

How To Successfully Achieve Any Goal

 the **Personal Excellence** blog



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About

Hi there! ☺ I'm Celestine Chua and I'm the writer behind [The Personal Excellence Blog](#) (TPEB), where I share my best advice on how to achieve personal excellence and live your best life. To date, I have written [over 150 articles](#), covering categories such as Conscious Living, Achieving Goals, People and Relationships, Productivity, and more.

All my writings are inspired from real events and experiences in my life. Here are just a couple of the many feedback my readers have shared after reading the articles:

*"Celes, I am your biggest fan of your writings. Your writings are deep, insightful, reflective and true. It was introduced to me by a friend and i found it is to be one of my staple diet on the net ever since. It taught me alot on how to think and some of the similarities I share with you."- **Clement***

*"I am impressed with your attitude towards life & your desire to help people. I really applaud that at your age you already are at this higher level of consciousness where some never achieve in their lifetime." - **Mei***

*"Celes, Your articles are very inspiring and uplifting. I have been feeling lost the past couple of years and you have started me thinking about my purpose. I was feeling really down but your work gave me courage to think positive and keep going. Thank you." - **Yanni***



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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Celestine Chua". The signature is stylized and cursive.

The Personal Excellence Blog

<http://celestinechua.com>

Part 1: Goal Achievement: Introduction

This is **part 1** of a **7-part series** on [how to achieve any goals successfully](#).

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Goal Achievement: Introduction



What are some of your biggest goals in life? To lose weight? To earn more money? To be in your dream career? To set up your own business? To live in abundance? To be in the peak of your health? To meet your life partner? To have a loving family?

For any of these goals, have you ever felt the resolve to achieve it, devote resources towards it, work on it for an extended period of time, only to have it fall flat on your face eventually?

Say you have a goal to lose weight and you resolve to shed off 30lbs. You start off strong, cutting off the amount of food you eat. You also start an exercise regime. Every day, you measure your weight to closely track your progress. Within the first few days, you start seeing a reduction in your weight. Rejoicing, you continue what you have been doing, but it seems that your actions have lost their effectiveness because your weight loss has plateaued. If anything, it seems to be increasing slightly versus your lowest weigh-in.

You become discouraged. You start to give up and binge, resigning that it is never possible for you to achieve the goal because it is in your genes or you just do not have the self-discipline. You begin to bury the whole notion of weight loss at the back of your head. Predictably, you start to gain back all the weight you lost and more. This makes you even more depressed and you start eating even more.

At some point down the road, you receive a wake-up call to lose weight. You embark on the goal pursuit again, more determined than ever. However, past events repeat themselves and soon you are back where you started, if not in a worse place.

Does this pattern of behavior apply to any of the goals you have set out to achieve before? Being looped in a continuous cycle of setting the goal and trying to achieve it, but never quite getting there? At this point, you feel despondent. You resign that you are not meant to achieve this goal and decide to focus your energy on something else.

The Biggest Mistake Many People Make in Goal Achievement

Many people are guilty of trying to tackle their goals using a series of trial and error approaches. They randomly throw their energy out with all their might on the few steps they know, thinking that this will get them to their goal. They deal with their goals in a haphazard approach, then hope that everything will turn for the best in the end.

While it may work in the short-run and on smaller goals, **it does not work with big, long-term goals**. For example, you may get away with losing 5lbs of weight by generally just eating less and exercising more, but to lose more weight and maintain that weight loss requires proper strategy.

Many people have this misconstrued notion of goal achievement because they only come into contact with the results of others' goals. They are not involved in all the thought-processes, intricacies and actual planning that went behind the achievement of those goals.

Take a look at Olympic winners. They do not achieve their medals because they just blindly train everyday. **There are many things that go on behind the scenes**, such as coaching by the best coaches, proper diets, self-help courses to psyche them in the right mindsets, learning the right techniques, etc.

Steve Jobs did not bring Apple to where it is today because he got lucky. It was through **conscious strategizing and planning** that allowed Apple to carve its special niche in the previously monopolized market by Microsoft.

The Eiffel Tower, one of the world's tallest buildings, was not built from just randomly slapping tiles of concrete and slab together. It was through **envisioning, strategizing against environmental elements, precision in planning and execution** that enabled it to be built, much to the surprise of everyone back then.

Personally, I am a very spontaneous and action oriented person. I am a big fan of just getting out in action mode, swinging at my goals and getting the instant gratification of seeing the results, instead of wasting time mulling over how to achieve the goal. Trial and error approaches are great for getting quick results and learnings.

But for goal achievement to succeed in the long-term, **you need have a system in place to sustain it.**

Just imagine you want to travel from Island A to Island B by sea. If they are 1km away, you can probably get there just by jumping head first in the water and swimming across. However, if the islands are 1,000km away, you need to start thinking about building a boat, food supplies, clothes, shelter, etc to bring you through the long journey. You might even want to invest time in building a mini yacht if the size of the goal calls for it. Without proper strategizing and planning, you will end up drowning in the middle of the ocean. **With big goals, you will find the initial investment will be far outweighed by the benefits generated in the long-run.**

My Experience With My Goal Pursuits

I have set and pursued many different goals throughout my life. My general approach towards goal achievement in the past was to just focus on the goal intently and do everything I can to reach it. The most I have ever done in terms of planning would be to just identify my end target and set aside an arbitrary amount of time in my calendar to work on them. That was all. Beyond that, it was all about throwing out all my energy towards the goals. Afterall, that was what I thought success goal achievement boiled down to. A mix of **one's desire of the goal and one's persistence level.**

When I did that, I faced varying successes depending on what the goals were. For goals like scoring good grades, they were attained as long as I kept up with my classes and assignments. Other goals like earning more money, establishing my freelance graphic design business (back when I was in university) and performing well in my (previous) brand management job were all within my grasps too, as long as I kept going at them.

However, there were certain goals I had issues with. For example, my weight loss goal. I was never overweight but I wanted to be slimmer since I was

18 (in 2002). For the next 5 years after that, I saw myself spending time and energy trying to attain the goal but failing in the process. I tried all sorts of different diets, from low-carb, high-protein, low-fat, low-calorie, to not eating. I tried counting calories, to not counting calories. I tried different types of exercises, exercising every day, to not exercising at all. During the times when I start off on the goal, I would succeed in losing some weight in the first 1 week. But it never lasted beyond that. After the first 1 week, things would remain status quo, and it was a matter of weeks before I would return to my old eating habits, usually eating more too because I felt deprived.

For me, it was utterly perplexing and disappointing because I could not phantom how I would face so much success with my other goals, but be stuck at a benign goal like losing weight. Why did that happen? It wasn't because I did not want my goal enough. I definitely felt that I was as passionate about this goal as I was about my other goals.

I thought maybe I was not persistent enough about the goal. But then again, if I was not, I wouldn't have spent some 5 odd years of my life mulling about it, would I? Something must be wrong in the way I was trying to reach the goal.

It was in end of 2007 when I thought that enough was enough. I was sick and tired of going up an emotional rollercoaster, pursuing and failing repeatedly in this goal and beating myself over it every time I failed.

I sat down to troubleshoot my situation and identify how I could really bust this goal. I started looking around me for ideas. I was still working in my previous company then, in brand management. In my day to day work, I was consistently faced with huge business goals and million-dollar projects which my team and I had to deliver against. I thought about how we would deal with those goals to eventually conquer them. Then it struck me on what I was lacking – **a proper strategy to achieve my goal.**

Strategy in Goal Achievement

I first studied strategy during business school 4 years ago. There, I learnt about the role of strategy in business world and how the companies with the right strategies triumph in the long-run. When I started working in brand management, my contact with strategy intensified. Every day, we would spend huge amounts of time with senior management inside meetings, debating about best strategies to move forward with. We literally breathed and ate strategy.

It was all these strategy-intensive work I was doing that led me to my realization. To put it simply – If strategizing has been leading multi-billionaire businesses to success through the decades and where they stand today, wouldn't it make sense to apply it to our personal lives as well, to achieve the same level of success?

I started applying the principles I learnt at work towards my weight loss goal. I set up a vision, identified the barriers I was facing, identified counteracting strategies, made specific plans, did a tracking sheet, among others. Within the first week of getting into action, I could tell things were different this time. I knew, with a deep-seated sense of certainty, that I was going to succeed. Sure enough, a year later in 2008, I had lost 13 lbs. It came so easily that I wondered why I was even struggling with this goal for so long in the beginning.

From there, I realized as long as I use the same key principles and follow the same formula, I will see similar success as well. And that was what happened when I applied it for all my goals from there on, such as becoming a vegan (which you will read in Part 4 on Strategy), achieving business goals at my previous work place, building the web presence of my personal development blog and setting up my personal development business.

Suddenly, goal achievement became much easier and surmountable. The uncertainty that used to surround the successes of my goal pursuits withered away in the face of this new-found insight. It felt amazing, because it was like I had uncovered the secret as to what make goals tick. While time and energy still need to be invested, **the process of goal pursuit has turned into a predictable science than abstract art**. I knew as long as I followed the same formula in all my goals, I would definitely face sure success and triumph in them.

Eventually, I distilled down the key elements of what I was doing so that I could share it with others and have them face the same success too. The output is a 5-step framework I call **ESPER**.

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Part 2: ESPER

This is *part 2* of a *7-part series* on [*how to achieve any goals successfully*](#).

ESPER: 5-Step Framework to Successful Goal Achievement

E-S-P-E-R is a 5-step framework which lists the 5 essential steps for successful goal achievement. These 5 steps are:

- **E**stablish: Set the vision and goal in place
- **S**trategy: Devise strategies to succeed in the goal
- **P**lanning: Identify plan elements based on the strategies
- **E**xecution: Bring the plan and goal to life
- **R**eview: Assess the outcome and next steps

ESPER is actually a term used frequently in games and fantasy shows referring to entities which have deity-like or demigod-like power. With ESPER, you will find that it gives you the power to crack down even what seemed to be the most insurmountable goals in the past. Goals you never thought achievable will start becoming within your reach, and in a matter of time, conquered. I personally use this framework to achieve my long-term goals and it has worked wonders in cracking them apart and conquering my goals.

Do not let the simplicity of the framework fool you. While these 5 steps look very simple and benign by themselves, they are the essence of what underlie successful goal achievements, especially for huge goals where the 'What' and 'How' towards achieving them becomes elusive.

That being said, ESPER is *not* a miracle pill which takes out the hard work to achieve goals. ESPER is not an elixir which allows you to achieve your goals without lifting a finger. At the end of the day, you still need to put in any time or energy for your goals.

But with ESPER, you will find the whole goal achievement to be significantly easier and surmountable. Instead of success being a random, haphazard occurrence, it will become a predictable, securable result. You will start seeing your goals crumble before you so naturally that you wonder why you struggled so long with them in the beginning.

ESPER is what is going to take the question mark out of your goal achievement process. ESPER is what will put your goals right within your grasp and lead you to a sure fire success.

In this article, you will have an overview of what ESPER is about. The subsequent parts will cover each step of ESPER in turn.

Why ESPER Is The Single Framework You Will Need For Successful Goal Achievement

You often see many other self help writers expounding different methods to goal achievement.

Some talk about how goal achievement is all about not procrastinating, being motivated, persistent, self-disciplined, 'just doing it', and so on. At best, these are very fluffy, air-fairy methods to goal pursuit. While these soft skills are important no doubt, they do not give you any insights as to 'what' exactly are the key steps needed achieve your goals. Persistence and desire can take you far, but they can only take you so far without a proper strategy to hold everything together. You certainly cannot rely on persistence and desire alone to achieve your huge goals. A smarter, more structured approach is needed rather than just randomly firing at different things. Would you prefer to be firing 100 shots every time and hit only once, or funnel your energy properly and get a 80/100 hit rate with a proper constructed strategy?

Then you have frameworks like SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-Bound), GTD (Getting Things Done), etc. While these are great methods in themselves (I use principles of GTD in my life), they are one-dimensional in the scope of goal achievement. For example, SMART only pertains to goal setting (1st step of ESPER) and it does not guide you on what is to be done between setting the goal and actually reaching the goal in the end. Even then, SMART itself is not exhaustive on the principles of what makes a good goal. GTD is great for planning and executing (3rd and 4th steps of ESPER), but it deals with the lower levels of goal achievement, neglecting the higher levels of goal establishment and strategizing which are pertinent for successful goals.

What is lacking is a holistic, single system that captures the key essential steps for successful goal achievements.

ESPER is this single, holistic framework that covers all that is to be done in goal achievement, from start to finish. It starts off with the establishing of your goal, right up to beyond your goal pursuit, where you review what you have done and the learnings you can adopt for the next time. It maps out the

key steps you need to do for every goal you pursue, and guides you along throughout the whole process.

Things to Know about ESPER

1. Applicable For Any Goal.

What goals do you have? Finding a job you love? Losing weight? Increasing traffic of your blog? Setting up your business? Improving your health? Buying a new home? Building stronger relationships?

No matter what goal you have, ESPER is totally applicable and relevant. In short, it can be used for virtually any goal in the world. If we take the example of building the Eiffel tower, this is what we will see with the framework:

1. **Establish:** Set the vision of building the world's tallest building and decision to bring that vision to life by engineer Gustave Eiffel
2. **Strategy:** Devised strategies to build a "300-meter high tower", such as overcoming wind resistance, ensuring the tower can support its own weight, among others
3. **Planning:** Identified plan elements such as building location (Champ de Mars in Paris), size of team, safety precautions, exact type and quantity of materials to use in construction, etc
4. **Execution:** Hired 300 workers, Procured construction materials, Started actual building of the tower
5. **Review:** Assessed the final structure. Gustave further improvised on the elements regarding operation of the tower

2. Each step serves its own role and is pertinent to the success of the goal.

They are individual parts of a system that make it whole. While the only essential step is the 4th step – Execution, trying to skip any of the other steps will jeopardize your chances and degree of success.

3. The steps occur in succession of one another.

The steps occur in succession of one another – meaning the 1st step needs to be done and locked before going to the 2nd, and so on. Thus, each step should be defined as accurately as possible before moving to the next to prevent disruption and rework. Say for example, you set the goal for yourself to lose 30 lbs of weight. You make a series of strategies and plans. But as you start losing the weight, you find yourself feeling tired, unhealthy and looking weak. You realize that you do not exactly want to lose 30 lbs of weight; you actually just want to be healthy. Since the basis of the goal is different, this changes in-between steps, like an increased focus on exercise, choosing healthy foods, instead of just losing weight. **The further down you are in execution and the larger the magnitude of change in the initial step, the more disorienting it will be to revise your plans to reflect the change.** Thus, it is important to be rigorous with each step of the framework.

4. Progression through the steps symbolises your goal being manifested from a mental creation to physical creation.

As you start off with the first step (Establish), it is essentially a creation inside your mind. As you move through the steps, you are essentially taking that virtual creation inside your mind and giving it physical form and shape in our physical reality.

5. Best suited for medium to big goals.

ESPER is a framework for busting your big goals which i) you have tried to achieve but have not succeeded or ii) you feel are too overwhelming for you. If you have small goals which you are reasonably confident in achieving, it might be faster and more efficient to barge ahead and conquer them. Planning through from each of the 5 steps takes investment of time and effort which might not pay out with small-scale goals. **The larger the goal, the more crucial the role ESPER plays.**

6. Sets you up for success in your goal.

Having this systematic approach to goal achievement helps dramatically increase your chances of success for two simple reasons: 1) Firstly, if there are problems with achieving the goal, you can always look back and **identify exactly which stage the issue arose, then resolve from there.** 2) Secondly, it ensures all bases are covered and **you do not leave any stone unturned.**

In this series, I will be detailing the specifics of each step, the role it serves, how to apply it in real life. Check out for the next part in the series on [establishing your goal](#). 😊

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Part 3: Establish Your Goal

This is **part 3** of a **7-part series** on [how to achieve any goals successfully](#).

(If you do not have the habit of setting goals, please read this article [6 Important Reasons Why You Should Set Goals](#).)

Establish is the **1st step** of [ESPER](#).

In Establish, you establish the goal that you are going to be pursuing. Since you are reading this goal achievement series, you probably already have a goal in mind which you want to achieve.

Yet, establishing your goal is more than just identifying a goal target you want to achieve. There are numerous list of factors of consideration to ensure that your vision is robust, accurate, and most importantly, what you really want.

Unfortunately, instead of investing quality time on this step, many people run into the mistake of being hasty. They skip past proper goal setting and jump straight into the planning and execution. At the end of the day, they end up causing a lot of backtracking and rework because they did not set the goal properly in the first place. Some of them actually achieve their goal, then find out that they did not want the goal in the first place.

Your time and energy are extremely precious, so it is better to invest a small portion of time to set the right goals. You do not want to waste your efforts on poorly set goals and end up crying over spilled milk after finding out you have spent your energy in vain. You do not want to be wasting time on goals which you never really wanted to begin with.

Establish consists of 2 parts. The first part is to **setting your goal** based on a set of 10 key, fundamental principles. The second part is **what to do with your goals after establishing them**. Let us explore each in turn.

Setting Your Goal

As you set your goal, you need to ensure that they adhere to the 10 key principles below. These are what will guide you to set the right goals so that you can pursue them.

1. Ensure Congruency with Your Life Purpose.

Your goals need to be **defined in the context of your life purpose**. Everything in your life flows from your purpose. Your purpose is the guiding direction for everything in your life. It sets the stage for what you do every day.

For example, part of my purpose is *“To achieve my highest potential and embrace my best life; To live consciously and freely in truth, love and power“*, while my goal for the mental aspect of myself is to *“To unlock and utilize the full capabilities of my mind“*. My goal is a **subset of my purpose** to achieve my highest potential. Both are congruent with each other.

Some people may ask – So where do ad-hoc goals like losing weight fit in this bigger picture? For me, losing weight is about looking my personal best and achieving the peak of my health. As such, it fits with my purpose to be my highest potential as well.

If your goals and your purpose are not congruent with one another, it either means:

- a) **Your goals are not in-line with what you really want to do**. If so, relook into them to understand your underlying motivations for listing them
- b) **You have limited the definition of your purpose**. If this is the case, try to expand on the definition of your purpose.

Do you know what your purpose is? If you have not discovered your life purpose yet, I highly recommend you read the [Discover Your Purpose series \(7-part\)](#) before proceeding with this, as your purpose sets the right context and background for your goal setting. By identifying your purpose, you then have absolute clarity on your direction and focus in life. The last thing you want to do is to spend your whole life trying to grow oranges when you actually wanted apples.

2. Ensure Your Goal Is A Key Goal, or 80/20 Destination.

How much does this goal matter to you? Is this goal a key goal in your life – in other words, a 80/20 Destination? Your [80/20 destination](#) refers to the 20% goals which when achieved, will give you 80% of the collective happiness from achieving all your goals. What are these 20% goals which really matter to you? These are what you should start focusing disproportionately on.

Note that the 80/20 figure is just a metaphor to describe a small handful of your goals brings you that disproportionate amount of happiness, so do not get hung up over the numbers. You may very well have 90/10 goals (i.e. 10% of goals which give you 90% of your happiness), 70/20 goals, and so on.

3. Understand Your Motivations.

Have you ever had an experience where you pursued a goal in full throttle, only to find out you never really wanted it? This brings to mind our society's mad pursuit towards wealth and success; the endless paper chase to validate one's worth; the corporate rat's sprint up the managerial ladder.

There are some common symptoms which emerge when you do not actually want a particular goal: such as self-sabotaging yourself in your goal pursuit, losing interest during the goal achievement process, feeling hollow after the goal has been achieved. Has this ever happened to you in your goal pursuit?

As you set your goal, **be clear on your underlying motivations**. Your goal should be something that you really want, and not what others want you to do. Why do you want this goal? Is it for yourself or for others? What will you achieve out of conquering this goal? Being clear on your underlying desires will drive you forward in the times when you face obstacles.

If you find yourself setting a goal which is not what you really want but what others want you to do, it is a sign that you are chasing **imposed purposes** – purposes imposed upon you by other people around you. They are the opposite of **liberating purposes** – purposes which are active creations by you and your consciousness. If you are having end goals like earning money and being successful, there is a high likelihood that you are pursuing imposed purposes.

4. Identify Your Objective Goal First, then Activity Goals.

What are objective and activity goals? **Objective goals** are your vision behind activity goals. **Activity goals** are specific end outcomes which you are more familiar with, such as lose 10lbs or earn \$10,000.

Examples of objective vs activity goals are: Be healthy vs lose 20 lbs. Foster strong relationships vs Spend more time with family. Have an enriching, fulfilling career vs get a job as a financial trader. Living in abundance vs increasing income by \$500.

Objective goals are the visions you want to pursue forever in your life rather than end destinations. Activity goals are means to achieve that visions. Objective goals usually remain the same throughout your life. Activity goals change over time.

Always define your objective goal first, followed by the activity goals needed to achieve the objective goals.

By clearly articulating your objective goal first, you can instead be **guided by a whole host of activity goals tied to your objectives**. You develop new insights and open yourself up to many other routes towards achieving your objective goal.

For example, say you looked yourself in the mirror and decided you want to lose 30lbs. What is the objective behind this? Usually people lose weight to become more attractive, so let us assume this is the objective. In this case, losing 30lbs is an activity goal which you think will make you look more attractive.

However, that is just one of the many ways you can achieve your objective to be more attractive. If you start brainstorming against that objective, you will start coming up with ideas such as 'losing weight', 'buying more attractive clothes', 'improving your image', 'joining etiquette classes', 'improving your complexion'. This is a stark contrast vs how you initially limited yourself to just 'losing weight'.

Clearly differentiating between your objective and activity goals **enables you to see the bigger picture**. You stop getting hung up on the outcome of activity goals and instead focus on achieving your actual objective goal. A lot of people obsess over their activity goal and hinge their life on it. They may become upset or demotivated when they fail to live up to their activity goal. However, they do not realize their activity goal is merely one of the many methods they can use to reach their objective.

5. Plan for BHAGs.

A BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal) is a goal that is **so visionary and ambitious** that you have people going 'wow' and **telling you that you are nuts** when you share it with them. BHAGs are great for personal growth and goal pursuits because they require you to take on an entirely different set of thinking and strategy rather than a normal goal. They stretch you to levels you were previously not aware of.

People typically factor in many considerations as they are setting their goals and end up with half-baked goals in the name of realism and practicality. Do not do that. These considerations are all just 'noise' and they are irrelevant at the goal setting stage. Focus purely on **what you want, and not how to**

do it. The 'How' part will come in the later steps of ESPER.

Your BHAGs should be big, challenging and motivating to you all at the same time. Setting small goals which don't inspire or setting goals which are too big and discourage you defeat the purpose.

6. Be Specific.

Be very specific on what you want. The more specific you are, the better guided you are in your goal pursuit. Some guiding questions you can use include: What do you want to accomplish at the end point? What are the exact end output you are expecting? What is the time frame you are setting?

Ambiguous goal leads to ambiguous results. Imagine trying to shoot at a dartboard that is not clearly demarcated. How can you aim when you do not even know what the target is? When your end point clearly marked out, you have a clear target to home in on.

7. Make Them Measurable.

This principle applies specifically for [Activity Goals](#), rather than [Objective Goals](#) since the latter are meant to be continuous directions to pursue (see principle #4 above).

For your (activity) goals to be effective, they need to be measurable. They should come with (1) a deadline and (2) a value you can measure against. These will be your success criteria when you evaluate against your performance. For example, if you have a goal to meditate, it may be to 'Cultivate habit to meditate 30 minutes every morning by XX date'. If you have a goal to lose weight, it may be to 'Lose 20lbs by XX date'.

For tasks which are qualitative, find a way to assess it. Let us say your goal is to be more confident. One way to make it measurable is to set a target for how many times you broke out of your comfort zone in the day and spoke up. Or maybe your goal is to be more disciplined. You can attach it to an activity you want to achieve – such as waking up at 6am – and measure your success rate of performing that task.

8. Start with Long-Term, then Break Down into Short-Term.

Always start off with your long-term goal so you can get the full picture. From there, break it down into smaller segments. Two common criteria to break down are (a) time (b) magnitude. If your goal is to lose 40lbs in 1 year, your shorter term goals may be to lose 20lbs in 6 months and 10lbs in 3 months.

9. Set them as End Outcomes, not Tasks.

This refers to the end outcome that you want to see, not the task that is needed to get the result you want. Examples of Outcome vs Process are: 'Achieving #1 in the competition' vs 'Attending 15 practices', or 'Securing \$100,000 worth of sales' vs 'Securing meetings with 10 clients'.

By focusing on the end outcome, it builds the fastest track to goal achievement as actions that need to be undertaken will naturally fall into the picture. Some self-help educators recommend focusing on tasks vs results as results may be influenced by externalities which we cannot control. Personally, I think focusing with the end in mind is much more effective because you learn to anticipate and plan for contingencies for successful goal achievement, rather than attribute things to external factors. Instead of placing your locus of control externally, you put it internally within yourself.

10. Use Positive Framing.

Your goals are what you set yourself to achieve, so you want to be sure that you are attracting all the positive energy in the universe instead of negative. If your goal is framed negatively, it affects you on a subconscious level and sets you up for failure. Instead of 'Prevent sickness and ill health', try 'A life of good health and longevity'. Instead of 'Eliminate poverty', try 'Create unlimited abundance'. You do not want to waste any bit of your energy on any form of non-positive energy.

If you know about the Law of Attraction, this is essentially what this principle is about. Law of Attraction is about how thinking positive thoughts attract positive things into your life. If you do not believe in the LoA, it is okay – just know that your thoughts naturally guide your behavior and you want positive thoughts to be what is guiding your actions, not negative ones.

What To Do With Your Goals After Setting Them

After you have set your goals in accordance with those 10 principles, you are almost ready to move on to the 2nd step of ESPER. However, before that,

there are 4 steps pertaining to your goals you need to adhere first.

1. Write Them Down

Write down your final objective and activity goals. This should be listed prominently in a place you will always be referring to.

2. Develop Absolute Mental Clarity of Your Goal

As you pursue your goal, you need to develop such a clear mental impression of your goal that you are able to perceive it with all your 5 senses, as if you have already achieved the goal. In fact, make it a point to do this every day in the morning, before you start your day. The clearer the image in your mind, the easier it is for you to manifest it in reality. Every goal is always created twice, first in the mind and then in reality. If you are unclear on how your goal looks like in your mind, how can you expect the physical manifestation to be what you really want?

For example, if your goal is to be the owner of your own restaurant serving Italian cuisine, imagine you are already in the situation. Close your eyes now and visualize the picture. How do you feel? Excited? Exuberant? What do you see yourself doing as the restaurant owner? How does your restaurant look? How big is your staff? What are you thinking now? What plans do you have for the restaurant moving forward? Capture that moment in your head and never lose sight of it. This level of mental clarity needs to be present and right in your mind throughout your goal achievement process.

3. Be in Constant Reminder of them

Set up your goal in places where you will be in constant reminder of it. Reminding yourself of your goal is extremely important to keep them in your top of mind awareness. It creates the drive and energy to pursue it every day. There are many ways to do that, such as setting it as your wallpaper, putting it on your noticeboard, putting up a poster of it, creating a vision board, having it as your handphone welcome message, putting it as the cover of your notebook, making a habit to review your goals every morning, and so on. For me, I always make it a point to review my goal sheet every morning after I wake up. It sets me on the activities to take on for the day and keeps me conscious of what is important and what is not important in achieving my dreams.

4. Review Periodically

Review your objective and activity goals regularly. You should review your activity goals more often (e.g., once every month), while your objective goals can be reviewed between longer intervals (e.g., once a quarter) since they are less subjected to changes.

It is important to review goals since they can become irrelevant over time. For example, when I was younger, earning a lot of money was very important to me. Over time, this goal lost its importance when [my life purpose changed](#). Now, it is now most important for me to help other people achieve their highest potential. Money is still important, but as a means to achieve what I want, and not an end.

In the next part of the series, we will be looking at the 2nd step of [ESPER – Strategy](#).

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Part 4: Strategy

This is **part 4** of a **7-part series** on [how to achieve any goals successfully](#).

“Strategies are like recipes: choose the right ingredients, mix them in the correct proportions, and you will always produce the same predictable results.” - Charles J. Givens

Strategy is the **2nd step** of [ESPER](#).

What is Strategy?

Strategy refers to a **game plan which enables effective pursuit of a specific goal or result**. It is a set of underlying principles which determines your action plan towards achieving your end goal. ESPER itself is a strategy for successful goal achievement. The S in ESPER refers to the specific strategies that pertain to your goal.

Strategy is like **your blueprint for success**. Think of it as the cross sectional map that shows you the best way to lead you to your goal. In war, generals gather together to devise strategies to secure an ensuing victory. In the world of business, companies invest millions in research to develop strategies to win in the market place. Consultancy is such a lucrative business because they identify patterns and strategies for corporations to get an edge over the competitors. In stock markets, the most successful traders spend years studying market trends of the past, identifying strategies and applying them. It is really not much different when it comes to your goal achievement.

Strategy is the one step which most people totally miss in the process of goal achievement, which then leads to their failure. Remember that for every goal, there is always a certain blueprint underlying it that guarantees its success. If you are to identify that blueprint, you pretty much have the goal in the bag.

Strategy Is Underutilized

In the systems I was brought up in, the ability to precisely follow instructions was viewed as epitome of a good student/citizen/employee. People were taught to do, not think. Back in school, we were credited if we used the exact same methodology we were taught. Any other methods, even if it led to the same output, were discouraged. Forms of thinking or behavior that did not conform to the norm were viewed as defiant. This is very commonly found in Asian societies, especially in China and Japan. As a result, many people are great in execution, but weak in strategizing.

I have seen many people around me who are unaware of the importance of strategy. They jump right into the execution of their goals, instead of studying their goals first and developing a strategy. What immediately follows is them succumbing to a cycle of self-depreciation and negativity. In the process, they waste their energy, get burnt and put themselves in a worse situation than before.

My Experience With Strategy

One of my personal success stories where strategy played a monumental role was when I switched to become a vegan in Jan, 2008 (triggered by the curiosity on how it would affect my mental clarity). Before this, I was eating the society's average diet including animal products. I had never been a vegetarian or vegan in my life, nor have I even remotely thought about it before.

Because I wanted to succeed in my goal the first time round, I sat down to work out a strategy that would definitely secure a victory. There were many things I did in preparation of the goal, including a full research on veganism, anticipating obstacles that would prevent my successful transition and my counterplan for those obstacles. I got in touch with vegan/vegetarian communities, made a list of nutritional sources from foods so I would have adequate nutrition, bought a blender to prepare my meals at home, among many other things.

The outcome was a home run. Not only did I not feel any desire to eat meat afterwards, I also did not experience any difficulty in the process. In return, I almost enjoyed the upsides of being a vegan immediately, such as the increased mental clarity, the increased vitality, improved sense of morality, among others. While I have heard of other people who try to become a vegetarian/vegan and revert back to meat within the first week, I did not experience any of such problems. I became a vegan immediately and have never looked back since.

Develop Your Strategy

As you look at your goal, think about what are your strategies to achieve this goal. What is going to be your blueprint for success? What can you do to bust this goal? No matter how huge your goal is, **there will be an underlying set of patterns which will allow you to conquer it.**

Below are **8 guides to develop your strategy**:

1. Understand The Goal Thoroughly.

What do you know about the goal? What are all the information you need about the goal in order to achieve success? What does the goal constitute? What is the gap that exists between you and the goal currently? List down all the information and knowledge you have that you think will play an important role in reaching your goals.

2. Leverage on the Mastery of Existing Resources.

As you are collecting the information, think about the existing resources you leverage on in your goal pursuit. There is an amazing wealth of knowledge and experience around you which you can utilize. One of the ways will be reaching out to people who have tried to achieve the goals or even achieved the goals before. If possible, look for mentors or coaches to help. Other sources include the websites, books, podcasts, online communities, friends, just to name a few.

3. Identify your More with Less Route, or 80/20 Route.

After you have obtained all the knowledge on your goal, identify all the paths you can take on to reach there. think about all the potential paths that can be undertaken to move towards your goals. Brainstorming plays an important role here, since you want to leave no stones unturned. Go wild with your ideas; really think out of the box! Visit [25 Brainstorming Techniques](#) for solid brainstorming techniques you can use for this exercise.

After you are done brainstorming, assess all those options based on the information you have. Out of all those paths, which is your [More with Less or](#)

80/20 route? The More with Less or 80/20 route refers to the path which gives you the most reward for the least effort, as opposed to other paths which may give you low reward for low effort, high reward for high effort, or low reward for high effort.

4. Identify the Key Pillars of Success, or 80/20 Actions.

After you have identified your 80/20 route, identify your key pillars of success. Key pillars of success are the few action steps which give you the bulk of the results; they absolutely need to be executed for your goal to be a success. Another name for them will be the 80/20 Actions; the 20% of actions you undertake which give you 80% of results. Again, do not be caught up in the number 80/20; it is just a metaphor for the disproportionate relationship between cause and effect.

Rank your key pillars of success in order of importance; this prioritization will guide you as you move to Planning/Execution. To be able to identify these pillars, you need to obtain a thorough knowledge on the subject matter and goal itself (see point 1 above).

For all the other action steps that are not your key pillars of success, they fall under your 20/80 actions. These are 80% of your actions which give you only 20% of the results for your goal. There is no need to discard them per se; when the need comes, you just need to prioritize your 80/20 Actions over your 20/80 Actions. We will talk more about this in Planning.

5. Pre-empt your obstacles and identify solutions to bust them.

Imagine that you are now pursuing your goal using your 80/20 route and key pillars of success you have identified above. Simulate the scenario as vividly as you can in your mind. What obstacles do you anticipate standing in your way of success? If you have pursued this goal in the past, what derailed you? Write all these obstacles down and rank them in order of magnitude. The bigger the obstacle is in diverting you from the goal, the higher the rank.

From here, start brainstorming on ways to bust the barriers. When you do this, you will have a set of ready solutions at your disposal when you face these obstacles later on. Instead of getting distracted in the middle of your goal pursuit to troubleshoot those barriers, you can easily brush them aside with the solutions you have developed. You can use the list of 25 Brainstorming Techniques for this exercise as well to identify ways to break out of those obstacles.

For example, when I was working out my strategy to lose weight, I realized that I had a penchant for doughnuts (Homer Simpson, anyone?). If I were to start eating a doughnut, it would set off the trigger to break out within the confines of my diet; in fact this was one of the reasons why my previous weight loss efforts were futile. I addressed the issue by staying away from doughnut shops, refusing doughnut offers from friends, telling my mom to stop buying donuts home. Nowadays it is no longer a problem as my natural inclination is towards much healthier foods and I find donuts too sweet for my taste. 😊

6. Obliterate Your Goals with Overwhelming Force.

This is a tactic used in military to overkill the opposition. The concept of overwhelming force means over-committing all your resources, time and energy so that **there is absolutely zero possibility of you failing**. While it is possible for you to achieve your goals with lesser resources, you are also eliminating any chances of failure. Isn't it more effective to get the job done once and for all, rather than dragging it around? Within the More With Less route and key pillars of success you have defined, what are all the things you can do to absolutely overkill you or goals, without any question of doubt?

7. Leverage on Your Environment.

Your environment guides your actions and behaviors and can be leveraged on to aid you in your goal pursuit. When you are in a building, notice how its structure alters your decisions and actions inside accordingly, whether it's walking in a certain direction to get to a room, the use of elevator or stairs to get to a different level, and so on.

Ask yourself this – How can you use your surroundings to support you in your goal? How can you modify your surroundings in a way such that it aids you in achieving your goal? What kind of environments can you immerse in that will set you on sail towards your goals? As you start observing your environment, you will find there are actually many ways you can make use of it.

For example, you may want to become fit. You can put up pictures of athletes around your room to remind yourself of your goal. You can start throwing out your larger clothes and buy fitting or smaller clothes in preparation for your new body. You can hire a trainer to get you up to speed. You can remove all the junk food in your house so that you will not have the opportunity to eat them. You can join both online and offline communities where fit people will amass, such as sports clubs, marathon groups, etc.

Be sure to read my article: [Using Your Environment To Achieve Your Goals](#)

8. Develop Your Skills.

With the achievement of every goal, there are different skills which you need to learn. The core skills are the ones which are critical to the success of the goal. The secondary skills are nice-to-haves and not need-to-haves to achieve your desired output. Which are the core skills and secondary skills for your goal? How can you develop these core skills to ramp up your chances of success?

Be sure to read my articles on skills development:

- [Skills Development](#) | [Leveling Up](#) | [10,000 Hours To Develop Talent](#)

9. Create accountability.

Create accountability via two levels. The first level is **accountability towards yourself**, which we will discuss in the last step of ESPER, [Review](#).

The second level is **extending accountability beyond yourself**. Who are the people you can get to hold you accountable for your results? You can get together with a friend who is sharing the same goal, share your plans and targets with each other and start holding each other accountable. Join support groups or communities which are related to your goals, such as weight loss groups, Alcoholic Anonymous, entrepreneur societies, Toastmasters, etc. Around you, start telling everyone about your goal and your desired outcome. They will start associating you with your goal and ask you for updates the next time they meet you.

At the end of the day though, remember your goal is your responsibility solely and its success depends on you. People around you can only serve as an aid.

The strategies you develop will form the foundation which your goal plan will be built upon. We will be discussing about [Planning](#) in the next part.

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Part 5: Planning

This is **part 5** of a **7-part series** on [how to achieve any goals successfully](#).

“Organizing is what you do before you do something, so that when you do it, it is not all mixed up.” – A. A. Milne

Planning is the **3rd step** of [ESPER framework](#). Where in [Strategy](#) you identify the overall principles to nail your goal, in **Planning** you use those principles to develop a fully structured plan, complete with all the specific details. In this step and the next (Execution), you will find that your left brain and organization skills play a very important role.

The objective of developing a plan is to **(1) organize your tasks** and **(2) allocate your resources accordingly** so that you can achieve your specified goals within your desired time frame. It is a reflection of where your time and energy will be channeled into. If it is well developed, it will keep you organized in your goal pursuit. If it is messy and haphazard, you will find your tasks get thrown into disarray when you are pursuing your goal.

The amount of planning needed varies across goals, since it is a function of the scale and time span of the goal. If your goal is a huge one that involves other resources and people (such as setting up a new business), you may find that there is a significant amount of planning to do before moving to execution. On the other hand, if it is a short-term goal managed at a personal level, you may find that there might be very minimal planning needed.

As you proceed with planning, below are the key guides to use:

1. Develop Your Plan, right down to the specifics

Get down to the **specific tasks, details and action steps** needed, based on the strategy you developed. This is where you get down to the nitty gritty of everything you need to do.

Some guiding questions would be:

- **What:** What is the full list of tasks you need to undertake? What are the action steps needed to trigger each task? What resources do they involve?
- **Who:** Who is required to perform each task? (that will typically be you)
- **When:** When does each task need to be performed? How regularly does each task need to be performed? How much time does it take? Are there any deadlines?
- **Where:** Where is each task supposed to be done?
- **How:** How is each task going to be executed?

Not all the questions will be applicable for your goal, so use them where appropriate.

Be clear on your key pillars of success, or [80/20 Actions](#) (see principle #4 in [Strategy](#)). Be clear on the prioritization within your key pillars of success as well – i.e.; the #1 pillar, #2 pillar, and so on.

As we have mentioned in the previous chapter, your key pillars of success are the most important tasks that will make the most impact to the goal. The rest of the tasks are the less important tasks which can be forgone if needed. This segmentation will be very important when you move to the next step, which is...

2. Fit Your Plan Into Your Schedule

After you have identified your specific plan, now you need to fit them into your schedule. By committing them to a timetable, you integrate your plan into your daily life, thus creating certainty that the whole plan will be acted upon.

a. Get A Daily Calendar

You will need a daily calendar which lists the hours as you schedule in your tasks. Depending on your preferences, you might like to use a web-based calendar, a calendar in your email client, a manually created calendar or even a hard copy calendar.

I used to use Microsoft Outlook for all my work and personal scheduling needs, since it was the email client in my previous company. It worked out pretty well for me. Now, I use [Google Calendar](#) – it is web-based so it can be accessed from any computer, making it extremely convenient. I find it extremely

helpful in keeping me organized; do check it out if you are not using any particular calendar software at the moment. 😊

b. Identify Best Times To Work On Your Goal

First, be clear on when you can work on your goal. There are two factors that determines this. The first is naturally, your time. When do you have available time for your goal-specific tasks? The second is your energy level. During those available free time, will you be in a proper frame of mind to work on your goals? Do not run into the situation where you overcommit yourself with your tasks. If you have working hours of 9am – 9pm every day, it is probably not reasonable to expect yourself to go to the gym every day. Most people often miss this factor, overcommitting themselves in the end and get themselves burnt out in the process.

(Check out my other articles on [21 Tips To Wake Up Early](#) and [28-Day Trial To Wake Up Early](#) on waking up early.)

If you find that you don't have enough time and/or energy, start thinking in terms how you can manage your activities better. Time management has become a mislabeled problem. We don't need to manage time as much as we need to manage our activities. While this might border on semantics to some, when you start seeing your situation as activity management rather than time management, you will look at your activities in a whole different way.

This helps you free up more time so you can spend them on your goal. Examine where all your time is going in right now. How are you spending your time every day? Which are the different activities you are doing? How much time is taken for each activity? Which activities take up the most time?

A simple yet excellent tool which enables you to get immediate clarity on how to streamline your current schedule is the [Time Management Matrix](#). This matrix is first published by Stephen Covey in the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. With this matrix, you can segment all your activities you are spending right now in your life into 4 possible quadrants – Q-1 (Important, Urgent), Q-2 (Important, Non Urgent), Q-3 (Not Important, Urgent) and Q-4 (Not Important, Not Urgent). (For more information, read my article on [Become the Master of Your Time](#))

Assuming you had been rigorous in the first step of ESPER (Establish – the goal), your goal should be a Q-2 or Q-1 task, meaning it is important. Just by removing the Q-3 and Q-4 tasks from your schedule, you will suddenly get a whole lot of free time for your goal tasks in the next step.

c. Schedule Your Goal Tasks

After you have identified the best available times to work on your goal, here is where you schedule your goal tasks in:

1. **Schedule your key pillars of success, or 80/20 Actions.** Start filling your available time slots with your key pillars of success first. These are the deal breakers in your goal and needs to be placed in first.
2. **Schedule your remaining tasks.** After giving priority to your key pillars of success, fill in the other tasks. These are the remaining tasks that need to be done in the course of your goal pursuit. They are not necessary all that critical in the bigger picture of your goal, but need to be done anyway as part of the goal.
3. **Ensure you spend disproportionate time and energy on your key pillars of success.** Ideally, the time allocated across your key pillars of success : your other tasks should be disproportionately skewed towards the former. The ratio will be dependent on the context of the goal and the plan, but the general principle is to spend as much time and focus on your key pillars of success as possible.

As you work on your schedule, here are some tips which can help you build a more robust schedule:

1. **Bundle/Schedule similar-tasks.** See if you can be more effective by bundling tasks or scheduling similar tasks together (e.g., getting your health foods at the same time when you do your grocery shopping; going to the gym on your way home from work).
2. **Allocate sufficient time for each task.** Many of us often run into the situation where we underestimate the time needed on an activity. Develop a good understanding of the timing needs for each task and allocate it accordingly.
3. **Schedule extra 'buffer' time.** This is for contingency purposes; it will come in handy in times when there are unexpected events that occur which need your attention, or when you underestimate the time taken for a particular task.

If you find you don't have enough free time to schedule all your tasks in, you will either need to prioritize across the activities you have in your life currently (see previous step 2b.) or prioritize across the tasks you have listed for your goal (see step 1). Do it until you are able to fit everything within your time schedule.

3. Ensure Congruency With Your Strategy

As a check, the plan you develop should be **congruent** with your strategy. Your strategy is your blueprint, so your plan should be fully based on that

blueprint and not deviate from it. In any scenario you find incongruency in your plan vs your strategy, you need to (1) revisit your strategy to examine if you missed something during that step or (2) revise your plan to fit your strategy if your strategy is indeed robust.

For example, let's say you want to reduce 10% of body fat. Your main strategy is to do high intensity interval training (HIIT). HIIT involves doing bursts of intense exercise that is followed by lower intensity exercises; It has been proven to be effective in reducing fat compared to other methods. However, when you are doing your planning, you fill up your exercise schedule with aerobic lessons and resistance training, which are not HIIT exercises. To stay true to your strategy, you should identify exercises that allow you to perform HIIT, such as treadmill, running and elliptical trainers.

Let's look at another example. Say you want to increase your salary in your current job, and in your strategy you listed the three biggest pillars of success as (1) Perform well in Project A, a huge project you just got assigned with (2) Finish Project B, which is less important than Project A (3) Ensure the day-to-day tasks are in order. The time that you allocate across pillars (1), (2) and (3) should be in accordance with the importance you gave them; For example, at a ratio of 60:30:10. Since Project A is the most important factor that leads to your goal, it justifies having the bulk of your time (60%) should be spent on it. If you find that you are allocation 90% of your time on (3) day-to-day activities and only 10% on (1) and (2), clearly there is something amiss. In this case you will need to reevaluate the timing allocation.

With the right planning, your execution will become an easier task. In the next article, we will be discussing [Execution](#).

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Part 6: Execution

This is **part 6** of a **7-part series** on [how to achieve any goals successfully](#).

“Execution is all that the world sees.”

Execution is the **4th step** of [ESPER framework](#). This is the step where your goal really gets brought to life in physical reality. When you were [establishing your goal](#), you created the virtual image it in your mind. In [Strategy](#), you developed the key pillars and principles you need to build your plan on. In [Planning](#), you develop the specifics of your plan, right up to activities you need to do and integrated it into your schedule.

Execution is an extremely critical step because **execution is all that anybody ever sees**. You can spend all your life establishing goals, strategizing and planning, but if you never get down to the execution, **nothing is going to happen**.

It is the step when things manifest, get brought to life, takes physical shape. It is when **your goal becomes reality**.

Assuming you have done a thorough and rigorous job in the previous three steps and you have [prioritized the right tasks in your plan](#), how your goal manifests in reality now weighs on your ability to execute according to your plan.

The key personal development skills that execution tests are **1) Self-Discipline 2) Maximizing Productivity**. I have already written a series of articles in those topics which you can check out below.

1) Self-Discipline

[Self-Discipline is Overrated](#): How to deal with situations where you feel resistance or inertia towards achieving your goals.

2) Maximizing Productivity:

1. [Become the Master of Your Time](#) – Two key pillars of productivity: Effectiveness and Efficiency
2. [Put First Things First](#) – How to better manage your activities with Time Management Matrix
3. [80/20 Principle](#) – Focus on getting the 80% right with 20% of your efforts
4. [Myth of Perfectionism \(3-part series\)](#) – [How perfectionism impacts productivity](#) and [what to do about it](#)
5. [50 Ways To Boost Your Productivity](#)
6. [Why We Have Slumps And How To Get Out Of Them](#)
7. [Why I Wake Up Early \(And 9 Reasons You Should Do So Too\)](#)

In the last part of the series, we will be looking at the last step of [ESPER](#) – [Review](#). 😊

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Last Part: Review

This is **last part** of a **7-part series** on [how to achieve any goals successfully](#).

Review is the **final step** of [ESPER](#).

Importance of Review

Review serves two important objectives: **(1) Accountability (2) Feedback**.

Firstly, Review strengthens **accountability** to yourself. When you review, you make yourself answerable to your goals. You take ownership of and responsibility for your actions. If you don't review, how will you know how you are reaching your goal? This is especially important if your goal is not immediately perceptible, such as how much weight you are losing or savings generated in a month. You can always operate under the assumption that you are at your goal, but you will never know for sure until you review.

Secondly, Review is where you get **feedback** on everything you have [strategized](#), [planned](#) and [executed](#). Reviewing lets you understand what's working, what's not working and how you can improve. Without Review, you will have no clue on whether your actions are leading you towards or away from your goals. You will be stabbing in the dark, blindly repeating the same steps, wondering why you not seem to be getting closer to your goal. You may attribute it to some inherent inability on your part or random external factors when the truth may be far from it.

Review Process

Reviewing occurs from **START** till the **End**

Most people only do their review at the end of their goal pursuit, when everything has been done and there is no room to make any changes. When you

do that, you risk getting yourself surprised by the results at the end. You also prevent any opportunity to effect improvisations mid-way in the goal pursuit.

Review should be an **ongoing process** that happens **from the start of your goal pursuit, during, and right at the end**. It should serve as a constant feedback loop on the effectiveness of your actions and their implications toward the outcome. By reviewing constantly, you get immediate learnings which can then be incorporated to **increase your chances of success**. It gives you clarity on your performance thus far and prevents surprise at the end of the goal pursuit.

The best way I recommend to do your review is to develop a tracking sheet right from the start of your goal pursuit.

Create Your Tracking Sheet

When you create your tracking sheet, it is best to use a software that can process and organize large amounts of information easily. I used to use Microsoft Excel in the past – However, I recently switched to a new laptop and don't have the license to install Excel anymore. Today, I use the spreadsheet application in [Open Office](#); it operates almost exactly like MS Excel and it is freeware so you can use it at no cost. 😊 Another option is [Google Spreadsheets](#), which is a free web-based spreadsheet program.

Your tracking sheet should ideally capture the following information:

1. **End goal target**. This is your goal target, such as your weight if your goal is to lose weight and your income if your goal is to increase your income.
2. **End task targets**. These are targets for the tasks you need to undertake to achieve your goal. They are especially important to track your progress if your end goal is something binary (yes/no). Say, your goal is to secure a job in a bank. Some of your task targets might be X number of industry people you connect with, X number of applications you send out, X number of interviews you go to, and so on. If you want to lose weight, task targets can include number of times you exercised a week, how long you exercised each time, amount of calories you ate/day, etc. Try to assign quantitative numbers as much as possible as to limit subjectivity. Note that **task targets should be your secondary measure to evaluate your performance**; your key measure should be your goal target since that is the result that matters.
3. **Intermediary targets for (1) and (2)**. These are the breakdowns of the end targets you set for your goal and tasks. These serve as your

milestones. For example, if your end goal is to be 10lbs lighter after 2 months, you might target to be 5lbs lighter at the end of the first month. You can set as many intermediary targets as you want.

4. **Your actual performance against your goal and task targets.** This is where you track your performance over time. Here, you can compare on how you are performing against your targets.

There is really **no hard and fast rule to how your tracking sheet should be**. Since the review sheet is for your own usage, the amount of information to track should be what is necessary and important in your goal achievement. For me, I have different templates which I use for different goals. For my long-term goals (3+ years), I have two review sheets – one **overview** goal sheet which is segmented by years and one **detailed** sheet which tracks by days in a month. My overview sheet lets me see the big picture without being caught up with the daily details, while my detailed sheet lets me get down to the nitty gritty.

The watchout is **not to obsess over the process of tracking**. If you find yourself spending an hour every day on tracking your performance alone, it is a sign that you are not optimizing your time. Keep it as simple as possible while ensuring that it captures the necessary information to serve your needs.

Key Things to Look Out For When Reviewing

As you review the results of your actions throughout the process, ask yourself the following questions:

1. **How are you faring against your targets?** Are you exceeding your expectations? Are you barely meeting your expectations? Are you falling behind?
2. **What is helping you in your goal?** Why is it working? How can you focus on this to further drive up your results? Are there any opportunities to improve on what has been working?
3. **What is not helping you in goal?** Why is it not working? Can you do anything about it to turn it around? Should you abandon the task instead? How can you incorporate the learnings into your plan to improve your chances for success?

If you are **meeting/exceeding your targets**, give yourself a reward to congratulate yourself 😊 Consider whether you want to increase your targets at this point; after all there is nothing better than to keep the momentum going while it's high! 🙌

If you are **not meeting your goal target nor your task targets**, it is likely that the gap in your task targets is causing you not to meet your goal target. You should focus on improving on your execution at this point.

If you are **not meeting your goal targets** but you are meeting your **task targets**, chances are something went wrong in your Strategy and/or Plan. Reassess and revise them accordingly, then proceed to execute your revised plan.

In either cases, identify the additional actions you need to take to still meet your goal in the remaining time. If it is not possible for you to meet the goal within the same timing and the time frame is non-negotiable, consider revising your goal target. Else, you should extend your timing to reflect the new changes.

End Evaluation

If you have been reviewing your performance regularly, the result at the end of your goal pursuit should not come as a surprise.

Goal achieved

If you have reached your goal, congratulations! 😊 Take some special time right out to bask in the moment – you should be really proud of yourself! 😊 After you are done, look back at the process of your goal pursuit. Did you achieve the goal too easily? Did you barely meet the goal? Did you achieve your goal but take more time and resources than you envisioned to conquer?

Whatever it is, take note of the learnings and incorporate them into your next goal pursuit. If your goal was too easy, make them harder next time. If your goal was more challenging than you thought, allocate your resources accordingly the next time.

Goal not achieved

If your goal was not achieved, identify the reason why it was not achieved.

Look back at the previous steps of ESPER to see what went wrong. Based on [your review](#), what went wrong in the process? Did you [establish your goal](#) in line with the key principles? Was [your strategy](#) laid out correctly? Was [your plan](#) a clear reflection of your strategy? Did something not get [executed](#) in accordance with your plans? The earlier the issue occurs in ESPER, the bigger it will culminate into when you are executing the plans. It is thus very critical that rigorous effort have been put into all the steps of the framework.

Be very rigorous and detailed in your troubleshooting process. Iron out all the issues you see until you are sure your plan is entirely robust and conforms to your best understanding of what is needed to achieve your goal. Don't keep doing the same things over and over again - troubleshoot to understand what is wrong. If you are not getting what you want, [it's probably high time to change your actions](#).

If the [activity goal](#) can be pursued again, reembark on the pursuit. If it is irreversible (such as exams, interviews), focus on what needs to be done next to bring you on-track towards your [objective goal](#). Remember, **your objective goal is what matters**. Your activity goal is just one of the many ways that can lead you to your objective. Go back to the first step and restart your goal planning.

Your Goal Achievement Journey

In the pursuit of your goals, you will undoubtedly face things that veer you off track. It is okay to be disappointed in the process. Face your disappointment, [learn how to deal with it](#) but do not let yourself be overrun by it.

As long as you follow through the [ESPER framework](#), you will experience success with your goals. No matter how insurmountable a goal may seem to be, it will be possible to crack it down. If you feel the goal looks unachievable, it is because you have not uncovered the [underlying set of patterns](#) and [paths](#) that allow you to reach it. Once you successfully do that, you will find that the goal is extremely accessible.

To quote Sydney Smith, *“Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off your goals”*. Remember that the world's most successful people have set mountainous goals and reached them because they kept their unwavering vision on their end goals. When you correctly draw up the map linking you to your end destination, all it takes is perseverance before you eventually reach your goals.

As you pursue your goals, remember to enjoy the journey. The goal achievement is but one point in time; the journey is the longest of the whole process. Only when you enjoy your journey will you be able to permeate your final goal. 😊

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