

THE GAP AND THE GAIN

Building your progress and happiness
entirely on how your brain works for you.

Dan Sullivan

Cartoons by Hamish MacDonald

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The Gap And The Gain

Do you find that no matter how much success you have, you're perpetually dissatisfied with your progress? Does it feel like you're still far from achieving your biggest goals? The problem is not in the quantity or quality of your success and achievements. The problem is how you measure.

In this book, I share a powerful insight I gained from working with thousands of successful entrepreneurs, many of whom weren't able to appreciate their own success. If you're finding that no matter how much you've achieved, it isn't making you happy, a simple mindset shift is all it takes to go from feeling like your goals are forever out of reach to continually feeling that you're making progress, inspiring the confidence to create bigger goals and a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction that leads to a happier life.

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Introduction

How Your Brain Works

You take complete responsibility for using your brain's ability to create and measure your personal daily progress.

There's a condition I call "being in The Gap" and it's one I've noticed particularly among high-performing, talented, ambitious entrepreneurs.

In one of my workshops, there was a client who was chronically unable to enjoy his achievements. It bothered me, and I decided to use the flip chart in the room to illustrate to him what he was doing. I drew a diagram that showed his starting point on the bottom, the ideal he was aiming for on the top, and in the middle, the goal he had actually accomplished.

I showed him that he was defining his success by measuring where he was—the goal he had achieved—against the ideal he had set out for himself. I said that the distance between his goal and his ideal is "The Gap." Measuring your progress this way only leads to unhappiness. The true way to measure is by looking from where you are back to where you started and seeing all the progress you've made. Measuring this way leads to happiness.

You might be operating at a level that everyone else thinks of as impressive and superior, but you, yourself, feel like you've fallen short of your standard.

When this happens, it isn't because there's anything wrong with you or your achievements; it's because there's something in the way you're thinking about things that produces this impression. In this book, you'll see how it's the way you

measure that makes all the difference in how you view your success.

Your brain isn't you.

We use our brains to experience the world around us, but we can also use them to observe situations from different angles and to be conscious of the ways in which we're experiencing things. You can ask yourself, "How am I looking at this? Why am I looking at it this way?" In other words, you can *think about your thinking*.

Thanks to evolution, our brains are very powerful tools. What we do, how we do it, and how we experience success and progress are all functions of how we use our brains to set up the things we want to achieve.

Since I was a child, I've been able to think about my thinking. I would talk to other kids about this, and none of them knew what I was talking about, and I'm not sure many of my teachers thought about their thinking either. As you'd imagine, once I realized that this activity I was doing was somewhat unique, I started to think about why I was doing it.

I discovered that rather than simply taking things in, I could be conscious of how my brain was working and consciously decide to use it in a practical way. The brain is primarily a problem-solving tool. People can be put into all kinds of problematic situations, and they will come up with all kinds of unique, strategic solutions to solve them. We're at our happiest when we're using our brains to visualize, achieve, and then measure actual progress we've made. But there is a right way and a wrong way to measure.

Focusing on specifics.

We perceive things as being either good or bad depending on whether the specifics that are necessary for success have been defined and achieved.

I've noticed that people who measure their accomplishments in terms of specifics tend to be happier and a lot more energized than people who speak and think in generalities. Someone who responds to a question like, "How are things going?" with an answer like, "Things are pretty good" isn't actually connecting with their real experience.

But if you think about specific facts when you assess your situation, this grounds your feeling in reality. For example, saying, "This recently completed project earned ten times as much money as it did last year" is very different from saying, "This project did pretty well." If you work in the world of generalities, it's easy to get confused about what's really going on, and your sense of your achievements will be vague and unclear.

Made for measurement.

The more you use your brain to measure specifics, the better you get at it and the more you develop great insight into change, whether the change has been good or bad, or there's been no real change at all.

Specifics must be measured against specifics. Trying to measure a specific against a generality is not real measurement. Setting up a goal of making \$10 million is specific, and you'll feel successful once you've done that by measuring from there back to where you started. But if you have the imprecise goal of "being wealthy," that's a generality. You may never feel like you've achieved it, and even if you do

feel as though you have, this feeling won't last because it's not grounded in specific reality. The goal—being wealthy—will continue to change and always seem out of reach.

Making it uniquely yours.

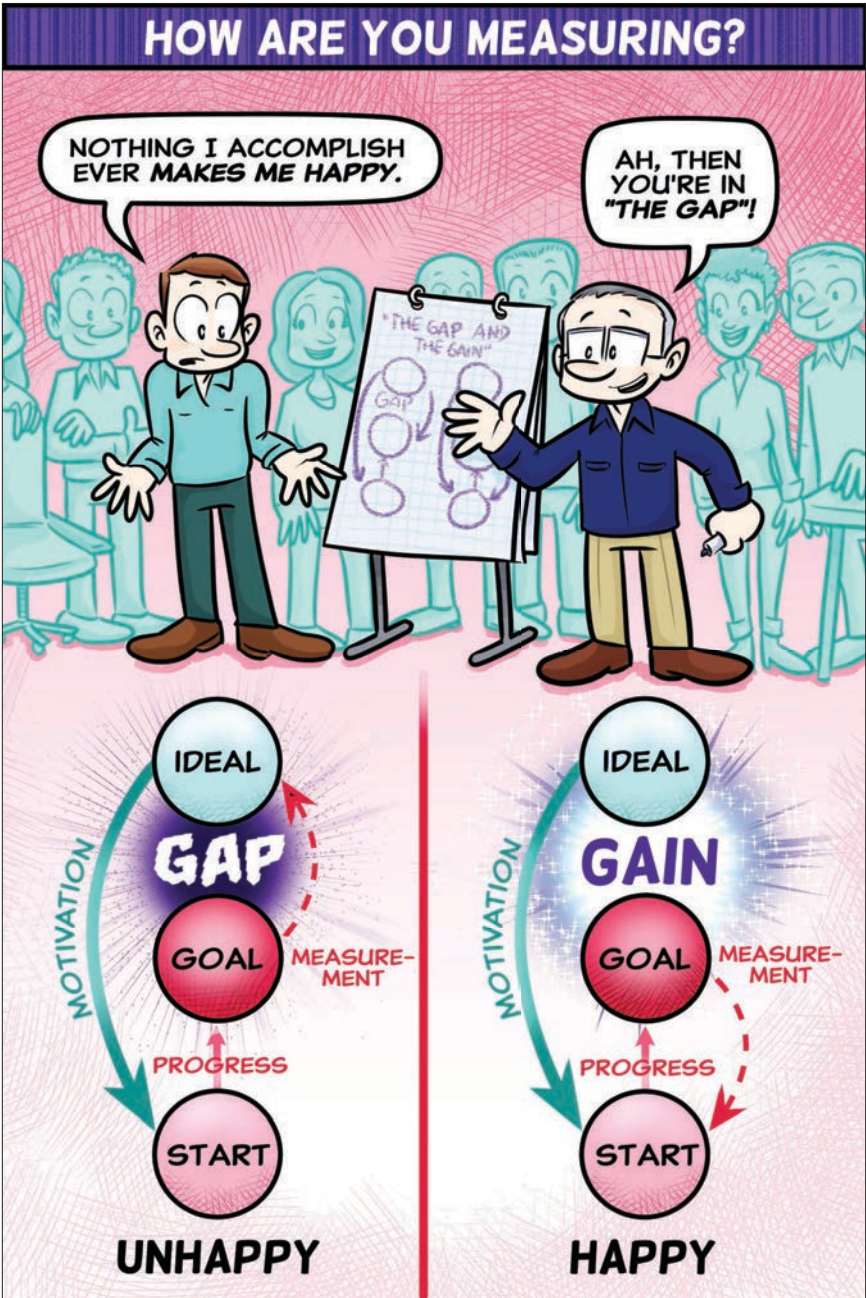
What makes us unique is identified and realized through specifics, not through a general ideal. It's the constant achievement of specific measurable progress that gradually develops the unique and superior skills and capabilities in individuals. And the more you use your brain to achieve and measure specifics, the more your brain is uniquely your own.

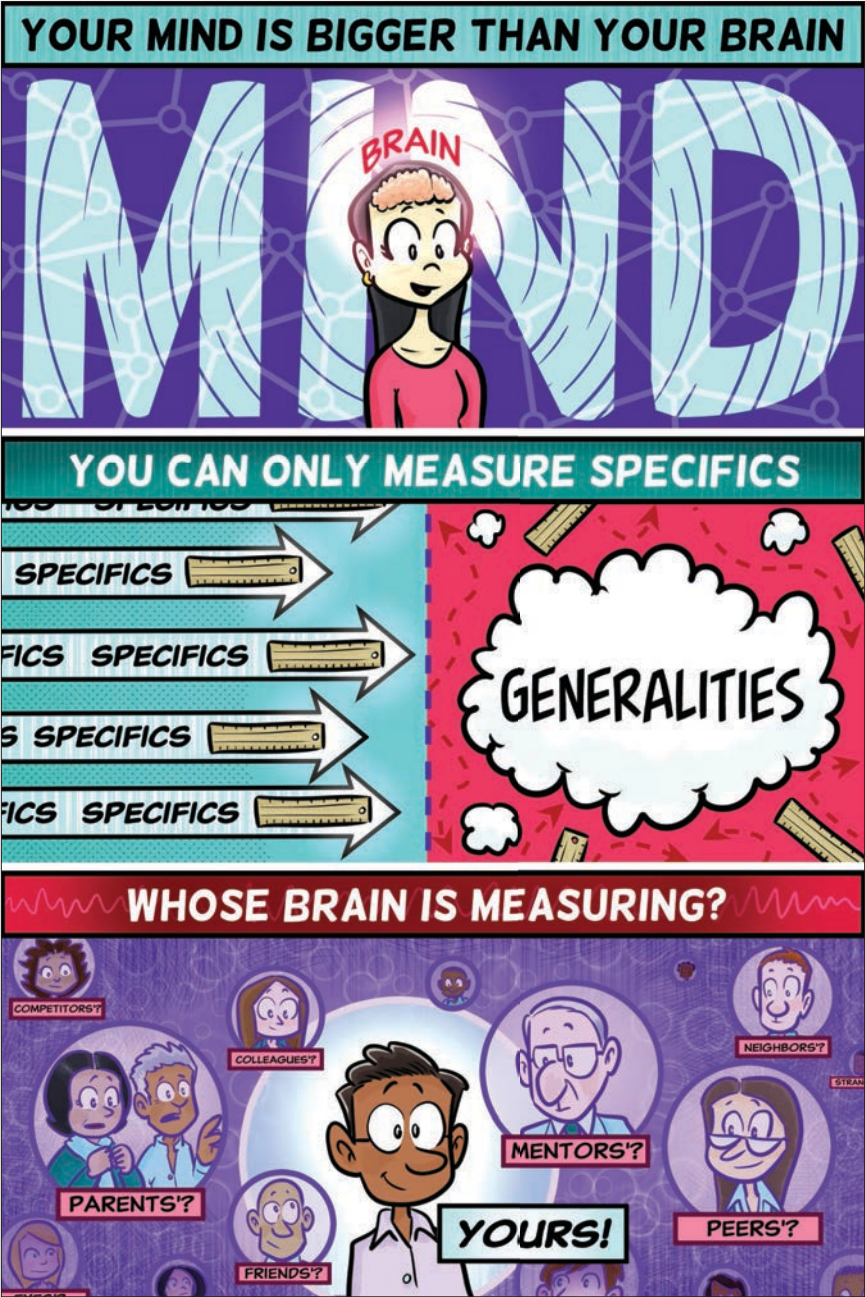
A lot of people have other people's brains: their parents', their teachers', their mentors'—whoever's telling them how they're supposed to be. You don't really have your own brain until you set your own goals and appreciate your own specific experience.

Ownership makes it better.

Your future growth depends on the degree to which you own how you use your brain for specific progress. Someone who uses their brain to measure using generalities will be lacking in clarity when it comes to both achievements and what their future holds.

But if you think in specifics when it comes to measuring your progress, you'll have an accurate perspective about what you've done and where you are, and you'll be in a better position to plan ahead to get bigger and better at what you do.





Chapter 1

Measurement Creates Progress

You totally accept that the only progress you can achieve is the progress you measure.

A sense that we're making progress toward our goals makes us happy. But to truly get the feeling of progress, we need to base it on concrete facts. Vague and general goals like "success" or "wealth" or being more like someone you admire can't lead you to the feeling of progress.

When we set goals, we must be specific so we know when they're accomplished—usually, a number was reached or an event took place.

Entrepreneurs in The Strategic Coach Program often tell me that they really get a sense of feeling grounded, being centered, and that there are fewer moving parts in their life that overwhelm them. This has to do with the fact that we're continually getting them to set up their futures in terms of specific, measurable progress.

Before they joined the Program and started using the tools, although they were successful, they were measuring themselves in terms of generalities like "wealthy" or against the number-one person in their industry. But this didn't make them happy, and it didn't truly give them an idea of their success and achievements.

Only being able to make a specific measurement will let you know that progress has been made. Simply put, there's no progress without measurement.

We're time-compelled creatures.

We all have a sense of where we are in the flow of time,

leading us to feel as though we're either making progress and moving forward or falling back and getting left behind.

We can't stop time to catch up to where we want to be. The only way to get ahead if you feel like you're falling behind is to make better use of your time. We have to set goals and measure progress in ways that will take us forward and improve our confidence and capabilities.

Experiencing time as a system of measurement keeps us sane. It makes our experience unique, and the more we use specific measurement to measure actual progress, where we can see we've clearly made improvements from where we were some time ago, the more positive we feel about what we're doing.

Moving forward feels good.

Time is always moving forward, and the best feeling we can have is to be moving forward along with it.

The feeling that we're making progress is powerful and positive, but it only comes from knowing you've moved forward, and the only way to know that is through specific measurements. You might have made progress toward your goals, but you're not going to feel good about it unless you measure how far you've come. You won't even know you've made progress at all unless you measure your progress properly.

From a material standpoint, life has vastly improved over the past 50 years, but if you don't measure your own personal progress, any type of measurable improvement in society will be meaningless to you. You can't appreciate any other

progress going on around you if you're not measuring, and therefore conscious of, your own.

Falling behind feels bad.

There's no in-between feeling when it comes to personal progress; if you don't feel like you're moving ahead, you feel that things are moving on without you, passing you by.

If you're not feeling good about what you're doing, your mind might go to a place where you start comparing yourself to other people you think are doing better. But measurements comparing yourself against others just cause unhappiness. As Theodore Roosevelt said, "Comparison is the thief of joy."

The purpose of measurement is to have right thinking around the results you've achieved. For this reason, all of my measurements are based on things to do with me personally or with my company, where I've had a major influence in bringing about an improvement, or where we can learn something specific from why we didn't hit certain goals.

In addition, measuring your own personal progress keeps you out of comparison with others.

We all know the phrase, "Mind your own business." Well, my new motto is, "*Measure* your own business." When you make sure all of your measurements are against yourself, you'll move toward your goal of increased progress, learning, and growth. Good things don't come from measuring yourself against anyone else.

Each of us is on our own.

You're the only person who can be responsible for designing and achieving the future you want. No one else has the experience of your past to use as raw material for measurement when you're planning ahead and setting goals.

The factor of aloneness is important here. Producing a positive result requires the willingness to just be with yourself and establish a set of standards and measurements for where you are in the present. You can then individually and uniquely set improvement goals that can be measured.

Once you have those specific goals in place, you can go individually toward the achievement of those goals, arrive individually, and turn around individually and measure backward from where you started.

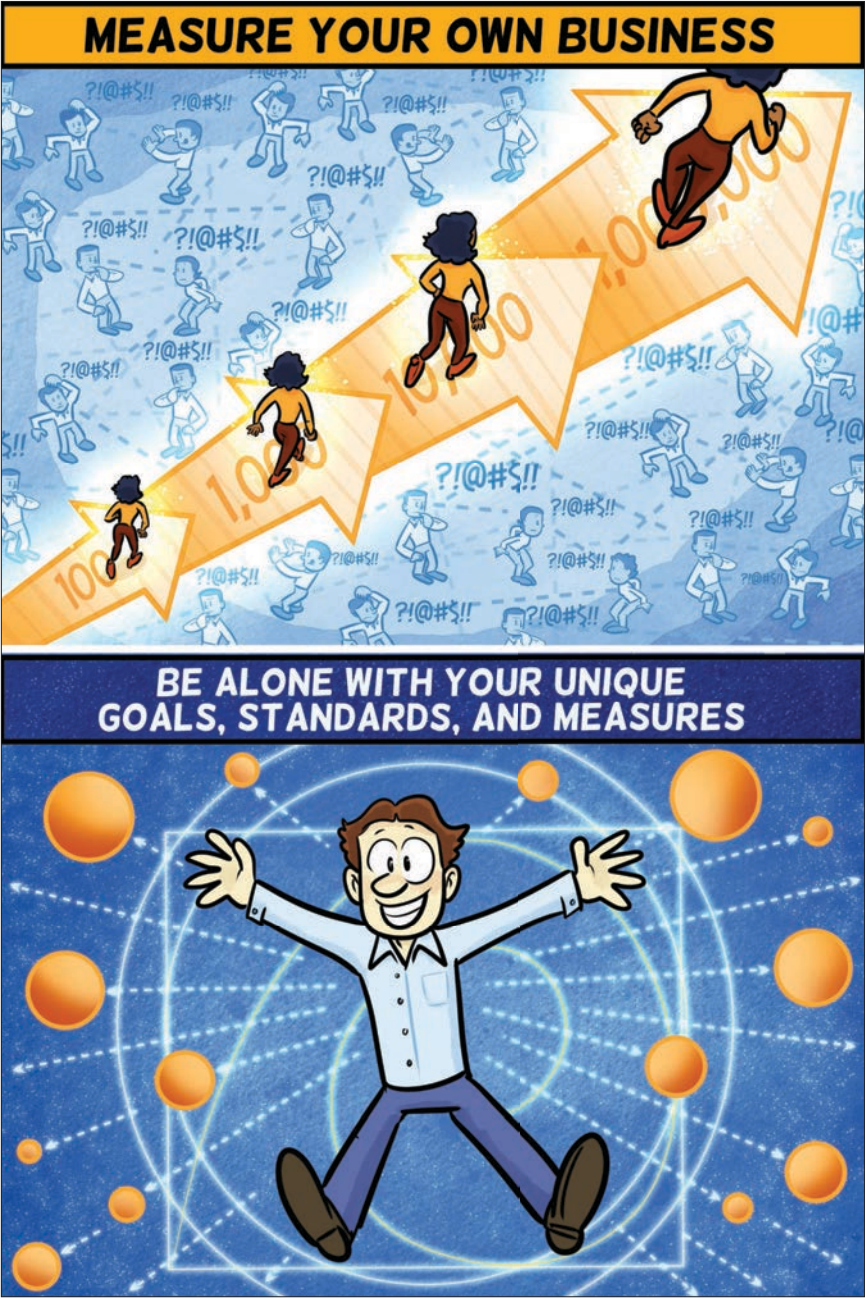
Why progress is so important.

Meaning and purpose are direct by-products of the experience of visualizing, achieving, and measuring specific personal progress. No one else can give you meaning or purpose.

Someone who's lacking meaning likely also doesn't have a sense of personal progress and doesn't use specific measurements in tracking their goals. People in this position often have the point of view that the world needs to change in some fundamental way for them to be happy. That's never going to happen, of course.

All we have to do and, in fact, all we *can* do is visualize our own futures, set our own goals, and measure our own progress—specifically.





Chapter 2

Ideals Can't Be Achieved

You continually make your personal ideals more powerful in order to identify more powerful goals.

The concept of the horizon, the line separating the Earth from the sky, is a useful tool for navigation and orienting oneself in space. But it's not a specific destination anyone can reach.

Our ideals are a lot like the horizon in this way. They're useful to us to figure out a direction and to plan a destination, but you can't reach your ideal any more than you can arrive at the horizon. No matter how far you've traveled, the horizon will always be far off from where you currently stand.

The destinations you aim toward are always somewhere between you and the horizon. The only way to measure the distance you've traveled is by measuring from where you are back to the point where you started, not from where you are toward the horizon. The horizon can't be part of a real measurement of progress.

Our ideals work in the same way. You can use your vision of an ideal future to shed light on a real goal that lies somewhere between you and the ideal. But once you reach your goal, the ideal will have changed, just as the horizon changes as you move forward, always remaining out of reach. So the way to measure your progress is backward against where you started, not against your ideal.

The ideal is there to help you envision specific, measurable goals. And the more powerful your ideals become, the more powerful your goals will be.

Ideally, no one ever gets there.

Now that you know that achieving an ideal is impossible, you can avoid the inevitable disappointment of trying to reach it.

Every time you have a vision of a bigger future, it's important to determine and recognize whether it's an ideal or a measurable goal so you know what to do with it.

Here's an example: Let's say you want to have a closer relationship with your significant other. That's an ideal, which you can recognize because it's completely general. What you can do is commit yourself to a specific goal that moves you toward that ideal. This could be to spend more time alone with your significant other by committing to having a certain number of date nights over a certain period of time. There are specific measurements you can make with that goal. You'll know if you've achieved it, unlike with the vague ideal of "having a closer relationship," where you can keep getting closer but never truly feel like you've attained it.

Operates just like the horizon.

Ideals are extraordinary, useful things. They're unachievable themselves but are the reference points that help us set up achievable destinations and accomplishments. They provide illumination as well as emotional energy and motivation.

When I was about 11 years old, I watched an airplane fly over our family farm, and it inspired me to wonder how far I could go. Whenever I reach another level of accomplishment in my life, I wonder, "Now, how far can I go?"

But “How far can I go?” is not an achievable destination. It’s an ideal that has propelled me in my specific goal-setting for 60 years and counting.

Purpose: Illuminate your goals.

It’s critical to have a clear understanding of why we have ideals so we can use them properly to set up goals for ourselves.

Let’s say you decide you want to achieve exponential growth. That’s great—who wouldn’t love exponential growth? You recognize, though, that there’s no specific measurement in the concept of “exponential growth.” It’s an ideal.

But if you decide that in one year’s time, you’d like to be making 10x the money you’re making now, there are numbers in that goal. You can measure those, and so you can measure your progress and will be able to determine when you’ve achieved the goal. 10x growth in one year is a great goal that you set up in the light of the ideal of exponential growth.

Both goals and ideals have their purpose. Confusing your ideals with your goals sets you up for disappointment and unhappiness.

Two ways to measure yourself.

Once you understand the relationship between your ideals and your goals, you can recognize that there are only two ways to measure the progress you’ve made: the right way and the wrong way.

The right way to measure is from specific to specific and

from your present to your starting point. There's simply no other path to actual, useful information. The wrong way to measure is from specific to general, from your present to your ideal. The signpost before this second path should read, "Beyond here lies disaster."

Since generalities can't be achieved, you'll always be unhappy if you measure against them.

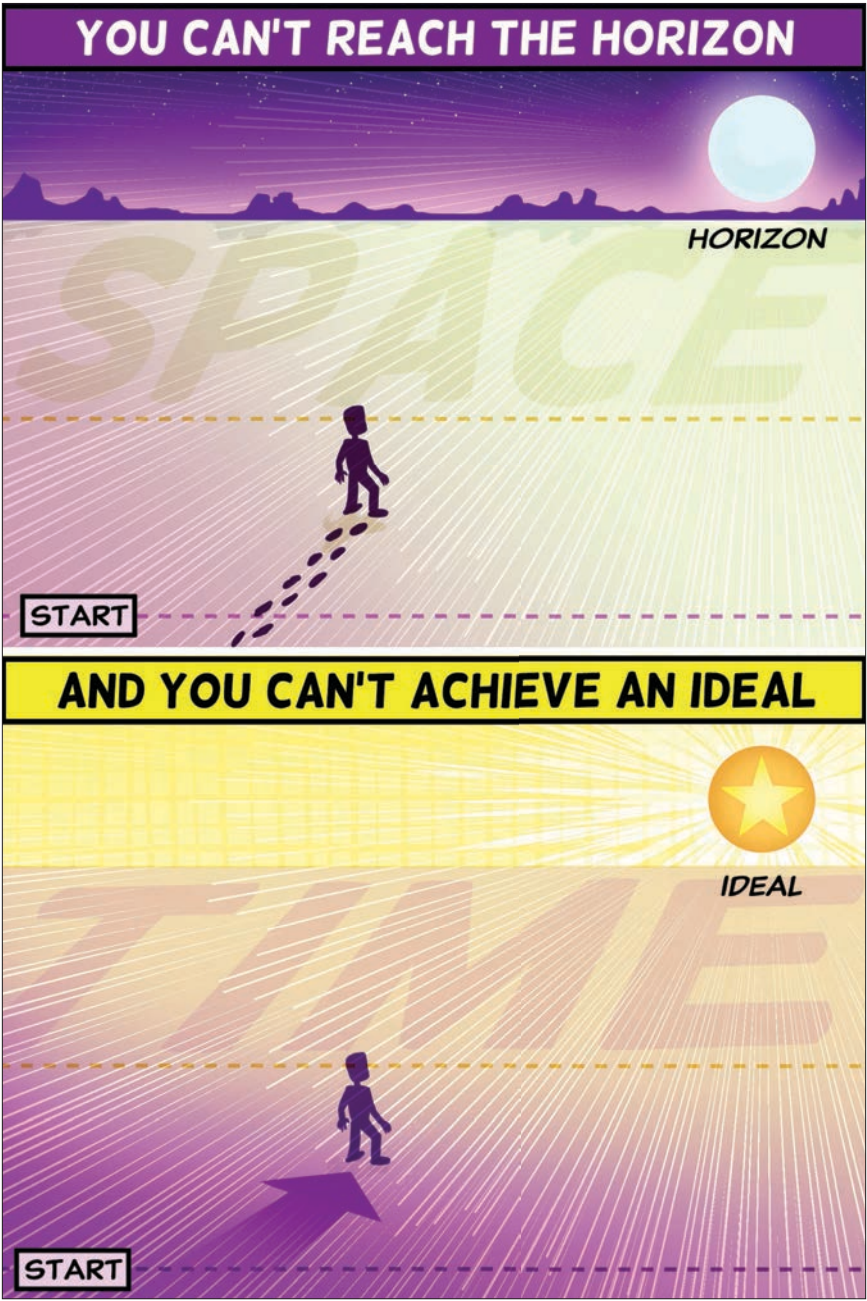
The Gap vs. The Gain.

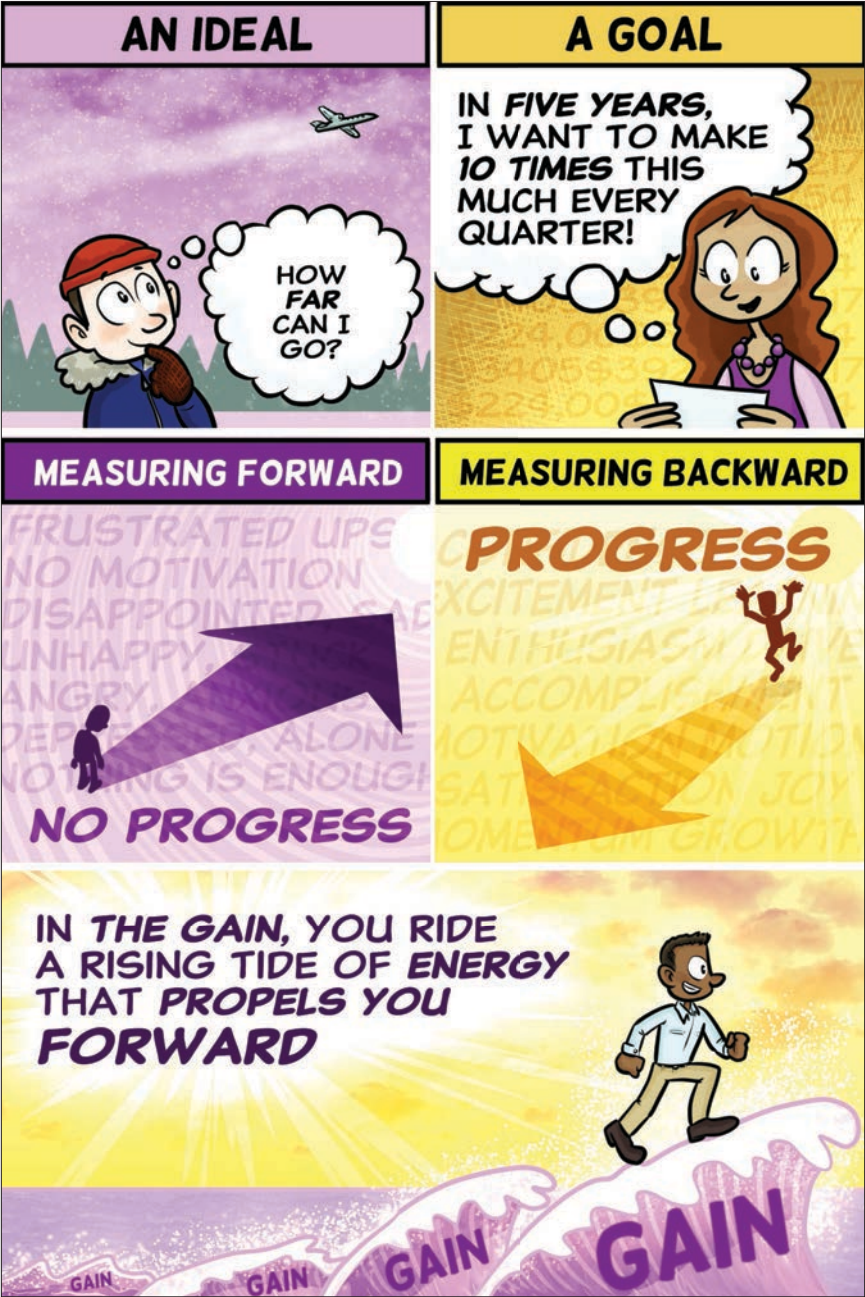
Your future growth and progress are now based in your understanding about the difference between the two ways in which you can measure yourself: against the ideal, which puts you in what I call "The Gap," and against your starting point, which puts you in "The Gain," appreciating all that you've accomplished.

When you're in The Gap, you feel as though you haven't accomplished anything at all. This is because even though you've moved forward, the ideal remains distant from you. The ideal is a moving target. It might even get bigger, leaving you worse off than where you started if you measure against it.

You've also used up time and energy getting to where you are, so if you don't measure the progress, you'll feel like you've wasted that time and energy and have fallen even further behind.

But if you turn around and measure your progress against where you started, then you're in The Gain, and you'll experience a sense of having moved forward, of having achieved something, and you'll be motivated to continue on to your next stage of growth.





Chapter 3

Only Measure Backward

Your sense of where you are right now is entirely based on where you started.

The future isn't a reality—it's a projection. And because it's not reality, it can't be part of any real measurement of your progress.

The only way to measure goals is backward, against the past. Use the reality of where you currently are and measure backward from there to the reality of where you started.

For a lot of people, doing anything “backward” seems counterintuitive because we've been taught that we should always be focused on our futures and not turning back. But while measuring forward is good for setting goals, we need to measure backward in order to get a true sense of where we are right now and how far we've come.

The future is tricky business.

As humans, we're able to visualize, intellectualize, and emotionalize a reality that doesn't yet exist.

The problem is that sometimes we misuse our ability to think about the future. Part of the reason for this is bad messaging.

We often hear people say things like, “Never give up on achieving your ideals,” but I don't think I've ever heard, “Only use your ideals to identify your goals.” The latter message is useful, but the former leads us to great unhappiness because our ideals are not the same as goals. Our ideals can't be achieved.

This is how people can get tricked by the future. It's dangerous stuff, our being able to visualize a reality that doesn't exist, because there's the risk of our becoming determined to make it happen without realizing that it's an ideal, something we can never reach.

Motivated by make-believe.

As a child, you probably thought about what you wanted to be when you grew up. Maybe you fantasized about being a movie star or a professional athlete, and maybe you imagined what kind of house you would live in or what kind of car you would drive.

That's what's called *make-believe*. Some adults try not to engage in make-believe anymore because they think it's childish, but I don't think we ever really outgrow it. In fact, I think that make-believe is the basis for all our motivations in life.

If you think about it, any envisioning of a future result before that result has happened is make-believe. You're making believe that that future is true.

The tricky part is what you do with the make-believe. You can't use it as a measurement tool. It's there for emotional, psychological, and intellectual motivation, but it's not there for measurement. It's critical to not confuse it for the goal. You have to determine if there's a specific, achievable goal in the make-believe that you can measure back from once you've reached it.

Big high, big low, repeat.

Here's what happens when we mistake our ideals for goals:

We get very excited about our future possibilities, we end up very disappointed because we feel like we haven't made progress, and then we do it all over again.

This is such a negative experience that it causes some people to block off all motivation and any kind of striving in their lives. They shut down their dreams in order to avoid the disappointment. They don't realize that the disappointment is a result of not setting goals and measuring in the right way.

They didn't learn the rules of the game. Anyone who's constantly disappointed has been playing by the wrong set of rules; they've been expecting to win when they can't.

The brain is a tool for visualizing, achieving, and measuring progress, and there's a right way and a wrong way to do it. One way will always make you happy, and the other will always make you unhappy. Now that you're learning the rules for winning and for losing, you know that you never again have to enter that cycle of disappointment.

How to guarantee progress.

Your progress will continually make you happier if you measure it properly.

This doesn't have to happen only once you've arrived at your goal; you can find happiness and energy by measuring the progress you've made at stops along the way.

This involves muscle-building. The muscles you use for visualization, achievement, and measurement get more powerful the more you use them properly.

A muscle you don't exercise for a week will be weaker the next time you use it. A muscle needs resistance to strengthen, so your ideals, goals, and achievements will keep growing as you go through the process again and again.

You'll also become a master of specifics. You'll stop measuring things in generalities and start to see life in terms of specific achievements and measurements.

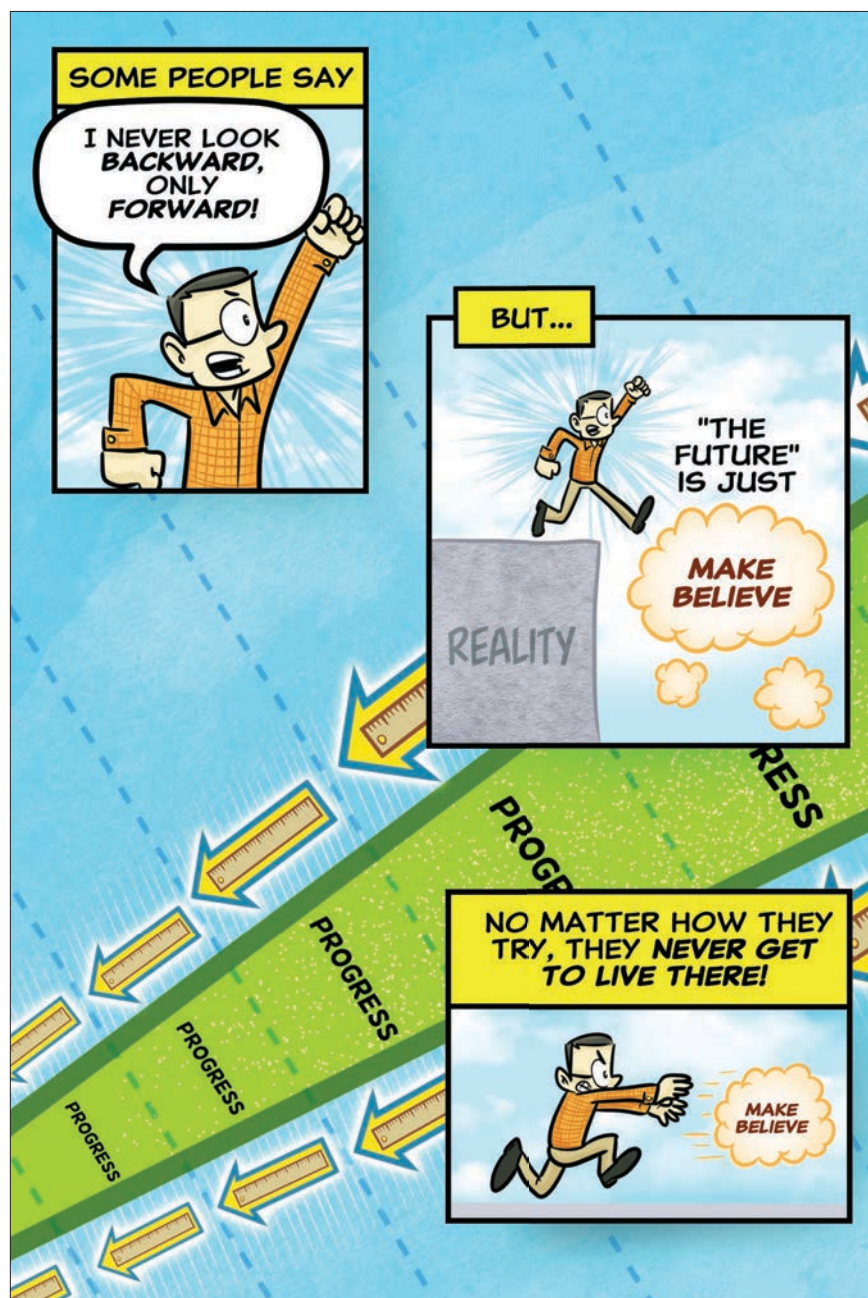
The lighting will get better and will continue to improve: You'll see things clearly from now on.

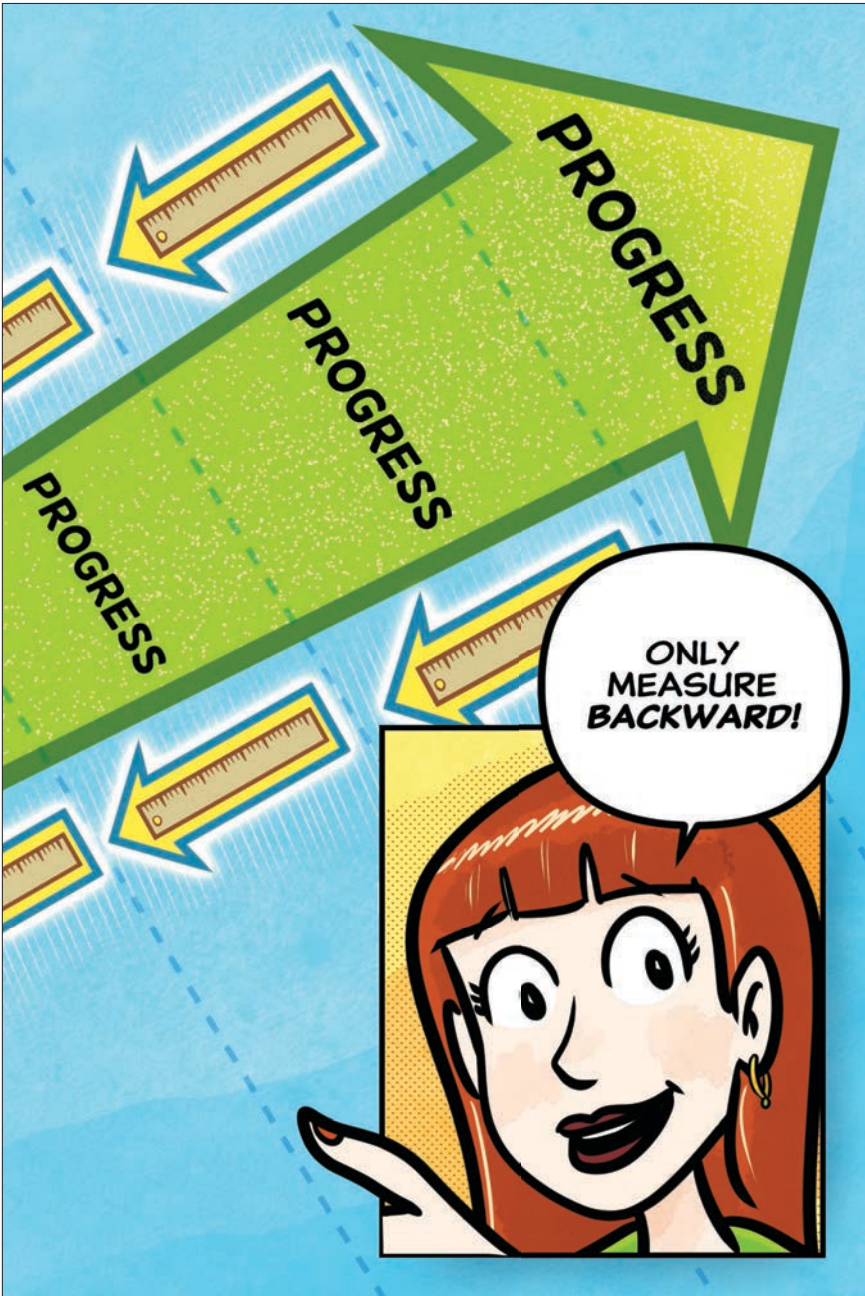
Looking to where things start.

Most entrepreneurs I know don't like looking back for any reason. They operate as though there's no reason to turn around, like there's nothing back there. They continually work harder and longer because they haven't achieved their ideal yet. They think that one of these times, they're going to achieve their ideal, but they keep going through the cycle of having a big high from the vision of the ideal to the big low of not getting there.

The fact is that no matter how much progress you make, you won't recognize your progress and achievements unless you measure back to where you started. All of the progress in the world won't give you a tiny bit of happiness if you don't measure it this way.

The basis for happiness is in measuring properly and in continuing to move forward by using your bigger and better ideals to visualize new goals.





Chapter 4

Stay Out Of The Gap

You realize that all unhappiness in your life comes from mistakenly measuring where you are against any kind of ideal.

When we visualize things that we want, there are feelings attached to those visions. But feelings aren't measurable. They're not objective reality. If we attain what we visualized but don't get the feeling we had when we visualized it, we're left disappointed and feeling as though we've failed.

But like ideals, feelings are useful.

The feelings we get when we visualize an ideal are part of what motivates us to move toward that ideal. And how do we move toward the ideal? We use it for illumination, to help us set up a goal that's somewhere between us and it. That goal is specific, and when we reach it, we measure the actual progress we've made. By moving toward that feeling, we gain higher confidence and capability.

Striving but never achieving.

If you mistake an ideal for a goal, once you reach it—or get as close to it as possible—it won't feel like the experience you visualized. You'll therefore feel like you didn't accomplish anything. Going through this experience can make you cynical and pessimistic, and can leave you forever chasing something you just can't get.

To work effectively, we have to shift between different brain functions. The ideal provides illumination, but then we must shift to objective goal-setting, then to the starting point, and, when we reach our goal, to practical measurement.

The ideal is like a map. It helps us get to where we want to go, but we shouldn't expect the destination to look like the spot we saw on the map.

What's more, the experience might not end up feeling like it did when you visualized it, but the visualization wasn't useless—it allowed you to set your goal and then make all that progress.

Looking successful, but always failing.

Looks can be deceiving.

Think of anyone who is, by objective measurement, extremely successful. You can look at them and assume that they must be very happy, but I promise you that they're not happy at all if they're measuring against their ideals. If they're not measuring against where they started, they're in The Gap, where no happiness dwells.

What's worse is that since everyone else can see how much the successful individual achieves, they assume that they're happy. This can make the person think they *should* be happy, but there's no connection between this idea and what they actually feel.

I see a lot of entrepreneurs who are at the top of their game by every benchmark of success, but none of it truly registers with them. None of it's on the inside. They go through great doubt about the value of success and talent because the rules say that they should be happy, and everyone else says that they have every reason to be happy, but they can't find a reason.

This is strictly a matter of measurement. Measuring forward has them in The Gap, so no kind of success can make them *feel* successful.

Children learning to be unhappy.

A lot of children are raised with Gap-like thinking. They're taught from very early on to strive for a certain ideal, to live in a certain ideal, and to maintain a certain ideal.

Instilling these ideas in children makes them into unhappy people, and these mindsets can be hard for them to shake off.

Ultimately, it's up to every individual to decide how they're going to define their own happiness. You're the only one responsible for this life you have, so how do you want to handle it? Your goals don't have to be the ideals that your parents, teachers, or anyone else has told you they should be. You can stick with a life of unhappiness by always trying to reach some ideal—or you can get out of The Gap and start using your ideals to set measurable goals.

If you've been raised with Gap thinking, you have to identify what's really going on and become conscious of it—and not be angry about it. After all, the people who taught you Gap thinking had it taught to them too. Gap thinking has been around for a very long time. We're at a point now, though, where we can recognize it and make our own choices about the best ways for our brains to work. We can choose to be not only successful, but also happy.

Like a switch in your brain.

It doesn't serve to be part in The Gap and part in The Gain.

Either you measure forward or you measure backward.
There's no in between.

Now that you understand exactly what each mode is, you can choose one or the other. It's like flipping a switch to a different way of thinking. Once you understand it as a switch, it's only a matter of making it a habit.

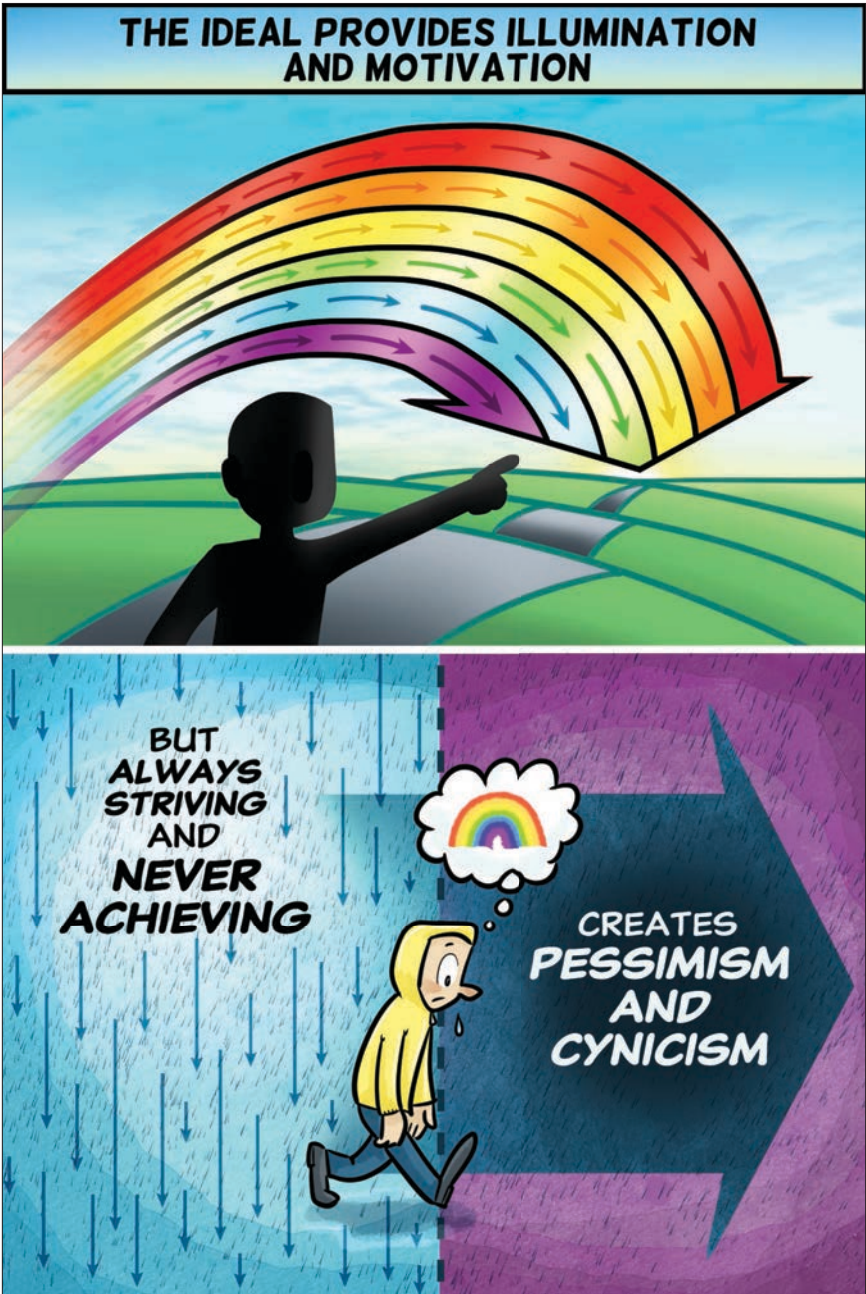
Proper understanding of how your brain works is crucial, personal information, and no one else has any say over it. You'll do what produces the desirable results, and if you don't get the desirable results, you'll know that you have the switch in the wrong position.

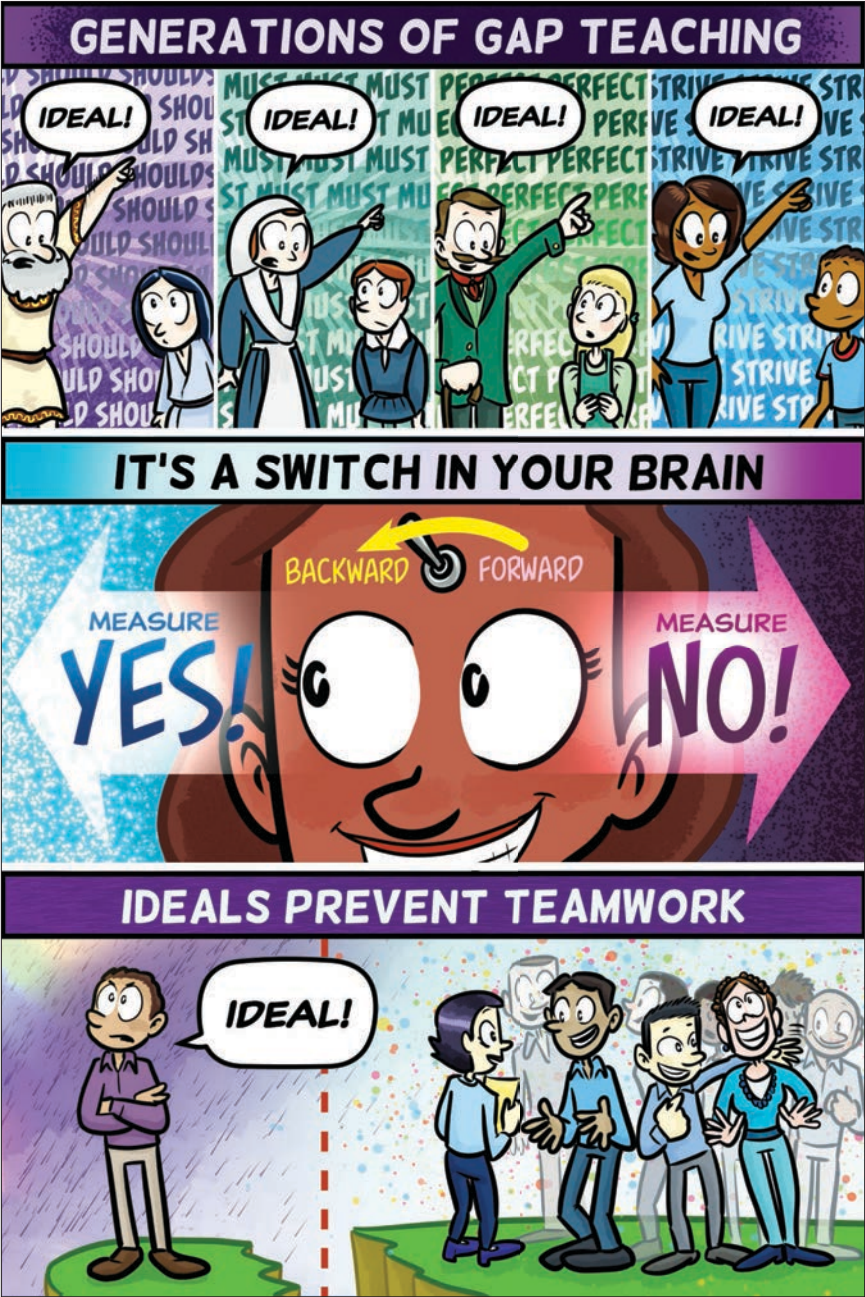
It really can be that easy. With proper consciousness, and if you're willing to work at it, you can just flip the switch from one position to the other.

Eliminating your future unhappiness.

Now that you understand the kind of measuring that leads to unhappiness, you can avoid it by being aware of your thinking and making sure to keep the switch in the right position. By staying out of The Gap, you're guaranteed not to judge yourself unfairly.

You know that your ideals are not what you should strive for. They're personal to you in guiding you. This understanding will be of benefit not only to you, but to the people you work with because you'll no longer be putting forward your personal ideals as though they're goals. Instead, your ideals will help you to set proper goals that you and your team can work toward—and actually achieve.





Chapter 5

Always Expanding Your Gain

You love that what you previously thought was an embarrassing weakness can now be one of your biggest strengths.

It's more than likely that by the time you read this, you'll have done a fair amount of living, working, and achieving already, but this doesn't make this new understanding of the right way to look at your progress any less beneficial to you now.

Looking back at all the times you felt unsatisfied or like you'd failed, doesn't it feel good now to know that it was really because you didn't know the right way to measure the progress you'd made and not because you hadn't actually been successful?

This is all positive. There's no blame to be had for your being in The Gap up to this point. Even if you were raised in a Gain-minded household, you could easily have picked up Gap-like thinking from the culture that was otherwise around you. After all, measuring backward is counterintuitive to most people.

There's no good reason to think along the lines of, "If only I'd had the switch in the right position this whole time!" The only thing to do now is to recognize why and how you had the switch in the wrong position, and then to flip it to the right position and keep it there going forward.

Strengthening your backward gains.

Your level of capability in the future depends upon your measurement of achievements in the past. You can't move forward and grow until you've acknowledged how far you've

come and have properly measured your gains.

For real measurements, you need to have a real starting point. I can't say with certainty what the origin of any of my ideals was, and that says a lot right there about the vagueness and fluidity of ideals. The ideal is not an actual point in time. And if it's not measurable in time, it's probably not measurable at all.

Every start is permanently certain.

But you can always remember a starting point. You can always recall where you first began on the path that led you to where you are now. And by knowing that starting point, you have half the measurement you need right there.

At any point, you can measure your progress and achievements by looking back to your starting point. All of your measurements will be totally grounded in reality when you measure against where you began.

As you move forward, new goals will require you to jump to higher levels of confidence and capability, but you've done that before, time and time again. To remind yourself of this, all you have to do is look back to your various starting points and then to your corresponding achievements. This is what progress and growth are all about.

All progress is a measurable gain.

You're always moving forward, and now that you'll always be measuring backward, every day will be better than the last one. Every 24-hour period, you'll see how much further along you've come from that fixed starting point.

What you'll see will be a real, specific, satisfying measurement of your progress.

Because of what you now know, this position of continually being happy about what you've done and getting the bursts of energy and confidence from your achievements is a permanent one.

Achievements that you know are true.

Belief and commitment are totally different things. We believe in our ideals, but we're not committed to them. If a goal is a good goal, then we're committed to it, and it's in no way a function of belief.

Commitment requires a measurable result and a date that we're going to achieve it by, so there's a huge difference between that goal and an ideal.

With this new mindset, you won't have anything governing your sense of progress aside from measurement. Once you've used your ideals to illuminate your goal, you'll leave the ideal alone. All you'll need then is your trusty starting point to look back to for real measurements of your real progress.

Once you've properly measured your achievement, you can look toward your ideal, and it will have probably gotten stronger because you'll have created reality out of it. You won't expect the experience of the achievement to equal the imagined experience of the ideal, though. They're totally different.

You'll enjoy the achievement by looking back from it to

where you started. As for the ideal, you'll be satisfied knowing that it's something that will always remain ahead of you, illuminating new goals that you'll commit to.

Always a number or an event.

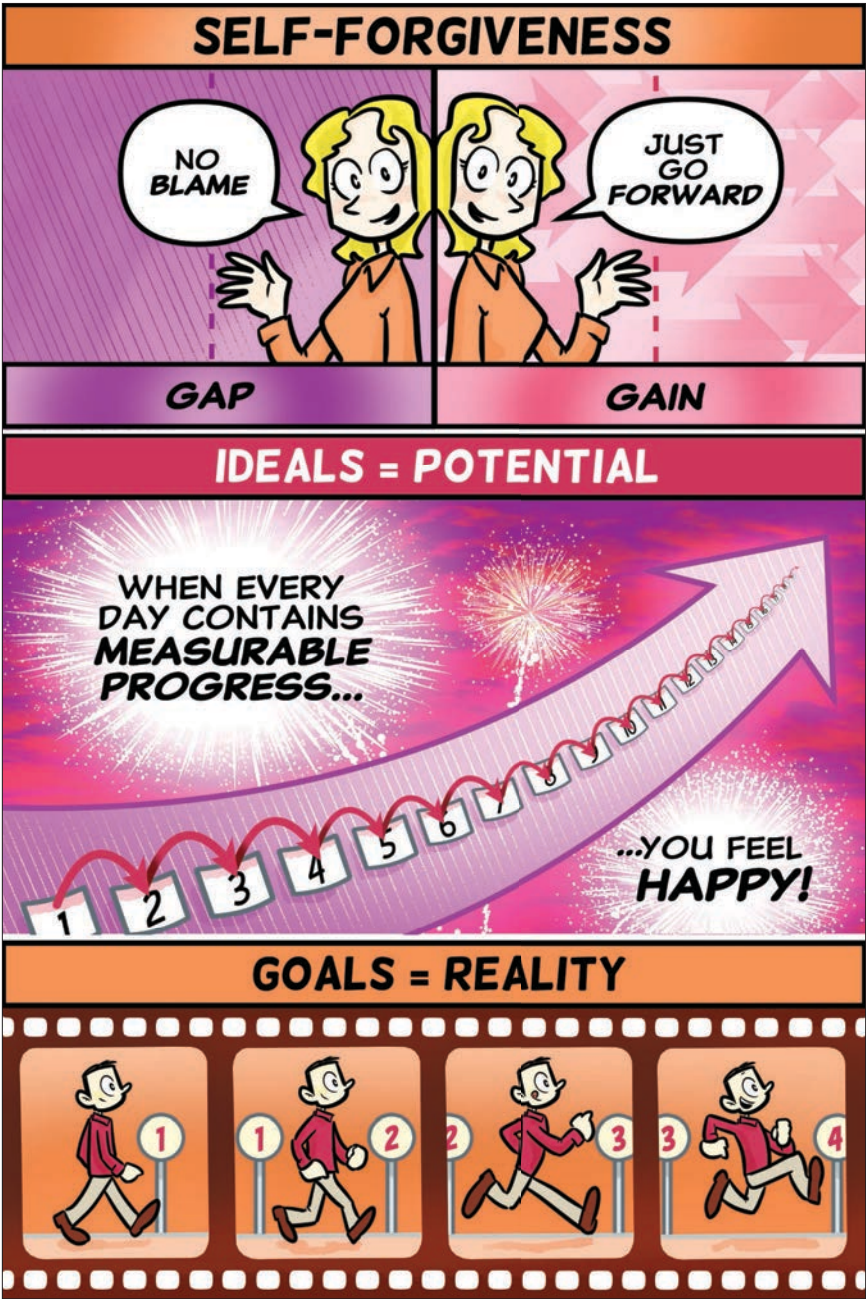
Every time you look back to where you started, you know that any measurement you make is a truth you can count on. It's not a function of interpretation. It's strictly a function of measurement.

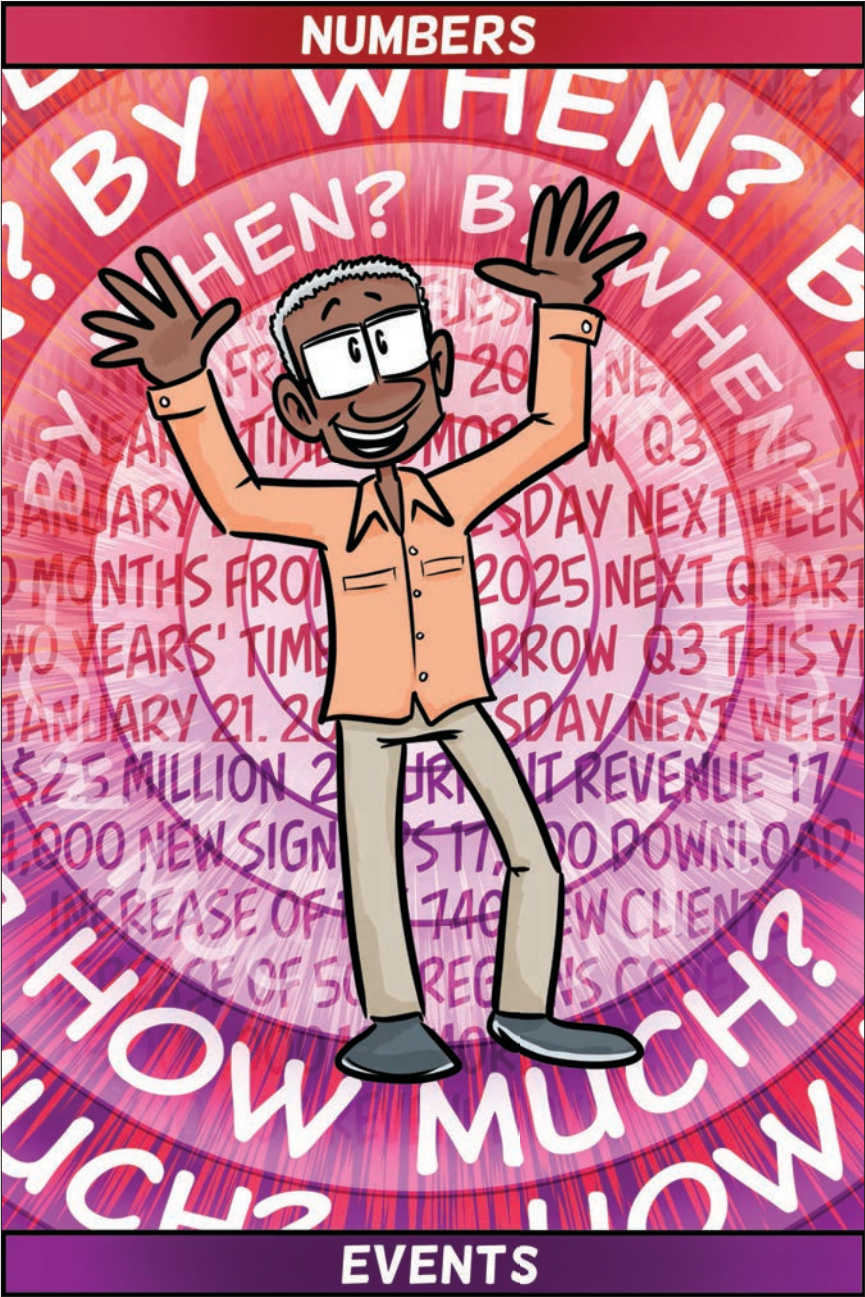
You know that you can't make a real measurement of your gains unless it's based on numbers achieved or events that have made a difference. It has to be quantifiable and verifiable.

You can't measure an ideal because there's no number or event attached to it. Ideals exist in a timeless zone, a realm that isn't measurable. I have a lot of room for timeless zones and for inspirational things, but I don't get them confused with measurement, and I ensure that my confidence and capability are based on measurement.

If what you're moving toward isn't a specific goal, you'll never achieve it. It will be a moving target. Not only will you feel like you're not making any progress, you'll feel like you're actually losing ground. And, of course, feeling good requires a sense of moving forward, and feeling bad often accompanies the feeling of falling behind.

Focusing on your tangible, measurable, results-based progress will continually keep you feeling confident and ready to take on even bigger concrete goals.





Chapter 6

Constant Goal Creation

You realize that continually expanding your goals into the future is the basis for creating measurable progress.

Goal achievement feels great, but, sadly, there are some people who never get the experience. By setting goals in the wrong way, they've set things up in advance so that when they achieve a goal, they don't truly feel that sense of achievement.

Someone who's used to measuring their goals and progress against their ideal will get used to feeling disappointed because they can never actually reach the ideal.

You, on the other hand, now know how to set specific goals in the light of your ideal, and how to then measure properly, which is to measure back to your starting point.

You can count on always getting that great feeling of goal achievement when you reach your destination, and, what's more, every improvement and all the progress you make along the way to your goal will also make you happy. Even failures can fall into this category if you use them as lessons to make improvements and course corrections.

Your goals will always be getting bigger, which means that throughout every process, you'll be growing, your achievements will be growing, and the results will always make you happy.

All improvement is achievement.

Once you're used to keeping the switch in the right position—setting measurable goals and measuring backward—

you'll know that this method works. You can get used to feeling at the start of every project that you'll succeed and that you'll enjoy the feeling of progress. This is because when you use this method, all of these positive things become predictable.

As for feelings of hopelessness and the fear of disappointment you've had in the past, you might as well just leave those back there because you're going to stay grounded in reality now. No more measuring against the ideal.

You know how to go about achieving any future idea for improvement, and you'll be feeling a sense of progress at every step toward that goal.

Ideals that are always good for you.

It's important to protect your ideals. A good way to do this is to not use them for measurement because that will leave you disappointed in your ideals, and you'll become cynical about them.

It's a terrible thing to become cynical about your ideals because you'll have damaged one of the most important capabilities you have, and that is to be inspired by your own future.

The more you measure in the right way, the stronger your ideals will become. You'll be able to recognize ideals that are good for you (ones with which you can easily identify positive, achievable goals) and ideals that are bad for you (ones that you can spend a lot of time on but that don't really show up with achievable, positive goals).

You'll see the good ideals for the inspirational tools they are, and you'll use your increasingly bigger ideals to set increasingly bigger goals. And the more you go through the process, the more confident you'll get in setting and achieving your goals.

No longer your worst critic.

What could be worse than spending 24/7 with someone who's a critic? No matter how much you think you've achieved, there's that person saying, "Yeah, but ..."

Good news. You're no longer your own worst critic. This is a huge burden to be rid of, having yourself as an enemy.

Now, you are your own best friend and biggest fan. You'll allow yourself all of the positive feelings from every achievement, big and small. You'll applaud yourself at each step, and you'll always be feeling, enjoying, and motivated by that sense of progress, which will boost your confidence and morale.

Accelerating sense of progress.

Now that you've given yourself the freedom and permission to aim only for your realistic, measurable goals, you'll get a sense of progress every day by measuring back to your starting point. You'll genuinely feel that you're moving forward, and your growth will begin to accelerate.

When you recognize that you're moving forward in everything you're doing, it feels like your sense of progress is speeding up. And it's not just a feeling—it's all tied to things that are measurable: bigger goals, greater confidence to take on new goals, your sense of commitment to each goal,

your higher level of capability, and your ability to be more courageous.

Ideals don't speed up. They don't move. But progress moves. Achievement speeds up. And that's a wonderful feeling.

Future always bigger than the past.

Being caught in The Gap will make you feel old. You'll be frustrated, disappointed, and not succeeding in the way you want to succeed. These feelings won't keep you motivated to continue toward your goals.

Being in The Gain has the opposite effect. As your goals keep getting bigger and you're measuring all of your achievements, how could you not be energetic and enthusiastic? You'll never want to stop doing what you're doing.

A key part of this is that you won't simply coast. You'll always be aware of the fact that no matter how much you've already achieved, the progress that lies ahead keeps getting bigger.

With this commitment you've made to The Gain, the number of people in your life who are talented, enthusiastic, and goal-setting will keep increasing. This will make it even easier to keep your future bigger than your past because it's not just you setting measurable goals and making progress; you'll have help all around you.





Chapter 7

Happiness Is The By-Product

You understand that happiness is simply the automatic and predictable result of increasingly staying out of The Gap — and in The Gain.

By reading this book, you're learning how to stay out of The Gap and in The Gain as much as possible. If you choose to apply the rules here, and work at sticking to them, you'll be grounded in reality, aware of and feeling all of your achievements—and, most significantly, you'll be happy.

Think about that last one, because it's certainly not a small thing: If you stay out of The Gap and in The Gain, you'll find happiness, automatically and predictably.

Pursuing happiness pushes it away.

You don't even have to set out to find happiness; it's a by-product of the complete measurement experience. You now know how to go through the process of visualizing, making progress, and achieving, and this process produces its own happiness.

The harder you try to pursue an ideal, thinking it will make you happy, the further away you'll find that hypothetical happiness to be once your work is done.

But the happiness you feel as a result of measuring properly is not idealistic happiness. It comes as a result of the specific measurements of progress you make, so it's also a grounded happiness: You'll know exactly why you're happy, and you'll be able to see how to replicate the happiness and expand it. You can also include others, which is something you can't do with idealistic happiness since it's purely in your own imagination.

Consider who you would rather be, and who you'd rather have your family, friends, and team be around: someone who lives with failure, frustration, disappointment, low self-esteem, guilt, and maybe even depression, or someone who shares feelings of success, satisfaction, confidence, high self-esteem, enjoyment, and optimism? This is the choice between The Gap and The Gain. And this choice impacts those around you.

It's measurement that does the trick.

As long as you keep moving forward, you'll not only always be ahead of where you were at any point in the past, but by measuring properly, you'll be aware of and enjoy that sense of moving forward, which will always make you happy.

Once you've been measuring your results in the right way for long enough, it will become second nature to know if you're in The Gap or in The Gain.

People say to me, "Dan, you must never go in The Gap anymore," and I always respond, "No. No more than four or five times a day. But the difference is, I no longer stay in The Gap for very long."

When I find myself feeling tense or stressed while thinking about something, I stop and consider what I'm doing. Every single time, I'll realize that I've been engaging in Gap thinking, measuring against the ideal. Then I just flip the switch and measure from where I am back to my starting point, and I'm grounded in reality and happy again.

When you make this switch, you'll be able to feel it physically as well as mentally. This is the power that measurement holds.

The world we live in is filled with more precise measurement than it has ever been before, with new technologies and data readily available. This can work to your great advantage, but for it to do that, you have to be a measurer yourself.

Being happy is where to start.

It's an enormous burden to be in the mindset that happiness is something you need to go out and get.

Instead, *start with happiness*. If you take the time to think about it, you'll find things you're happy about. Acknowledge those, and use that positive energy to build on and enhance your happiness.

I don't think we set and achieve goals in an effort to become happy. We do it because we *are* happy and want to expand our happiness.

Expanding your vision outward.

Before you start the process with a new goal, make sure to recognize and appreciate the progress and achievements you've made so far.

You'll see how you've raised your levels of capability and confidence with your past progress. What you then want to do is take these things that are true and expand them outward. You're not trying to get anywhere. You're just trying to get bigger. It's so good at the center, so why wouldn't you want it to just grow out from there?

Happiness is your starting point, and you've expanded the center by achieving the goal. So, it's a constant outward expansion of happiness.

We know that happiness is internal. It doesn't come as a function of competitive achievement or external standards. You start off positive and just keep making it bigger.

Your ideals are now free to grow.

Your ideals will be the best they can be for you now that you've stopped using them as something to measure against and judge yourself by. Now they can do what they're meant to do: provide illumination for setting measurable goals.

Once you've relieved your ideals of the heavy demand that they be achievable, they will grow and become more and more valuable to you.

The illumination of what represents your next progress will keep getting sharper. In this light, you'll pick out specific goals you can achieve in terms of real measurements, and the clarity and the possibilities will keep expanding.

You have to use an ideal that allows you to actually achieve goals in order to have better ideals. So there's a reciprocal relationship between your goal achievement and the usefulness and the inspirational value of your ideals. When one improves, the other does too. There's a measurable progress that strengthens another capability. And you'll believe more in your ideals the more you commit to and achieve practical goals.





Chapter 8

Three Wins Every Day

You reinforce a lifetime of measuring three “wins” at the end of today and visualizing three new ones for tomorrow.

Improved ideas alone don’t always result in improved behavior and results, but we have an exercise that’s simple and repeatable, and you can start this very evening to use it and benefit from it for the rest of your life.

You know now that there are behaviors and ways of thinking that make you unhappy and ones that make you happy, and that the former is The Gap and the latter is The Gain. Now you can start doing something that will root you in The Gain.

At the end of each day, measure three “wins” that you had that day, and then visualize three new ones you want to have the next day. A win is anything you can measure as being better today than it was yesterday. It can be something you were working on today in which you made measurable progress, or it can be a sudden new opportunity, or a discovery of a gain you’d made that you can measure.

Each win, big or small, is important, and the more you do this activity, the more you’ll see greater and greater opportunity for wins. We even offer a free app called WinStreak that you can download at strategiccoach.com/winstreak to make this activity even simpler.

All of your attention will be going to the Gain part of your daily experience and away from the Gap part. The more attention you give good habits, the more your bad habits will get crowded out.

Measuring gains every day.

Meaning and value aren't given to us. We create our own meaning and value for every experience.

For every day, which is defined simply as the time between waking up in the morning and going to bed at night, simply review your experience and pick three things that represent meaningful progress.

That's it. It takes only two or three minutes to do this exercise, but when you do it at the end of each day, you'll be making important choices about what the meaning and value of your day was.

Your day was what you say your day was. It has these three meanings and three values. That's the measurement for this good day, and you're the only one who knows that. It's not up to anyone else's definitions or explanations.

Don't compare today's value to that of any other day, because that's going into the realm of the ideal. Stick to the three daily wins, and you'll be staying in The Gain and avoiding The Gap.

Each day, you'll have a greater ability to identify three wins, measure yourself on three wins, and set up three new wins for the next day.

Only your progress matters.

You have a lot of experiences between morning and night, but you're making the decision that the only parts of your experience that are going to be highlighted and measured are the ones that represent the best examples of progress.

There's a degree of manipulation in the world where other people want to interpret your experience for you. Once you allow someone else's interpretation of your experience to be greater than your own, you're permanently in The Gap.

People will say, "You didn't have a very good day, did you?" and I'll say, "How would you know if I had a good day or not?" I'm the only one who has a say regarding how good my day was.

Three wins today and tomorrow.

Tomorrow is going to come whether you want it to or not, but you'll be more ready for it if you're not embroiled in the past.

There's a natural tendency, once you've measured your progress and success, for your mind to be freed up from the past because there will be no more to be learned from it, and so you can look toward the future.

You don't need to look further than the next 24 hours. You'll use the energy and new confidence from your achievements today to visualize three more satisfying and stimulating gains for tomorrow.

If you dwell on perceived failures in the past, you'll be facing the wrong way, backing into each new day. When you stick to extracting the value from each day, you'll be freed up from negative considerations of the past and will be carrying greater meaning and value into each day. This will positively bias you toward having similar meaningful types of experiences to the ones you had yesterday.

You'll gradually acquire a past that needs no further comple-

tion. You can look back, but there's nothing back there that you need to complete. Daily, you'll get a sense of a completion of that day with a positive interpretation of its meaning and value.

Maximize what's available.

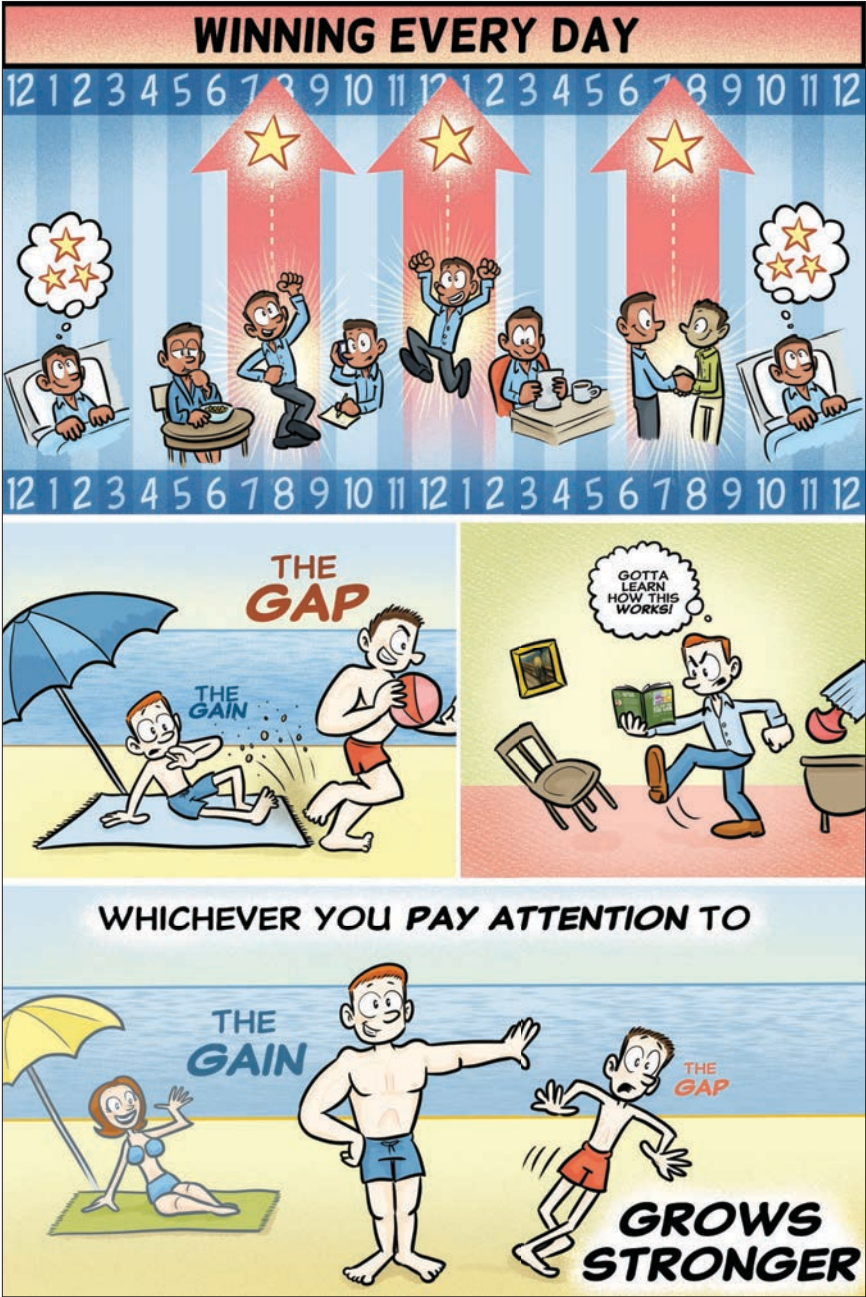
Wishing and achieving aren't the same thing. Wishing involves becoming emotionally attached to things you don't have. In The Gain, you altogether stop wishing for what you don't have and focus enjoyably on gaining maximum advantage from what you do have.

Every day, you have certain unique resources available to you—opportunities for growth and strengthening of who you are uniquely as an individual. Because it's unique to you, you're the only one who can say what those resources are. You're taking ownership of the daily activity and saying, "Today, I have to find three things that give me a greater sense of the value and meaning of my life, and this is 100 percent my responsibility because I'm the only person who can know what these things are to identify and measure."

Morale, momentum, motivation.

You'll notice with each winning day—which is every day—that your sense of pride, confidence, and excitement expands and accelerates.

You're the only evaluator, and you've given yourself a good grade by making realistic judgments. Your time is your own, so there's no reason to be happy only on certain days. Every day, you'll recognize your progress, you'll feel better than you did the day before, and you'll be ready for the next day and feeling good about it.





Conclusion

How Your Life Works

You use your winning brain to identify, achieve, and measure daily progress, which continually expands your ownership over every area of your life.

I started this book by talking about how your brain works, and I'm going to finish it by talking about how your life works.

It's no surprise that the two are very closely related. You use your brain to measure your progress and achievements, which, in turn, expands your ownership over your life.

Keep in mind that there is only 100 percent ownership over your life. There are no gaps in ownership. Either you own your life or somebody else does. Is it you that gives meaning and value to your life or do you depend on someone else to provide meaning and value? There isn't going to be any vacuum. One or the other is going to happen. You have a choice over who is going to be owner.

If you own your life, that's where your happiness is going to come from. You can do anything you want with your own property.

Only you have the inside information.

No one but you can tell you what your ideals and goals are. You're responsible for knowing your standards, what you want your future to look like, and how you want to feel every day.

You now have the understanding as well as the exercise to use that understanding. You are now aware that one simple exercise done daily will continually build your ability to be

clear about what your ideals are, what your goals are, and how you can create the two of them to build the life you want.

Measurement multiplies your ambition.

There's no natural stopping point to how much your ambition can grow. Your ambition is the combination of your ideals and your ability to make progress, which is neverending.

By measuring your progress properly, you'll avoid the big ambition killer—a sense of never making progress—and you won't rely on anyone but yourself to give meaning and value to your life.

You'll experience an endless strengthening of your vision of what your bigger and better future can be, and all it requires is measuring your progress today.

Ideals that illuminate and inspire.

Your increasing energetic sense of who you're becoming as your measurable life expands also provides growing leadership to everyone you encounter.

We can always spot people who live their lives this way, moving toward their ideals by creating measurable goals and interpreting their days as positive.

In a world where there's a lot of negative experience, someone who's systematically and consistently confident and capable, who's showing progress and moving forward and is freed up from their own past so they can be available for everybody else's present, is demonstrating a form of leadership. They're in The Gain and encouraging others to get in The Gain.

You don't have to give any thought to it for it to have this positive effect on people you encounter; you just have to live this way and set an example. You won't know where or how it will land with others, but it will land.

Here's a bonus: People who choose to be negative will want to stay out of your environment because they'll find it hard to be negative in your presence.

Increasingly attracting other winning players.

You'll discover that simply by minding your own measurement of your daily progress, you'll automatically attract the creative teamwork of others who are also transforming their daily lives in the same way.

People who operate this way can spot one another very quickly. It's not so much about what they do, but how they talk about themselves. You can tell if someone is operating from a position of severe judgment that no matter what they did today, it's not enough. And if you're your own worst enemy, you don't need any others.

When two Gain-based people get together, something positive but unpredictable will happen between them. They're doing something similar, but each is doing it in their own way that's unique to their ideals and to the goals they choose to achieve, so there's a resonance rather than conflict.

Growing community of energizing achievers.

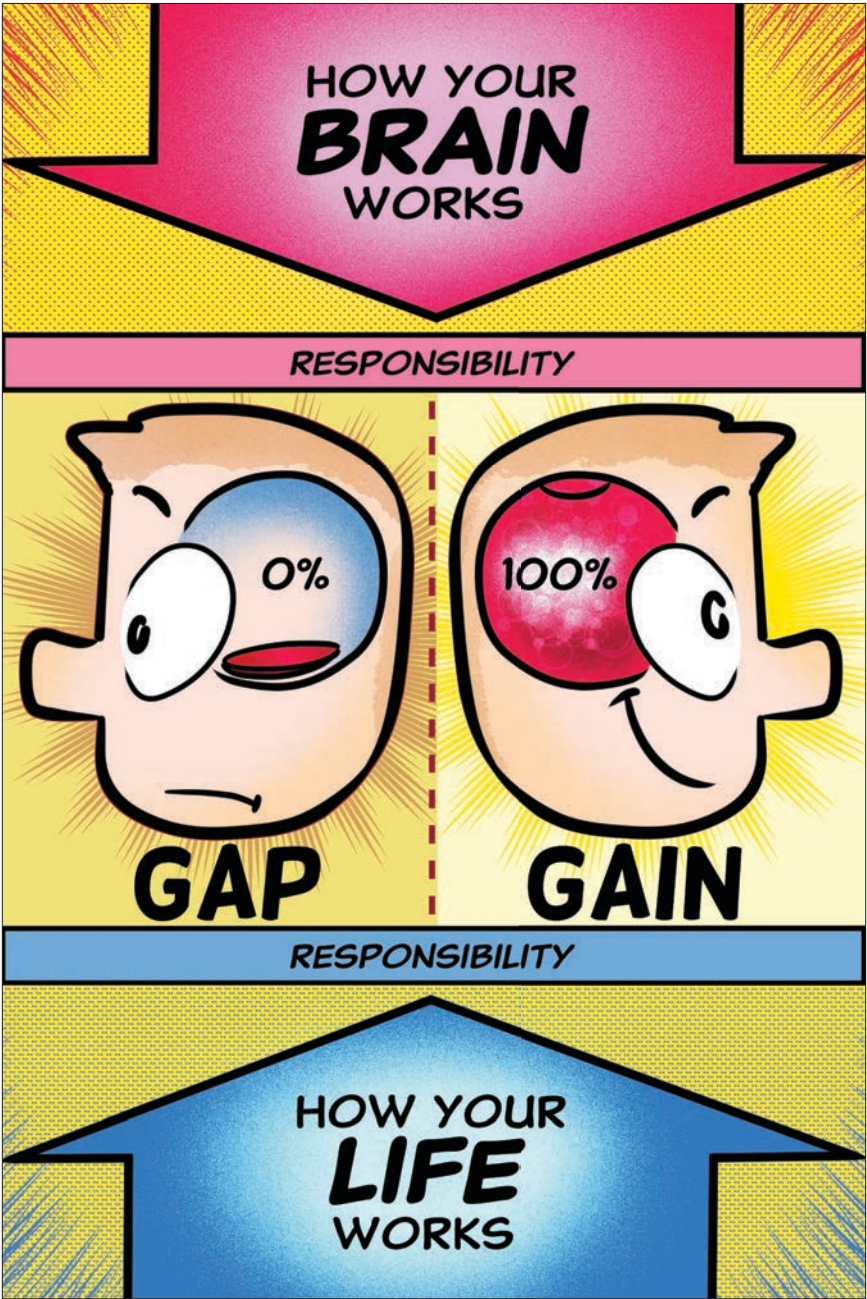
Maybe you've always wanted to be engaged in creative teamwork with positive people, but this can't happen to someone who hangs around in The Gap. Now that you know how to stay in The Gain, other people in The Gain will notice, and you'll notice it in them.

People end up together because there's an attraction. If you were engaging in Gap thinking and Gap communication, then great people probably weren't trying to find you and stay in your sphere. Now, what you're creating will be attractive to exactly the kind of people you'd like to have around you.

Maximizing the meaning and value of your experience through the simple activity of picking out three wins for every day has the by-product of making you very attractive to people who are like-minded. They're doing the same thing as you, and they also have a high sense of morale, momentum, and motivation.

It's a great pleasure and joy to realize that what's increasingly measurable and real for you is rapidly being experienced by everyone you know. You're not alone. You have a community around you.

If you're always growing, you're making the best possible contribution to other people. Their inspiration and imitation of that will do the same for you. You'll get the benefit of their work, and you won't have to think about it. It will just happen. You'll have an increasingly positive connection with an expanding world outside of yourself.





The Strategic Coach Program

Expanding Entrepreneurial Freedom

The Strategic Coach Program, launched in 1989, has qualifications, measurements, structures, and processes that attract a particular type of talented, successful, and ambitious entrepreneur.

One differentiating quality of these Strategic Coach participants is that they recognize that the technology-empowered 21st century is a unique time to be an entrepreneur. It's the first time that a growing number of individuals with no special birth privileges and no special education can achieve almost anything they set their minds to.

These self-motivated individuals who participate in the three levels of Strategic Coach accept that if they can focus on mastering the right mindsets, they can experience increasing breakthroughs for themselves, both personally and professionally, that are new in history.

The Gap And The Gain is one of these breakthrough mindsets, and there are dozens more for you to master.

Mindsets that enable entrepreneurs to escape.

Many entrepreneurs have the potential and the willingness to achieve exponential goals in the 21st century, but they are blocked from taking action and making progress because they feel trapped in three ways:

- **Trapped thinking:** They are isolated by their own disconnected creativity, which continually churns out ideas that don't translate into achievement. *At Strategic Coach, entrepreneurs increasingly liberate their thinking to create entirely new practical breakthroughs for themselves and others.*

- **Trapped circumstances:** They are surrounded by people who don't support their ambitions, who actively oppose them, or who try to make them feel guilty about their achievements and dreams. *At Strategic Coach, entrepreneurs learn how to increasingly surround themselves with like-minded and like-motivated individuals in every area of their personal and business lives.*

- **Trapped energy:** They're using much of their daily energy to simply sustain themselves without ever actually experiencing exponential performance and results. They wanted to create a growing business but it turns out that they've only created a job—one that always stays the same. *At Strategic Coach, entrepreneurs continually transform every part of their business organizations so that they become self-managing, and then self-multiplying.*

Mindsets that enable entrepreneurs to achieve.

Around the world, the vast majority of entrepreneurs never get out of these trapped circumstances, but at Strategic Coach, our participants not only escape from these limitations, they also jump to extraordinary levels of achievement, success, and satisfaction.

They never stop growing. Strategic Coach participants continually transform how they think, how they make decisions, how they communicate, and how they take action based on their mastery of dozens of unique entrepreneurial mindsets that have been developed in the Program. These are purely entrepreneurial mindsets, like The Gap And The Gain.

We've taken a look at what goes on in the minds of the best

entrepreneurs and have created a thinking system that is custom-designed for them and adjusts to the ambition of each individual.

The Strategic Coach Program provides an accelerating lifetime structure, process, and community for these entrepreneurs to create exponential breakthroughs.

Mindsets that enable entrepreneurs to multiply.

Depending on where you are right now in your life and business, we have a complete set of entrepreneurial mindsets that will immediately jump you up to the next level in terms of your ambition, achievements, and progress. Over the course of your entrepreneurial lifetime, you can move upward through our three levels of mindset measurement and scoring:

1. The Strategic Coach Signature Program: From isolation to teamwork. At this first breakthrough level, you create a “Unique Ability Team” in which everyone does only what they love and do best, allowing you to have a “Self-Managing Company” where your business runs successfully without your having to be involved in the day-to-day operations. Every successful entrepreneur dreams about having this kind of teamwork and organization. Through the Signature level of the Program, these dreams become a reality.

2. The 10x Ambition Program: From teamwork to exponential. You make breakthroughs that transform your life, and your organization becomes a “Self-Multiplying Company.” Talented entrepreneurs want to free their biggest growth plans from non-supportive relationships, situations, and circumstances. Through the 10x Ambition level of Strategic Coach, their biggest aspirations attract multiplier capabilities, resources, and opportunities.

3. The Game Changer Program: From exponential to transformative. As your entrepreneurial life becomes exponential, your Self-Multiplying Company become transformative. *The key evidence of this is that your biggest competitors want to become your best students, customers, and promoters.* Game Changer entrepreneurs in Strategic Coach become the leading innovators and cutting-edge teachers in their industries and continually introduce new strategies, methods, and systems that create *new* industries.

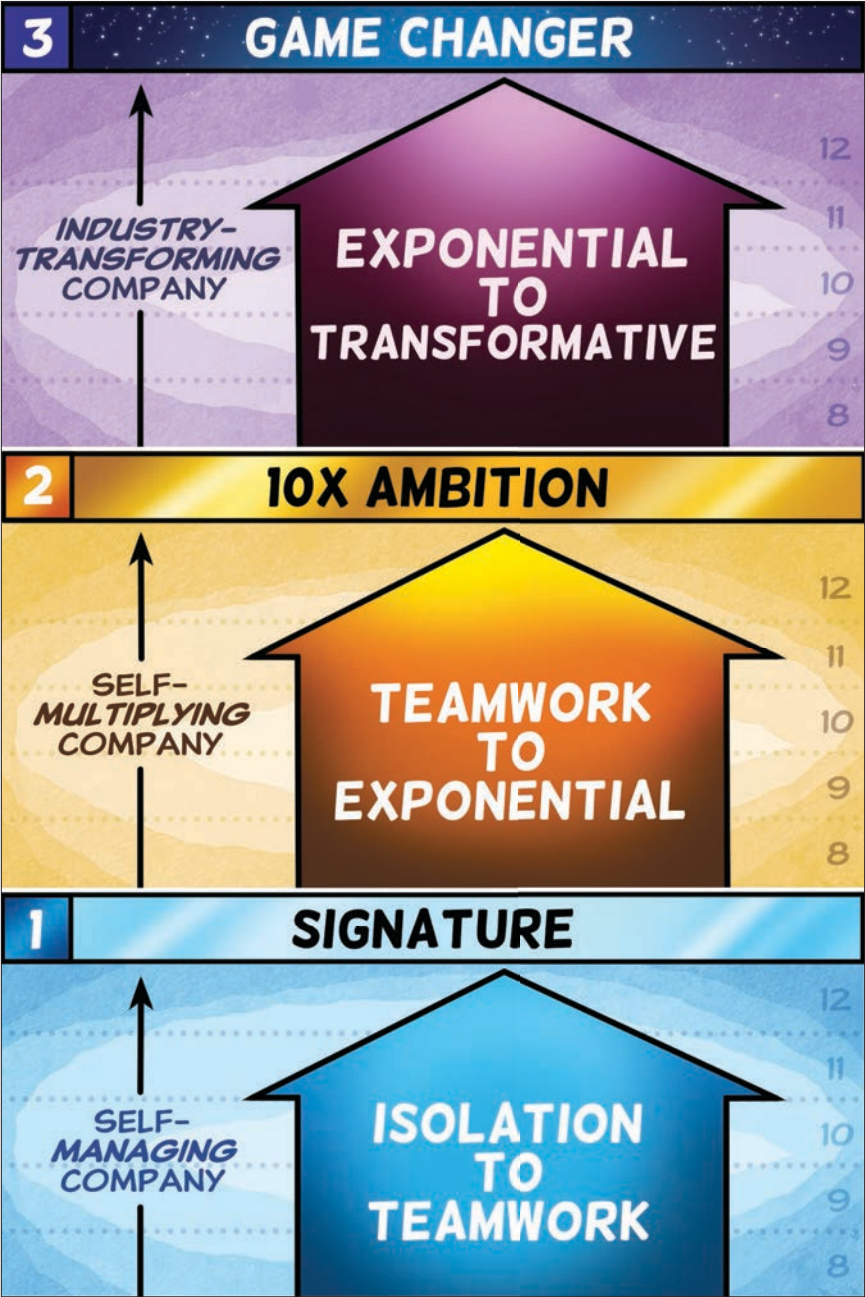
Measure yourself, score yourself, get started.

We've created a Gap And The Gain Scorecard you can use to score yourself according to the eight mindsets discussed in this book. Go to strategiccoach.com/go/gapandgain to download your copy. Read through the four statements for each mindset and give yourself a score of 1 to 12 based on where your own mindset falls on the spectrum. Put each mindset's score in the first column at the right, and then add up all eight and put the total at the bottom. Now, think about what scores would represent progress over the next quarter. Write these in the second scoring column, add them up, and write in the total.

When you compare the two scores, you can see where you want to go in terms of your achievements and ambitions. If this fast exercise tells you that you want to multiply in all these areas, contact us today to get started:

The Strategic Coach Program is ready for you! Visit us online at strategiccoach.com or call us at 416.531.7399 or 1.800.387.3206.





About The Author

Dan Sullivan



Dan Sullivan is the founder and president of The Strategic Coach Inc. and creator of The Strategic Coach® Program, which helps accomplished entrepreneurs reach new heights of success and happiness. He has over 40 years of experience as a strategic planner and coach to entrepreneurial individuals and groups. He is author of over 30 publications, including *The 80% Approach™*, *The Dan Sullivan Question*, *Ambition Scorecard*, *Wanting What You Want*, *The 4 C's Formula*, *The 25-Year Framework*, *The Game Changer*, *The 10x Mind Expander*, *The Mindset Scorecard*, *The Self-Managing Company*, and *Procrastination Priority*, and is co-author with Catherine Nomura of *The Laws of Lifetime Growth*.



THE GAP AND THE GAIN

Do you find that no matter how much success you have, you're perpetually dissatisfied with your progress? Does it feel like you're still far from achieving your biggest goals? The problem is not in the quantity or quality of your success and achievements. The problem is how you measure.

In this book, I share a powerful insight I gained from working with thousands of successful entrepreneurs, many of whom weren't able to appreciate their own success. If you're finding that no matter how much you've achieved, it isn't making you happy, a simple mindset shift is all it takes to go from feeling like your goals are forever out of reach to continually feeling that you're making progress, inspiring the confidence to create bigger goals and a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction that leads to a happier life.

For more information about Strategic Coach®:

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