Create More Success
10 Simple Strategies to Boost Your Results

QUICK OVERVIEW
In *The Power of Focus*, personal-achievement mentors Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen and Les Hewitt explain that three of the biggest challenges facing people today are time pressures, financial pressures and the struggle to maintain a healthy balance between work and home. Their pointed advice is geared toward finding solutions to these challenges, and the strategies they offer are practical whether you’re attempting to reshape your professional or personal life.

The authors also explain that the main reason most people struggle professionally and personally is simply due to a lack of focus caused by procrastination, distractions and interruptions. They offer readers “10 Focus Strategies” to develop forward action and create momentum in achieving success in life. This summary focuses on two of these ten strategies: Successful People Have Successful Habits and Consistent Persistence. Additionally, we’ve included an exercise that will help you understand that everything—including success and failure—is a choice.

APPLY AND ACHIEVE
Canfield, Hansen and Hewitt address an important confidence factor that few other personal-development books spend much time talking about—eliminating unfinished business. One common mental blockade of unfinished business is forgiveness.

“To release yourself totally from the baggage of the past, you must learn to forgive,” they write. There are two sides to forgiveness. First, you need to forgive the people who obstructed you in the past—parents, friends, relatives or teachers. No matter how traumatic the experience, to be free you must forgive them. This may not be easy, but it’s essential if you want to have peace of mind and a happier future.

How do you do this? Write a letter, make a phone call, have a face-to-face conversation, whatever it takes, but it is of paramount importance that you settle the issue within yourself. Just let it go, and move on.
Second, forgive yourself. Silence forever those negative thoughts of guilt. The past is history. You will never be able to change it. Instead, accept the fact that whatever you did, your choices were based on your level of knowledge and awareness at the time.

Break down the barrier of unfinished business by practicing forgiveness.

Brent Vouri knew he was going to die.

The severe asthmatic attack had deteriorated into adult respiratory distress syndrome. To put it simply, his lungs had completely seized, just like a car engine when it finally runs out of oil. The last thing he remembered that night was the hospital floor rushing up to meet him, then, total blackness. The coma lasted for fifteen days, during which time his weight dropped by forty pounds. When he finally awoke, he was unable to speak for another two weeks. That was good, because for the first time in years it gave him time to think. Why, at only twenty years of age, had his life almost evaporated? The doctors had done a miraculous job keeping him alive, when others thought he had no chance for survival.

Brent reflected deeply. The asthma had been a part of his life since birth. He was well known at the hospital after numerous visits to stabilize his condition. Despite having lots of energy as a child, he was never able to participate in any physical activities like other kids, such as skating or hockey. At age ten, his parents divorced and all of his pent-up frustrations finally boiled over. The next few years were a continuous downward spiral leading to drugs, alcohol abuse and a smoking habit that consumed thirty cigarettes per day.

He didn’t finish school and aimlessly drifted from one part-time job to the next. Even though his health was steadily getting worse, he chose to ignore it—until that fateful night when his body said, “no more.” With time to reflect, he came to this all-important conclusion: “I brought this on myself through years of making bad choices.”

His new resolve was, “Never again; I want a life.”

Brent gradually became stronger and was eventually released from the hospital. Soon after, he mapped out a positive game plan to improve his life. First he enrolled in a fitness program. One of his initial goals was to win a T-shirt for completing twelve sessions. He did it. Three years later he was teaching aerobics. The momentum was building. Five years after that he competed in the National Aerobics Championships. Along the way he decided to further his education—first, completing his high school diploma and then successfully working his way through university.

Next, he and a friend started their own manufacturing business, Typhoon Sportswear Ltd., specializing in producing apparel for retail chains. Starting with only four employees, the company recently celebrated its fifteenth anniversary.

Your everyday choices ultimately determine whether you end up living with abundance or living in poverty. However, life never completely closes the door to opportunity.

Today it’s a multimillion-dollar enterprise with sixty-six people and an international distribution network supplying high-profile clients such as Nike. By deciding to make better choices and create better habits, Brent Vouri turned his life around—from yesterday’s zero to today’s hero!

Isn’t that an inspiring story?

Here’s what’s important: Life doesn’t just happen to you. It’s all about choices and how you respond to every situation. If you are in the habit of continually making bad choices, disaster often occurs. Your everyday choices ultimately determine whether you end up living with abundance or living in poverty. However, life never completely closes the door to opportunity.

Consistent choices lay the foundation for your habits. Your habits play a major role in how your future unfolds. This includes the habits you display to the business world every day, as well as the variety of behaviors that show up in your personal life. These strategies can be applied to both work and home, and all of these strategies work equally well for men and women. They are not gender specific. If you haven’t noticed, one of the most exciting developments in the marketplace today is the rapid growth of women entrepreneurs.

Successful people have successful habits; unsuccessful people don’t!
HOW HABITS REALLY WORK

Your habits will determine your future.

What is a habit? Simply stated, a habit is something you do so often it becomes easy. In other words, it’s a behavior that you keep repeating. If you persist at developing a new behavior, eventually it becomes automatic.

For example, if you learn to drive a car with a standard gearshift, the first few lessons are usually interesting. One of the big challenges is figuring out how to synchronize the clutch and accelerator pedals so you have a nice, smooth gear change. If you release the clutch too quickly, the car stalls. If you press down too hard on the accelerator without releasing the clutch, the engine roars but you don’t go anywhere. Sometimes the car jumps down the street like a kangaroo, surging and stopping as the new driver struggles with the pedals. However, with practice, the gear change eventually becomes smooth and you don’t think about it anymore.

(Les) We are all creatures of habit. When I drive home from my office every day, there are nine traffic lights along the route. Often I get home and don’t remember any of the lights. It’s like I’m unconscious as I drive. If my wife asks me to make a detour to pick up something on the way home, it’s not uncommon for me to totally forget because I’ve programmed myself to take the same way home every night.

The great news is that you can reprogram yourself any time you choose to do so. If you’re struggling financially, this is important to know!

Let’s say you want to be financially independent. Doesn’t it make sense to check your money-making habits? Are you in the habit of paying yourself first every month? Do you consistently save and invest at least 10 percent of your income? The answer is either “yes” or “no.”

Immediately you can see if you are moving in the right direction. The key word here is consistent. That means every month. And every month is a good habit. Most people dabble when it comes to growing their money. They are very inconsistent. In other words, you commit to your better financial future every single day. It’s what separates the people who have from the people who don’t have.

Get a New Life With New Habits

Once a new habit is well-developed, it becomes your new normal behavior. This is great news! By superimposing a new behavior on top of your present behavior, you can create an entirely new way of doing things. In other words, you simply start replacing your old bad habits with new successful habits.

I (Mark) have a friend in his fifties who changed twenty-four eating habits over a two-year period. Before he decided to change, he was tired and overweight, had low energy and lacked motivation for his work. His bad habits included too many desserts, fast foods and a bottle of wine every day.

Then he decided to change. It was a long process and required lots of self-discipline. With the help of an excellent nutritionist and a personal fitness trainer, he made a complete turnaround. He has stopped drinking, has no trouble avoiding desserts and eats smaller food portions that are well-balanced and provide maximum energy. He has a new zest for business and his confidence is at an all-time high.

If other people can make significant changes, why not you? Remember, nothing will change until you do. Embrace change as a positive catalyst, one that will give you more freedom and peace of mind.

If you keep on doing what you’ve always done, you’ll keep on getting what you’ve always got.

THE SUCCESSFUL HABITS FORMULA

This is a step-by-step method to help you create better habits. It works because it’s simple. You don’t need complicated strategies. This template can be applied to any area of your life, business or personal. If applied consistently, it will help you achieve everything you want. There are three fundamental steps:
1. Clearly identify your bad or unproductive habits.
   When you examine your own bad habits, consider the long-term implications. Be totally honest.

2. Define your new successful habit.
   Usually this is just the opposite of your bad habit. To motivate yourself, think about all the benefits and rewards for adopting your new successful habit. This helps you create a clear picture of what this new habit will do for you. The more vividly you describe the benefits, the more likely you are to take action.

3. Create a three-part action plan.
   This is where the rubber meets the road. You must take action. Start with one habit that you really want to change. Focus on your three immediate action steps and put them into practice. Do it now. Remember, nothing will change until you do.

**CONSISTENT PERSISTENCE**

“The miracle power that elevates the few is to be found in their industry, application and perseverance, under the promptings of a brave determined spirit.”—Mark Twain

If you take a close look at people who are truly successful in life, you will find one character trait in abundance. We call it Consistent Persistence. At first glance, the words consistent and persistence may seem similar. That’s true, they are. We have double-barreled them to emphasize the importance of this habit. In case you feel like skipping over this without due thought and consideration, here’s an important statement to digest and store forever in the deepest recesses of your brain: You will never achieve big results in your life without consistent and persistent action.

Many organizations struggle because their leaders put up with a high level of inconsistency. Well, we have news for you. The business world today is a lot different than it was ten years ago. The performance bar has been raised to a new level. Ineptitude will not be tolerated.

For example: You call a team meeting for 9 a.m. Monday. Each one of your twenty sales representatives is asked to attend. At 9:15 a.m., only fourteen people have shown up. Two more eventually stroll in at 9:25 a.m. and the rest never appear. And it’s like that almost every week.

This lack of consistency will wreck your team unity. Usually a few prima donnas are the root cause. Sometimes they show up, sometimes they don’t. It’s really frustrating. In today’s world the answer is simple—lock them out! That’s right, at 9:00 a.m. sharp, lock the doors of the meeting room. The message will soon be understood: “If you want to play on our team, be consistent.”

**The Benefits of Consistency**

(Jack and Mark) One of the main reasons we have enjoyed considerable success with our *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series of books is the consistency in setting weekly, monthly and yearly targets. These are well-defined and challenge us to the max. Our goals inspire us because we are not exactly sure how we will accomplish them. This stirs our creative juices. With the help of our Mastermind Group partners, we always find solutions. Currently we have twenty-nine Chicken Soup titles in print.

In our first year of publication, we sold 135,000 books. In year two, that figure grew to 1.35 million, and in year five (1998), our total book sales were 13.8 million. We also discovered that when you have consistent persistence and a proactive game plan, you build momentum that becomes unstoppable; you develop a winning streak.

Now put yourself under the microscope for a moment. What sort of a streak do you have going right now? Does your consistency show up in real terms every day? Or are you bouncing around all over the place, dabbling here and there with the opportunities of life? If you are doing pretty well, we applaud you. But let’s move your abilities to another level, that rarefied atmosphere where the challenges are greater and the rewards are even more lucrative.

**EMBRACE YOUR GREATEST POWER**

We want you to stop right now and make a list of six things you absolutely have to get done in the next three months. These are activities that must be completed, for whatever reason. They may include some of the short-term goals you established earlier. Keep your statements brief. Opposite each activity that you have to do, write one word that describes your feelings about it.

Think of how you honestly feel when you visualize each task. To help you, here are a few examples of “feeling” words: angry, sad, happy, excited, upset, worried, frustrated, joyful, loving, thankful. These are all words that directly relate to emotions. Choose your own word to describe how you feel about each item on your Have-To list.
The Power of Focus

Have-To's

Now let’s review your list. Take a look at each item and, one at a time, put a line through each task. That’s right, cross it off your list.

Here’s why: You don’t have to do any of these things. No, you really don’t! Now, you may be protesting that some of these things really must be done. They can’t be avoided—taxes must be paid, you say. No, you don’t have to pay taxes. You may end up in jail or pay a fine, but you don’t have to pay taxes. These are just the consequences if you don’t pay—but you don’t have to. In case you are a little confused by this, let’s make a simple defining statement: In life, you don’t have to do anything.

Choose-To’s

Now, make a list of at least six things you want to do, or choose to do in the next three months. This is a different list. What are you really looking forward to doing? Again, choose a word to describe how you feel about completing each item on your list.

To get the full benefit of this it’s important that you sit down and complete this activity now.

Now look at those feeling words. They are probably much more positive than the ones on your Have-To list. If your activities are producing positive energy, then you will have a greater capacity and desire to complete them. Isn’t it better to be feeling happy and excited instead of worried and frustrated?

At this point you may be thinking, “Well, it’s easy to feel good about the things I want to do, but life isn’t always like that. There are a lot of things I don’t like to do, but I have to do them anyway. That’s just the way it is.”

No, it isn’t. Here’s the mega-point: Everything in life is a choice. Absolutely everything.

Focus On Your Natural Talents

The Rolling Stones’ career has spanned almost forty years, performing to sold-out stadiums around the world. You may not like their music, but it’s hard to deny their success. Let’s go behind the scenes just before their concert begins…. The stage is set. It took over two hundred people to build this mammoth structure several stories tall and half the length of a football field. A convoy of more than twenty semi-trailers was required to haul it from the last location. Two private planes jet the key people, including the band, between cities. Their 1994 world tour earned more than $80 million profit, so it’s obviously worth the effort!

A limousine pulls up back of the stage. The band members step out and wait expectantly for their cue call. Seventy-thousand people erupt into a deafening roar when the Stones walk on stage and pick up their instruments. For the next two hours they perform brilliantly, sending their legions of fans home happy and satisfied. After the final encore they wave good-bye, step into the waiting limousine and exit the stadium.

They are masters at applying the habit of Priority Focus. That means they only do the things they are brilliant at—recording and performing on stage—period.
ACTION STEPS

Get more from this SUCCESS Book Summary by applying what you’ve learned. Here are a few questions and thoughts to get you started today.

1. What bad habits are holding you back?
2. What new habits do you need to develop in order to reach your goals?
3. In what areas of your life do you need to consistently persist?
4. How would being consistent change your results?
5. Do you have a proactive game plan for your business? If no, create one now!
6. Are you embracing the power of choice?
7. What are you going to choose to focus on accomplishing during the next thirty days?

About the Authors

Jack Canfield is a best-selling author whose focus is to inspire others to live their best lives. In addition to co-authoring the Chicken Soup for the Soul series, Canfield has worked with numerous companies, including General Electric, Federal Express, Johnson & Johnson, Sony Pictures, TRW and Virgin Records, plus other organizations such as the Million Dollar Round Table and the Young Presidents Organization. He has appeared on CNN, PBS, Today and Oprah.

Mark Victor Hansen has taught success strategies to millions of people. He received the prestigious Horatio Alger Award in May 2000 and has appeared on CNN, Today, PBS and Oprah and has been featured in a number of magazines and newspapers. In addition, Hansen is the co-author of the Chicken Soup for the Soul series.

Les Hewitt is a dynamic speaker, author, business coach and sales trainer. Originally from Northern Ireland, Hewitt is one of the top performance coaches in North America and the founder of the highly successful Achievers Coaching Program. Hewitt has coached hundreds of entrepreneurs to achieve exceptional profits and productivity.

Recommended Reading

If you enjoyed the summary of The Power of Focus, check out:

Talent Is Never Enough by John C. Maxwell
The Richest Man in Babylon by George S. Clason
The Millionaire Next Door by Thomas J. Stanley and William D. Danko