

theFrumiGroup

The 12 Week Year

Notes by Frumi Rachel Barr, MBA, PhD.

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Publisher: Strategic breakthroughs press

Copyright year: 2010

Author's Bio: **Brian Moran** is founder and President of Strategic Breakthroughs. A visionary and strategic thinker, Brian has over thirty years of expertise as a corporate executive, entrepreneur, consultant and coach. His experience includes positions as President & CEO of a Start-up Company as well as Corporate Vice President of Sales & Service for a billion dollar, Fortune 1000 company.

Brian is the driving force behind many of the successful managers and producers in the industry today. His unique combination of experience and insight provides a platform for business owners and producers to quantum leap their performance. Brian's breakthrough approach has been tried and proven in his own businesses before sharing his principles and practices with others. His realization that most people don't lack for ideas, instead where they struggle is with effective implementation has led to the development of Periodization

Michael Lennington, Vice President with Strategic Breakthroughs, is an expert at leading individuals and organizations through the implementation of lasting change. A creative and strategic thinker, Michael started and led a Retail Strategy Practice. He has been a strategy and operations consultant for more than 20 years in North America, Europe and the Middle East and his experience spans multiple industries including automotive, retail, and financial services.

He applies his deep and broad experience at all levels of a client organization from CEO to front line producers. He enables his clients to achieve their visions and goals through a combination of personal expertise and a facilitation approach that develops the capabilities of his clients to achieve both their current and future objectives

Author's big thought: In this book, the authors will show you how to increase your current results by up to 4 times or more! Not by working harder, but by focusing on the activities that matter most, maintaining a sense of urgency to get those things done, and shedding low-value things that keep you stuck.

Chapter Notes:

Execution Is Key

- It's not what you know; it's not even who you know; it's what you implement that counts.
- Our 12 week execution system is both flexible and scalable.
- Execution is the single greatest market-differentiator. Great companies and successful individuals execute better than their competitors.
- Over time, competition and business models may change, yet the ability to execute well remains the key differentiator between success and failure
- Top performers, regardless of industry, don't necessarily have better ideas. What they do have is a better system of implementing their ideas. The bottom line is that top performers execute better.
- With ever-increasing levels of change and competition, execution remains paramount. Effective execution means carving out time each and every week to focus on the high payoff activities. It means rising above the day-to-day and focusing on the future. P
- To improve your execution you will need to set aside all the problems and "fires" and focus your energies on the stuff that really matters: the strategically important items.

Discard Annualized Thinking

- Annual goals and plans are often a barrier to high performance. Effective execution doesn't happen monthly, quarterly or annually. At the heart of annualized thinking is an unspoken belief that there is plenty of time in the year to make things happen. We mistakenly believe that there is lots of time left in the year, and we act accordingly. We lack a sense of urgency. Ultimately, effective execution happens daily and weekly.
- The notion that there is plenty of time in a year has a detrimental effect on performance. Another flawed premise with annualized thinking is the notion that, sometime later in the year, we will experience a significant improvement in results. .
- Stop thinking in terms of a year; instead focus on shorter time frames. Discard annualized thinking and watch what happens.

Great Things Happen At Year End

- A deadline is a terrific motivator. The most active time is just before something is due. The difference between success and failure for the whole year can hang in the balance during the last 60 days.
- Year-end is certainly a rousing time in most industries. Activity is up and people are focused. Workers focus on the critical projects and opportunities. Tasks that are not directly related to driving results are pushed aside or what really matters in the short-term. There also seems to be an increase in performance-related conversations.
- People procrastinate less near year-end. In these remaining days, diffusion and downtime are replaced by a strong sense of urgency.
- You could create that energy, focus and commitment throughout the year with Periodization and the 12-Week Year!

Periodization

- Periodization began as an athletic training technique designed to dramatically improve performance. Periodization for sports is a focused training regimen that concentrates on one skill at a time for a limited period, usually four to six weeks. After each four to six week period, the athlete then moves to the next skill in sequence. This way, capacity in skill is maximized.
- The authors have developed a 12 week approach to Periodization that moves to focus on the critical factors that drive production and life balance. The 12-Week Year defines what's important for you to do today so that your long-term objectives can be attained.
- The 12-Week Year is a focused process and a structured approach that fundamentally changes the way you think and act. It's important to understand that the results you achieve are a direct result of the actions you take. Your actions in turn are manifestations of your underlying thinking. Ultimately, it is your thinking that drives your results; it is your thinking that creates your experiences in life.
- When you focus on changing your actions you experience incremental improvements. When, however, your thinking shifts—everything changes. Herein lies the power of the 12-Week Year; it shifts your mindset thereby creating opportunities for breakthrough.
- The 12-Week Year provides the tools and focus for individuals and organizations to be highly successful. It creates a sense of clarity regarding what is important and a sense of urgency each day to do what is necessary.
- Periodization: Intensifies focus and creates energy drives out inefficiencies and delays in the system, eliminates wishful thinking and confronts reality, builds capacity to execute against core activities
- 12 Weeks Equals A Year. A year is no longer 12 months; it is now only 12 weeks. Now, there is just a 12-Week Year, followed by the next 12-Week Year, ad infinitum.
- The 12-Week Year creates a new end game date—the point at which you assess your success (or lack thereof). The great thing about having a 12-Week Year is that the deadline is always near enough that you never lose sight of it. It proves in a 12-week year there is clearly no time to put off or procrastinate.
- The 12-Week Year also forces you to confront your lack of execution. The 12-Week Year narrows your focus to the week, and more to the point, the day, which is where execution occurs.
- Effective execution does not happen monthly, or quarterly or semi-annually, it happens daily. The 12-Week Year brings that reality front and center. Once 12 weeks becomes your year then each week matters; each day matters; each moment matters. You now experience the anticipation of a new year every 12 weeks.
- Every 12 weeks is a new start. And just like you do at the end of calendar year, every 12 weeks you can take a break, celebrate and reload. The important thing is that you take time out to reflect, regroup and reenergize. The 12-Week Year presents, at a minimum, opportunities to recognize and celebrate your progress and accomplishments. A 12-Week Year creates a clear line of sight from start to finish.

Critical Objectives

- The only way to push through to successful execution and achieve your goals is to have a strong emotional stake in the outcome. Critical Objectives are the emotional underpinnings that propel us forward through difficulties and uncertainty.
- To create that powerful emotional stake we must first clarify and connect with what is important in life. If you are going to perform at a high level; if you're going to take new ground; if you're going to be great; then you better have a vision that is emotionally compelling. You will need a vision of the future that is bigger than the present; a vision with which you are emotionally connected.
- A vision is the starting point of all high performance. We create things twice; first mentally, then physically. And the biggest barrier to high performance is not the physical manifestation but the mental creation. You must be clear on what it is you want to create.
- It is actually your life vision that gives traction and relevance to your business. Begin with your personal vision – with what you want your life to look like three years from now, and then what your business needs to look like in order to align with and enable your personal vision. The more personally compelling your vision is, the more likely it is that you will act upon it. In order to tap the incredible power of your vision you need a future that is bigger than the present. A compelling personal vision creates passion. It is critical that you craft a compelling Personal Vision and a Business Vision that aligns with and supports your life goals.
- Critical Objectives clearly define your vision for your life. They also create an emotional link to your business objectives because your business objectives fund your personal vision. In the end, the money funds the vision.
- Your business vision then is most powerful when it is developed in light of your personal vision and objectives. Critical Objectives are the reasons why we work in the first place. Once you understand the linkage between your life vision and your business success, you can define exactly what level of income or production your business must deliver in order to support your vision. It is this emotional connection that will provide you with the inner strength to forge ahead in spite of any difficulties, thus enabling you to achieve your dreams and desires.

Developing 12 Week Plans

- Once you have a clear vision, you need a plan to get there.
- Working from a plan has three distinct benefits:
 1. It Reduces Miscues
 2. It Saves Time
 3. It Provides Focus
- Planning allows you to think through in advance the best approach to achieving your goal. You make your mistakes on paper; which reduces miscues during implementation.
- Planning time is some of the most productive time you can have. Planning keeps you focused and on purpose; this is vital, as there are all kinds of day-to-day distractions to pull you off course. Once you are clear about your vision, you then need a plan to achieve it. Planning brings the future into the present.

- The first thing that is different with 12-Week Planning is that it is more predictable. The further you plan into the future the less certainty you have because assumptions are stacked upon earlier assumptions, which are stacked upon earlier assumptions.
- The reality is that it is very difficult, if not almost impossible, to know what the appropriate daily actions should be eleven to twelve months into the future. That is why annual plans and long-term plans are very numbers based. With a 12-week plan. Predictability is much greater.
- 12-Week Plans are both numbers and activity driven in connection between the actions you take today and results you wish to achieve.
- The second difference with 12-Week planning is that it is more focused. The approach is “Let’s be great at a few things versus mediocre at many.” With 12-Week planning you identify the top one, two maybe three things that will have the greatest impact and pursue those with intensity. The 12-Week Plan focuses on a few key areas and creates the energy and urgency to act.
- The third thing that is different with 12-Week Planning is the structure. Most plans are written with the unspoken goal of developing a good plan. Your plan should start by identifying your overall goal(s) for the 12 Week period. The goal defines the “where” you want to be at the end of the 12-Week Year. It is aligned with your longer-term vision.
- Once the 12-Week Goal is clarified, strategies will then need to be determined. Strategies are the initiatives that, when implemented, lead to the achievement of your goals. “What” you need to implement to accomplish your goal. Between one and three strategies are recommended. To be effective each strategy must be specific and measurable. For each strategy, what we call tactics will then need to be developed. Tactics are the daily “to-do’s” that drive the attainment of our strategy.
- Tactics are the “how.” Tactics too must be specific and actionable, and include due dates and assigned responsibilities. The 12-Week Plan is structured so that if the tactics are completed on a timely basis the Strategy is accomplished and the goals are achieved.
- In order to keep from losing your way with a 12 week focus, you will need to align your 12-Week Plan to a longer-term vision. A vision that focuses eighteen to thirty-six months into the future is sufficient. A 12-Week Plan is powerful; twelve weeks is a long enough period of time to get things done and yet is short enough to create and maintain a sense of urgency.

Weekly Plans—the Power of the Moment

- Long-term results are created by what you do each and every day. Weekly plans allow you to structure your activities so that you are focused on both the long-term and short-term tasks that are truly important. You can then focus on acting in the moment, and avoid the distraction of worrying about the future.
- The Weekly Plan is the instrument that organizes and focuses your week. It becomes your weekly game plan. It reflects the critical strategic activity from your 12-Week Plan that needs to take place in the current week in order for you to achieve your goals.
- The starting point for an effective Weekly Plan is your 12-Week Plan. The 12-Week plan contains all of the tactics that are needed to achieve your 12-Week Goals, and it has assigned weeks for each tactic.

- To use your Weekly Plan effectively, you will need to spend the first 15-20 minutes at the beginning of each week to review your progress from last week and to plan your upcoming week.
- In addition, the first 5 minutes of each day should be spent planning that day. A 12-Week Year creates even greater focus on the value of each week.
- In the 12-Week Year, a year is now equivalent to twelve weeks, a month is now a week, and a week is now a day.
- Your Weekly Plan enables you to focus your actions and be great at a few things rather than mediocre at many. Your Weekly Plan encompasses your strategies and priorities, your long-term and short-term tasks, and your commitments in the context of time.
- To really benefit from this tool you will need to print it out and work from it on a basis, start each day with your Weekly Plan. Check in with it several times throughout the day. If you've scheduled a tactic to be completed that day, don't go home until it is done.
- The Weekly Plan, more than any other tool, will help you execute on a daily and weekly basis and will help you achieve your vision! Weekly plans focus our energy on what we need to accomplish today so that we may reach our goals tomorrow.

Keeping Score

- One of the key reasons sports are so stimulating is that we keep score. Good scorekeeping paints an accurate and honest picture of our performance at any point in time.
- Too often in business we fail to keep score. Measurement builds self-esteem and confidence. Measurement functions as the reality check, providing performance feedback and insight into your effectiveness.
- Effective scorekeeping removes the emotion and paints an honest picture of your performance. It is not concerned with effort or intentions; it simply highlights outcomes. Effective measurement demands our attention and causes us to respond more immediately, increasing the likelihood of success.
- Measurement drives the execution process. It is the anchor of reality. Measurement provides important data that allows you to make intelligent decisions. Effective measurement combines both lead and lag indicators that provide comprehensive feedback necessary for informed decision making.
- Measurement creates visibility. Visibility allows us to manage.
- Lag indicators are the end results that you are striving to achieve—things like income, sales, commission dollars and relationships.
- Lead indicators are the activities that produce the end results.
- If you don't achieve your goal, you need to know whether it was a breakdown in plan content or a breakdown in execution, because there is a difference. A breakdown in plan content occurs when strategies and tactics are not effective, while a breakdown in execution occurs when you fail to fully implement the plan tactics.

- Effective measurement will help you pinpoint the breakdown so that you can address it head on. The most effective lead indicator that measures execution is how well you implement your Weekly Plan.
- The Weekly Scorecard is an objective measure of how well you executed. With the Weekly Scorecard you measure execution, not results. You strive for excellence not total perfection. The measurement drives the process.
- Effective measurement is essential if you want to execute well and perform at your best. Take time to establish a set of key measures that include both Lead and Lag Indicators.

Intentionality

- Time is perhaps the most squandered of all personal resources. If you are not in control of how you use your time, then you are not in control of your results.
- In the end we have more control over our actions than we do our outcomes. Ultimately our results are created by our actions. The actions we choose to engage throughout our day ultimately determine our destiny.
- To take your performance to the next level and beyond you will need to be more intentional about how you use your time. Being intentional is the opposite of being reactive. It requires you to reorganize yourself around your priorities and consciously choose those activities that align with your goals and vision.
- When you are intentional you are much more conscious of your actions. You willingly employ discipline and rigor to how you organize and structure your day and your week. Your activity is driven by your goals and plan.
- The key to successful time use—intentional time use—is not necessarily trying to eliminate these unplanned interruptions but to regularly block out time in order to focus on the strategically important items.
- Performance Time is a system that utilizes “time blocking” to take back control of your day and maximize your effectiveness. There are three primary blocks that make up Performance Time: Strategic Blocks, Buffer Blocks, and Break-out Blocks.
- STRATEGIC BLOCK —A Strategic Block is a –hour block of uninterrupted time that is scheduled in advance. During these blocks you accept no phone calls, no faxes, no e-mails, no visitors—no anything. You focus all your energies on the preplanned items—your strategic and money-making activities.
- BUFFER BLOCK —Buffer Blocks are created to deal with all the unplanned and low-level activities that arise throughout the day. A Buffer Block is a block of time set aside in advance to handle the unexpected and low level activities like email and voicemail. By grouping together activities that tend to be unproductive you increase efficiency and take back control of your day.
- BREAK-OUT BLOCK —one of the key factors contributing to performance plateaus is the absence of free time. This approach is an energy and enthusiasm killer. To achieve greater results what’s necessary is not actually working more hours, but, on the contrary, it is more free time. A Break-out Block is a minimum 3-hour block of scheduled time that is devoid of any work-related activities and thoughts. This time is designed to refresh and reinvigorate so that when you

return to work you can effectively focus. The more you can structure your days and weeks the more effective your execution will be. Schedule the most important activities during this prime time. If you are not in control of your time, then you are not in control of your results.

Accountability

- Most people equate accountability with consequences and, as a result, often try to avoid it.
- It is impossible to hold someone else accountable. Accountability is not consequences: its ownership.
- The very nature of accountability rests on the understanding that each and every one of us has freedom of choice. It is this freedom of choice that is the foundation of accountability.
- Take accountability for your own results—it is the only path to lasting success. All of life is choices. There is a big difference when you approach something you choose-to versus have-to.
- Ultimately, you choose your actions, your results, your consequences. Accountability is very confrontive. It confronts with freedom of choice and the consequences of those choices, and in this way is empowering. But you must be willing to confront reality and the truth of your situation.
- When you understand that true accountability is about choice and taking ownership of your choices, everything changes, you move from resistance to empowerment, limits to possibilities, and from mediocrity to greatness.
- At the end of the day the only accountability that truly exists is self-accountability. Strive to see how the choices and decisions that you make in every moment create the life you live, and the results you achieve.

12-Week Commitments

- Commitments are powerful; commitments can be life changing.
- A commitment is a personal promise that you make with yourself. Keeping your promises with others builds trust and strong relationships. Keeping self-promises builds character, esteem and success.
- A commitment is a conscious decision to take specific action or non-action. We all know intuitively that commitment is fundamental to effective execution and high performance. When you're committed to something, you accept no excuses, only results.
- Here are four keys to successful commitment:
 1. **STRONG DESIRE** —In order to fully commit to something you will need a clear and personally compelling reason. The end result that you are striving to achieve needs to be meaningful enough to get you through the hard times and keep you on track.
 2. **CLEAR ACTIONS** —Once you have an intense desire to accomplish something you then need to identify the core actions that will produce the result you're after. In most cases there are a few core activities that account for the majority of the results, and in some cases there is one. Perhaps two, primary activities that ultimately produce the result. It is critical that you identify the one or two core actions and focus on them.

3. **COUNT THE COSTS** —Commitments require sacrifice. In any effort there are benefits and costs. Costs are the hardships that you will have to endure to accomplish your desire. Costs can include time, money, risk, uncertainty, loss of comfort, etc.
 4. **ACT ON COMMITMENTS NOT FEELING** - there will be times when you won't feel like doing the critical activities. If not, you will never build any momentum and will be continually starting over, or as is so often the case, giving up.
- Many times commitments are made more arduous by the time frame in which the commitment is made. It is difficult to commit to anything for a lifetime. With the 12-Week Year you are not asked to make lifetime or annual commitments, but rather 12-week commitments.
 - Commitments ultimately shape our lives. Making and keeping commitments start a constructive process that is self-reinforcing and empowering.

Greatness in the Moment

- Greatness is not achieved when the result is reached; but rather long before that when an individual chooses to do the things that he knows he needs to do. The results are not the attainment of greatness; the results are simply the confirmation of it.
- The difference between being mediocre and being great on a daily and weekly basis is slim, and yet the difference in results in six months or one-to-two years is fantastic.
- What makes a champion is a discipline to do the extra things even when—especially when—you don't feel like it.

Putting It All Together

- Most change fails because it creates discomfort and uncertainty. The discomfort you feel is the first sign of progress.
- **USE YOUR BRAIN** —As we discussed in the chapter on vision, your brain either supports you acting on our Vision, or prevents you from acting on it. In a real sense, your brain is in conflict with itself! There is a neurological reason why we find ourselves stuck in our old habits seemingly unwilling to change.
- Brain research shows that by frequently and consistently envisioning the future we increase our brain's capacity to create powerful and compelling visions. In other words, by creating and nurturing our vision we are setting ourselves up for success! You're serious about achieving your best you will need to spend time with your vision every day.
- **WRITE IT DOWN** — if you know what you need to do, writing it down increases the probability of success by up to 80%. That is why written 12-Week plans are so important. **START NOW** — Studies have shown that when you are introduced to a new concept or habit the sooner you act on it and the more frequently you act on it, the more likely it is that you will incorporate it into your daily routine. Write your vision and plan down right now—it will get you started. Engaging immediately is critical.
- **DON'T GO IT ALONE** — if you are implementing change don't go it alone. Your chances of success are 7 times greater if you employ peer support.
- **GO BIG** — you have a greater likelihood of successful change when you implement significant change vs. trying to implement small pieces. With incremental change you experience the pain

of change but the results are so slow in coming that you give up. Conversely, with massive change the pain of change is no greater. And may even be perceived as less because you are mentally prepared for it. Also an added benefit is that the results come much quicker reinforcing the change.

- Notice your thinking. Your thinking creates your reality. Your results are driven by actions and your actions, in turn, are manifestations of your thinking. Ultimately your thinking creates the results you have in life.
- When you focus on changing actions you experience incremental improvements. But when your thinking shifts, everything changes. Your actions naturally align with the new thinking and you experience breakthrough.
- The 12-Week Year is a change, and change starts first with your thinking. Your thinking creates your reality, your future. The most important thinking change you will make is to view the 12-Weeks as your year. It's important you realize that your failure and your success are not determined over an annual cycle. Success and failure happen faster than that. Fact, success and failure happen moment by moment.

- What follows is an action plan that you can use to experience the power of the 12-Week Year for yourself:
- **CARVE OUT TIME** —Schedule a three-hour Strategic Block in your calendar somewhere in the next 24 hours. Schedule it right now before you read any further. This Strategic Block will be used to establish your 12-Week execution system.
- **CLARIFY YOUR VISION** —Identify what is important to you personally, Your vision should be clear, focused, and emotionally compelling. Using your lifetime vision, create a three-year personal and business vision that defines what greatness looks like for you three years from today.
- **ESTABLISH YOUR 12-WEEK GOAL(S)** —This goal should represent realistic progress towards your three-year personal and business vision, and it should create excitement all on its own.
- **DEVELOP a 12-WEEK PLAN** —Next build out your strategies and tactics that will, when executed, achieve your 12-Week goal. Remember, less is more, keep it focused. Identify the weekly actions that you will have to take to execute your plan.
- **DETERMINE YOUR 12-WEEK COMMITMENTS** —Identify one to three personal goals with which you would like to make progress. Then identify one key action that repeats weekly, that will drive you to hit your goals—ones that you are willing to commit to for a 12 week period.
- **CREATE A WEEKLY PLAN** —Every Monday create a Weekly Plan that contains the actions and commitments that are due this particular week from your 12-Week Plan.
- **ESTABLISH KEY MEASURES** —develop a set of metrics that include both Lead and Lag Indicators. Use these measures to monitor your results and to respond quickly to performance breakdowns. Using your Weekly Plan as a starting point, at the end of each week, determine the percentage of actions and commitments that you completed. If you score above 85% “completed” each week, you will be well n your way to hitting your 12-Week Goal.

Recommendation: This book certainly changed my thinking about how to be more efficient and effective.



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About the reviewer: Frumi Rachel Barr, MBA, PhD

Many CEO's find themselves asking "What now?" to sensitive situations that only an experienced former CEO can understand. Frumi is the advisor to call to work with you and your executive team as a confidante and - some would say - corporate shrink. She has an uncanny knack of getting to the heart of your corporate climate and maximizing your team's performance, profitability and sustainability.

To schedule a free ***Break From the Pack to Success*** consultation email ceoconfidante@frumi.com or call 949-729-1577