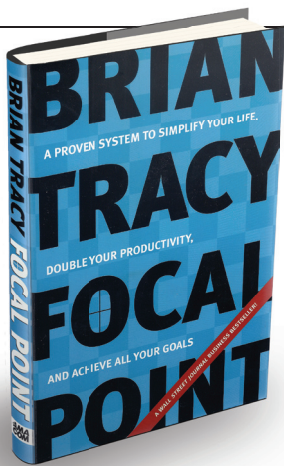


Focal Point

A Proven System to Simplify Your Life, Double Your Productivity, and Achieve All Your Goals

by Brian Tracy



AMACOM
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SUCCESS Points

In this book you'll learn how to:

- Create a personal strategic plan
- Simplify your life
- Maximize your use of the 80/20 rule
- Leverage other people's time, money, experiences and talents
- Realize your full potential

Where Is Your Attention?

Sharpening your focus empowers you to make your goals a reality.

QUICK OVERVIEW

Who doesn't want to earn more money, take more time off, enjoy better relationships and live a more fulfilling life? That's a lot for any book to promise, but it's the premise of Brian Tracy's best-selling book *Focal Point*.

Will reading Tracy's book instantly make you more successful? No. But *applying* what you learn from *Focal Point* very well could. Tracy opens the book with an overview of basic success and time management principles that, though you may have heard them before, are worth revisiting. He offers examples of how those principles work in controlled research settings as well as in real people's lives. He devotes the second half of the book to showing readers how to apply these success strategies to seven key areas of life: business and career, family and personal life, money and investments, health and fitness, personal growth and development, social and community activities, and spiritual development and inner peace. The overall goal is to sharpen the focus of your goals for and attention to each of those areas. That focus and clarity of purpose, he says, will help spur you to achieve the results you desire.

APPLY AND ACHIEVE

Clarity and flexibility are two key aspects of success according to Brian Tracy's *Focal Point*. Throughout the book he encourages the reader to engage in zero-based thinking, a strategy that leans heavily on the question, "Is there anything I am doing right now that, knowing what I now know, I wouldn't get into again if I were starting over today?" If the answer is yes, identify what activities need to be eliminated.

Use that question as a starting point for simplifying your life and maximizing your results. Once you've identified what you should continue doing, apply Tracy's "Five Questions for Superior Performance" to ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

SUMMARY

FOCAL POINT

Life is the study of attention. Where your attention goes, your heart goes also. Your ability to divert your attention from activities of lower value to activities of higher value is central to everything you accomplish in life.

In 1928, at the Hawthorne Electric Plant of General Electric, a group of time and motion experts conducted a series of experiments aimed at increasing the productivity of workers based on varying the working conditions and the environment in the plant.

The researchers selected a group of women who worked on a production line assembling motors. They explained to the women that they were going to be experimenting to find the best combination of working conditions to achieve the highest level of productivity with the smallest number of mistakes. These women had been chosen to be the subjects of the experiment.

They then began their experiments by raising the light levels in the production area. Within a couple of days, production went up and defects went down. The researchers were delighted with these results.

They then lowered the lighting levels to test the differences. But to their surprise, production levels went up again. They experimented with other working conditions. They raised and lowered the noise levels. They raised and lowered the room temperature. They altered the seating arrangements and the work order of the employees. But in every case, productivity levels went up. The researchers were baffled by these results.

Finally, they sat down with a focus group of the workers and explained to them what they had found. They asked them, "Why do you think it is that production levels have gone up, no matter what variables we changed in the working conditions?" The answer they got back was surprising. The participants told the researchers that they had never before been singled out and treated as anything other than simple factory workers. When they were chosen to be subjects of this experiment, their levels of self-esteem and self-respect had gone up. They felt better about themselves. They felt more important. As a result, they did their work better than they had ever done it before. Each change in the working conditions reminded them that they had been specially selected for this study. They worked harder and better. And their productivity increased.

This breakthrough at the Hawthorne Electric Plant triggered the management revolution that has changed the world of work as we know it today. It was the discovery of the psychological factors of production that led to the breakthrough work of management researchers such as Maslow, McGregor, Herzberg, Drucker, and many others. Today, thousands of the

best minds in the world are committed to improving the psychological factors that contribute to higher levels of productivity and output in every work situation.

Ask yourself, "Is there anything I am doing right now that, knowing what I now know, I wouldn't get into again if I were starting over today?"

IMPROVEMENT IS AUTOMATIC

What psychologists and others have discovered is that the very act of observing a behavior tends to change that behavior for the better. This is one of the greatest breakthroughs in the understanding of personal performance. This critical discovery contains the key to dramatically improving the quality of any area of your life.

When you observe yourself engaging in any activity, you become more conscious and aware of that activity, and you do it better. When you pay attention to any element of your behavior, you tend to perform far better in that area than you would if you were not paying attention or if you had not thought about it at all. The power of the Focal Point Process is that you learn how to identify the most vital actions and behaviors in each area, the ones that can bring you the greatest rewards and results in the shortest period of time. When you consciously focus on these areas, you will perform better and better. This process of continuous improvement will happen naturally and easily because you have put an "X"—your focal point—on the important behavior in advance.

THE GRAND SLAM FORMULA

The Grand Slam Formula in the Focal Point Process is made up of four parts: simplification, leveraging, acceleration, and multiplication. The Grand Slam Formula is another key to doubling your income and doubling your time off.

Six Steps to Doubling Your Income and Doubling Your Time Off

1. Identify your key tasks with absolute clarity so that you know without a shadow of a doubt what you can do to make the greatest contribution.
2. Identify the routine tasks and activities that consume so much time but contribute little or nothing to your long-term goals at work. Begin today to delegate those tasks to others, one at a time. Eliminate them altogether wherever possible.
3. Use the Grand Slam Formula to dramatically increase your output and your results. Simplify, leverage, accelerate, and multiply your talents and abilities through others.
4. Decide today to take at least one full day each week off work during which you spend time exclusively on your personal pursuits.
5. Reorganize your life so that time off becomes a major priority. The more you get your time and your life under control, the more you will get done and the more enjoyable your work will be. The more you get done, the more free time you will have. The more free time you have, the more rested you will be. The more rested you are, the more alert and productive you will be when you are working, thereby getting even more done.
6. Start today to pay closer attention to the things you do. Identify your most important tasks and concentrate on them single-mindedly.

Simplify

The first letter in *Slam* stands for *simplify*. To get better control of your time, to double your income and dramatically increase the quality of your personal life, you must learn to simplify everything you do. You must be continually reducing and eliminating activities that take up too much time and contribute very little to your goals.

To simplify your life, zero-based thinking is one of the most powerful strategies you can learn and apply on a regular basis. Here's how it works. Ask yourself, "Is there anything I am doing right now that, knowing what I now know, I wouldn't get into again if I were starting over today?"

Is there any relationship, personal or business, that you wouldn't get into again today if you had it to do over? Is there any product, service, process, or expenditure of time or money in your work or business that, knowing what you now know, you wouldn't get into again today if you had it to do over?

If your answer is "yes," then your next question is, "How do I get out of this situation, and how fast?"

Leverage

The second letter in the Grand Slam Formula stands for *leverage*. You use leverage to get the most out of yourself. You leverage your strengths and abilities to achieve more than you thought you could. The Greek philosopher Archimedes once said, "Give me a lever long enough and a place to stand, and I can move the world." This principle applies to you as well. There are seven forms of leverage that you can develop. These forms of leverage are often available to you for the asking. You can leverage other people's:

- Knowledge
- Energy
- Money
- Successes
- Failures
- Ideas
- Contacts

Accelerate

The third letter in the Grand Slam Formula stands for *accelerate*. Today, in our society, there is an incredible need for speed. Everyone is impatient. Everyone wants everything yesterday, even if they didn't know they wanted it until today. Anyone who can act quickly to satisfy the needs of other people can move rapidly to the front of the line. Always be looking for ways to do things faster for the key people and customers in your life.

Multiply

The fourth letter in *Slam* is *M*, which stands for *multiply*. The primary way you multiply yourself is by organizing and working with other people who have skills and abilities that are complementary to your own. Your ability to assemble a team of excellent people and then help your team accomplish important tasks is central to your long-term success. It is the key to multiplying yourself and your abilities.

To perform at your very best and double your productivity, you must be absolutely clear about what you want to accomplish.

FIVE QUESTIONS FOR SUPERIOR PERFORMANCE

There are five questions you must ask yourself regularly if you want to perform at your very best:

1. What am I trying to do? Define the ideal goal or outcome you are striving for before you begin. If you are working with others, make sure everybody is crystal clear about the desired result before anyone starts work.

2. How am I trying to do it? Make sure that this is the best way. Ask whether there could be another way. Always remain open to the possibility that you could be wrong. Think through and analyze your approach to be sure that it is the very best way to approach your goal or objective.

3. What are my assumptions? Are you making any assumptions with regard to the market, the actions or performance of other people, the underlying motives of the key players, or the outcome of future events? Remember, as time management expert Alec Mackenzie wrote, "Errant assumptions lie at the root of most failures."

4. What if my assumptions were wrong? What if something that you believed to be true turned out not to be true at all? Perhaps someone you are negotiating with is only using this negotiation with you to get a better price or deal from someone else. Always be willing to question your most cherished assumptions.

5. What would I have to do differently if my key assumptions were wrong? What would you do if this approach failed completely? What are your alternatives? If you were not doing it this way, would you start it over again? Always be willing to ask, "How else could I go about achieving this same result?"

Clarity is everything. To perform at your very best and double your productivity, you must be absolutely clear about what you want to accomplish. You must then identify and pursue the best way to achieve it. You must be open to new information, willing to accept feedback and self-correct, and willing to abandon one way of working and embrace another if the circumstances warrant it.

SHARPEN YOUR FOCUS

Personal strategic planning is the tool you use to get from wherever you are to wherever you want to go. The difference between using personal strategic planning as a central part of your life and just letting your life happen

without a plan is like the difference between driving a car and riding a bicycle. Both will get you from point A to point B, but the Car, personal strategic planning, will get you there much faster and easier.

The personal strategic planning process for Focal Point divides your life into seven areas. This enables you to clarify what you want in each area and what you have to do to get the things you want. The seven areas of life are the following:

1. Business and career: How do you become extremely successful and satisfied and move to the top of your field?

2. Family and personal life: How do you achieve balance between external success and your personal relationships?

3. Money and investments: How do you get your financial life under control and achieve financial independence?

4. Health and fitness: How do you achieve and maintain high levels of fitness, energy, and overall well-being?

5. Personal growth and development: How do you identify and acquire the key knowledge and skills that you need to live an extraordinary life?

6. Social and community activities: How do you structure your life so that you make a real difference in the world and leave a lasting legacy?

7. Spiritual development and inner peace: How do you organize your inner life and thinking so that you realize your full potential as a human being?

Give yourself a grade in each area, on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest. You will find that most of your stress and unhappiness comes in the area where you give yourself the lowest grade. Once you identify that area, you can determine the specific steps you need to take to get that area under control.

The Focal Point Process consists of seven steps in each of the seven areas of life. These seven steps make up a system of personal strategic planning that enables you to determine where to put the "X" in each part of your life. These seven steps include identifying your values, vision, goals, knowledge and skills, habits, daily activities, and necessary actions.

SUMMARY

FOCAL POINT

CREATE YOUR DAILY PERSONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY SCHEDULE

There are seven disciplines you must develop if you want to achieve all that is possible for you. You can learn these disciplines through practice and repetition until they become automatic.

1. Daily goal setting: Every morning, take three to five minutes to write out your top ten goals in the present tense. Get a spiral notebook for this purpose. By writing out your ten goals at the beginning of each day, you will program them deep into your subconscious mind. This daily goal writing will activate your mental powers. It will stimulate your mind and make you more alert. Throughout the day, you will see opportunities and possibilities to move more rapidly toward your goals.

2. Daily planning and organizing: Take a few minutes, preferably the night before, to plan out every activity of the coming day. Always work from a list. Always think on paper. This is one of the most powerful and important disciplines of all for high performance.

3. Daily priority setting: The essence of all time management, personal management, and life management is contained in your ability to set the proper priorities on the use of your time.

4. Daily concentration on your highest-value activities: Your ability to work single-mindedly on your most important task

Always be willing to question your most cherished assumptions.

will contribute as much to your success as any other discipline you can develop.

5. Daily exercise and proper nutrition: Your health is more important than anything else. By disciplining yourself to exercise regularly and to eat carefully, you will promote the highest possible levels of health and fitness throughout your life.

6. Daily learning and growth: Your mind is like a muscle. If you don't use it, you lose it. Continuous learning is the minimum requirement for success in any field.

7. Daily time for the important people in your life: Relationships are everything. Be sure that in climbing the ladder of success, you do not find it leaning against the wrong building. Build time for your relationships into every day, no matter how busy you get.

These seven disciplines will ensure that you perform at the highest level and get the greatest satisfaction and results from everything you do.

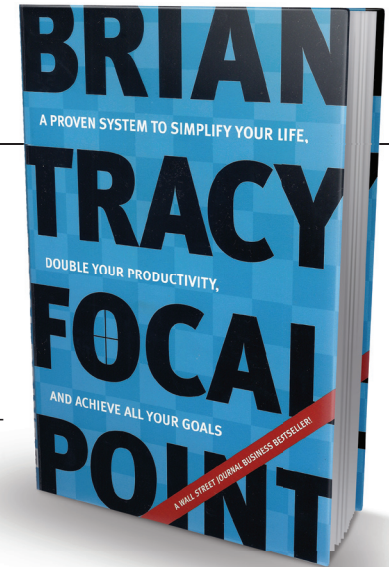
Seven Lessons for Success in the Twenty-First Century

These are some of the most important ideas I have learned in more than thirty years of studying successful people.

- 1. Your life only gets better when you get better.*
- 2. It doesn't matter where you're coming from; all that matters is where you're going.*
- 3. Anything worth doing well is worth doing poorly at first.*
- 4. You are only as free as your options, the well-developed alternatives you have available to you.*
- 5. Within every problem or difficulty you experience, there is the seed of an equal or greater advantage or benefit.*
- 6. You can learn anything you need to learn to achieve any goal you can set for yourself.*
- 7. The only real limits on what you can do or be are the limits you accept in your own mind.*

About the Author

Brian Tracy is a popular keynote speaker, prolific author and leading personal development trainer. He is Chairman and CEO of Brian Tracy International and has consulted more than 1,000 companies and addressed more than 5 million people in seminars throughout the United States, Canada and 55 other countries. He is a best-selling author with more than 45 books and has written and produced more than 300 audio and video learning programs.



Action Steps

Get more out of this SUCCESS Book Summary by applying what you've learned. Here are a few questions from Brian Tracy's Focal Point Process to get you started.

1. Which area of your life needs the greatest amount improvement?
2. For that area of your life, identify your values. What virtues or qualities are most important to you in that area of life?
3. Write down your vision for that area of your life. If this aspect of life were perfect five years from now, what would it look like?
4. What specific goals must you achieve to bring that vision to life?
5. What information, knowledge or skills do you need to acquire to achieve those goals?
6. What specific habits of thought and action do you need in order to become the person who is capable of achieving your goals?
7. Identify specific daily activities that would empower you to develop those habits.
8. What specific action or actions are you going to take immediately to begin realizing your ideal future vision?

Recommended Reading

*If you enjoyed the summary of **Focal Point**, you may also want to read:*

The Compound Effect by Darren Hardy

What to Say When You Talk to Yourself by Shad Helmstetter

7 Strategies for Wealth and Happiness by Jim Rohn

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