

Winning gold and creating an *Exceptional* life is an inside game, with a little help from your friends, coach and allies

What comes to mind when you think of Mahatma Gandhi, Sir Winston Churchill and the Dalai Lama? While most of us would agree that they were or are great leaders, I believe it was their vision of the world that they wanted to create that kept them going when the going got tough and it seemed like the world was conspiring against them.

For Gandhi, it was a free India, and for Sir Winston Churchill, one of the greatest wartime leaders ever, triumph over the Nazis. And for our more contemporary example, Tibet's Dalai Lama? A free Tibet.

There's an old, wise saying that pain pushes until vision pulls. How else to explain how these leaders kept moving forward, sometimes only inches at a time, despite the odds and despite the immensity of their goals? Who would have thought that the coupling of a one-day strike and a refusal to play a salt tax could have been the beginning of the end for the British in India?



For all the famous leaders like the four I mentioned, there are millions, if not billions of people who have a desire that won't let them alone, that keeps whispering its longing if we'll stop long enough to pay attention to it. What is yours? To be a captain of industry, to start your own business, to create an *exceptional* life for you and your loved ones? What is so compelling to you that its pursuit would turn you into a modern-day Sisyphus, happy to repeatedly push your proverbial rock up the hill until you reach your goal?

As a life and business coach who works with clients to help them achieve their goals, I've found that getting my clients in touch with their desired future is the second and one of the most important steps to getting there. Why? Because when you can literally see, touch, taste and feel your vision, your chances of creating it skyrocket. Successful people, the world's great leaders and more recently popular books like *The Secret*, *The Law of Attraction* and *The Amazing Power of Deliberate Intent* all demonstrate the fact that your success must manifest mentally before it stands a chance of manifesting physically.

If that's the second step, what's the first? Before cementing your vision, it's important to look at what activities, things and people attract you, or what's important to you. In coaching parlance we call these values. Some more common values include: family, a supportive large community, social stature, personal growth, education and money. If what's important to you isn't an integral part of your vision, then your effort to make it happen will feel like it takes more effort than you have and leave you feeling like Sisyphus, who I referred to earlier.

I've seen time and time again that once clients discover and orient themselves and their vision around their values, their chances of fulfillment and success increase exponentially. Wonder why? Because when it's all said and done, you and your values are one. And when you know your values: your choices will become easier, because decisions will be screened through your values; your sense of peacefulness will increase, because your goals will be aligned with what's important to you; you'll drop draining goals and projects that don't express what's important to you and; you won't have any regrets, regardless of what happens, because during your journey you'll have been true to your values.

Having taken the first step of defining your values, the next step is to ensure that your vision or goal is consistent with them, or with what's important to you. If they're simpatico, it will be easier to play full out, reach new goals and blow through barriers that might have seemed daunting before. This doesn't mean that if your values aren't consistent with your vision that you won't succeed. What it does mean is that the experience will feel like it takes more effort, because it isn't feeding your soul's longings, or what's important to you.

As you start moving towards what's important to you, once your personal vision and values are aligned, it's time to go deeper. Why? Because what you think about your chances of success is the key indicator as to whether or not you'll succeed. As the poet C.W. Longenecker wrote, *Life's battles don't always go to the stronger or faster man. But soon or late the man who wins, is the man who thinks he can.*

Because our thoughts create emotions, which lead us to act, whatever you think has a tremendous impact on your chances of success. The most solid vision, even if it is aligned perfectly with your values, is no match for stinkin' thinkin' on your part. Given this fact, it's important to pay attention to the stories you're telling yourself.

The third important step in achieving a goal is replacing negative thoughts - coaches call these thoughts saboteurs - with more positive ones. If you think more negative thoughts than positive ones, count on the fact that you won't believe your new thoughts immediately and that it will be easy to return to your negative thinking. Henry Kimsey-House, one of coaching's pioneers, calls this "jet lag." We experience it when the old, familiar you hasn't yet caught up with the person you are becoming. But like real jet lag, you can get over it and it's important that you do. Just think what would have happened if Churchill believed Hitler was unbeatable?

And the last vital step in winning gold in your own personal Olympics is surrounding yourself with like minded people, maybe a coach, or as in Churchill's case, with trusted allies. This support network will keep you focused, encourage you when you're down and might even help you win a war or two, as Churchill's allies did for him.

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