to borrow a phrase from the U.S. Army):
1. **Evaluate your strengths and weakness** – In *Goals*, Tracy writes that every job is made up of five to seven areas. For instance, for a freelance writer, the seven areas might be: (1) prospecting, (2) establishing rapport, (3) building credibility, (4) identifying needs & presenting solutions, (5) asking for referrals, (6) writing copy, and (7) upgrading your skills.

For each category, give yourself a grade of between 1 and 10. Then ask your boss or a customer to rate you from 1 to 10 in each category.

According to Tracy, your weakest area is the one that determines your income and how fast you will advance in your career. For example, if you're an "8" when it comes to writing copy but only a "2" at prospecting, you will never make the type of money you desire until you raise up your prospecting score to a similar level. Tracy adds that you need to average a 7 or greater in each to be in the top 20% of your field.

2. **Focus on areas where you need to improve** – Once you've evaluated your strengths and weaknesses, focus with laser-like precision on improving your weakest area. Continue doing so until you score as high as possible in each area.

For example, if you rank yourself an "8" in the writing copy department, but a "2" in prospecting, throw all your efforts into devising a prospecting system for yourself that works.

3. **Identify what you love to do** – You may already know the answer to this, but you might not have committed it to paper or put together an action plan to turn what you love to do into your full-time career.

Take out a piece of paper and a pencil and write down a skill or a talent you would gladly do even if no one was paying you to do it. What topic do you love to read about in your spare time? What do you enjoy so much that time just flies by when you’re doing it?

Maybe you’d like to write a screenplay for a blockbuster movie … write the perfect spy novel … become the world's best white paper writer.

Or perhaps what you're doing now is exactly what you want to be doing.

Finding something you love to do is so vitally important because, according to Tracy, "Many people make more progress in a couple of years doing something they love and suits their talents than working 20 years at a job that is not a good fit that they really don't enjoy."

4.
Determine what your ultimate career goal in life is and then commit to it – If what you love to do and what you currently do are not the same thing, you need to put together an action plan to make them one and the same.

The first step is to write down the ultimate goal for your career. Let’s say your ultimate career goal is to become a professional poker player. First thing you should do is determine how realistic it is – and how badly you want it. If you determine it is indeed a realistic and achievable goal, the next step is to put together an action plan. Your plan should include benchmarks and a deadline.

Now, here's the thing …

You still have to focus on and give your primary attention to what you do that actually makes you money. For example, if you're working as an executive assistant, you still have to focus on being the best darn executive assistant in the world. So you should still go through Steps 1 and 2 on an ongoing basis.

But you also have to find the time to focus on fine-tuning your skills as a poker player. Because if you don't, your poker playing goal will more than likely remain a dream. And if that's the case, you might as well forget about it entirely.

When you're in the transition phase, you must be prepared to dedicate more time to your success if you expect to actually one day make the changeover.

5. **Become a lifelong do-it-yourself project** – In *Goals*, Brian Tracy reveals his "3+1 formula" for mastering any skill.

The first step is to read about the area you want to become more skillful in every day – even if only for 15 or 30 minutes.

Next, listen to educational audio programs on the subject in your car. Average drivers today spend 500 to 1,000 hours each year in their cars driving each day. Tracy says you can become one of the best educated people in your field by simply listening to audio programs.

Thirdly, attend seminars and workshops on your subject. Many lives have been changed completely by attending a single one- or two-day seminar on a key subject.

The +1 part of the formula is to take action every time you hear a good idea. As Tracy notes, "The person who hears one idea and takes action is more reliable than a person that hears 100 ideas but takes action on none."
(If you’re interested in more ways to move yourself closer to personal excellence, check out this article I wrote last year.)

6. **Practice, practice, and more practice** – No matter what you want to do in your career, there is no substitute for actually practicing your craft. The more you practice, the more competent and skilled you’ll become. And the faster you’ll start to experience all the benefits of being a master at your craft.

7. **Keep a laser-like focus on the skills you’ll need in the future** – What additional knowledge, skills, and information will you need to be a leader in your marketplace in the months and years ahead? You should always be projecting yourself three to five years in the future. Determine what you need to be studying. Plan for both now and down the road so you’ll be, if not the best, one of the best paid people in your industry.

The time to commit to becoming one of the top 10 percent performers and income earners in your profession is now. Not tomorrow or the next day.

Today.

*Right now.*

Remember, all skills are learnable. Your potential in life is not genetically determined. You can realize your full potential in any area by committing to it and persisting at it.

Follow these seven steps to personal excellence and you’ll find there really are no limits in life.

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