

A red metal hook with a black handle is shown against a white background. A large, white, semi-transparent letter 'P' is overlaid on the left side of the hook, partially obscuring it. The hook is curved and has a textured surface.

P

HOW TO START WHEN YOU'RE STUCK

Jason and Jodi Womack

Is there something you have always wanted to do?

Maybe it's a career change, a health and fitness transformation or a personal project or side business you want to start, but for some reason—whatever it is—you haven't started yet.

“Not enough time.”

“Not enough resources.”

“Not enough support.”

Statements like these not only limit your potential, but hinder your productivity. In order to find the time, the resources and the support you need, you first need to GET MOMENTUM. You need more than a little motivation. You need true forward movement. Momentum means you're moving, and things are happening. It means you're making progress, and it feels good!

Momentum is as personal in nature as it is different for everyone and for every project. What works for someone else may not work for you. The key is to practice thinking bigger and more creatively to put yourself in a position to move beyond the inertia that is holding you back from your dreams.

Based on our experience coaching thousands of professionals toward achieving their greatest potential, here are the most effective practices we suggest to get momentum...

The Power of Checklists

In early 2009, the World Health Organization published a “19-point Surgical Safety Checklist.” This checklist, now used by providers around the world, recommends surgical teams ask seven questions before the surgery even begins, with the first question being, “Has the patient confirmed his/her identity, site, procedure, and consent?” Talk about covering the basics! According to World Health Organization, staff at a hospital that implemented the checklist claimed a 50% reduction of inpatient deaths following major operations.

Atul Gawande is a surgeon and author of a book titled *The Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right*. In this book, he writes about the importance of building and using checklists and how it has helped a range of tasks in a variety of industries from investment banking to disaster response. Whether your job is as complex as managing financial portfolios or handling medical emergencies, a checklist can help you become a more productive and influential leader.

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What would a checklist look like for you? Some examples might be to research how others have accomplished the goal you are trying to achieve or to make a list of all the reasons why you want to achieve this goal. This is essentially a pros and cons list, without the cons! It is important you focus on success and dream big while creating your checklist. This will keep you motivated and wanting to come back to that checklist as often as possible.

Ask and Answer the Right Questions

We believe that you can change your life by changing the information you let into your life. So if you have a goal in mind, it is important that you are asking and answering the right questions. We call these the Momentum Questions. By committing to this process and digging deep, you will soon discover what momentum not only looks like, but what it feels like.

Here are the questions to ask yourself:

1. What do I want to be known for?
2. Whom can I learn from?
3. What are three specific sub-projects I can achieve?
4. What positive thing is happening that I can acknowledge?
5. What small change will I make next?

Answering these five questions makes it easier to decide what to take on, what to delegate, and what to say no to. Perhaps more importantly, when you lead from this reflective perspective, you demonstrate your commitment to be mission focused and values driven.

Question #1: What Do I Want to Be Known For?

“In order to write about life first you must live it.” —Ernest Hemingway

We all have deep, personal reasons for wanting to work as hard and as diligently as we do. By asking yourself “what do I want to be known for?” you are identifying and aligning yourself with the higher purpose you’re serving.

In 1989, Warren Bennis and Peter Drucker were quoted in Stephen Covey’s book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, saying “Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things.” Defining your legacy is the first step to any significant and lasting change.

Give yourself the gift of your own attention and go deep. By answering this first question, you are clarifying your purpose, your mission and your vision of what you want to be known for. You will be pin-pointing what is important to you personally and professionally.

In 2012, an Australian nurse named Bronnie Ware published her list of the “5 Regrets People Have as They’re Dying.” While a palliative nurse caring for people in their last days, Bronnie shared what she had learned. The first remorse people expressed was: “I wish I would have had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.”

Have the courage to clarify your “why” and connect to your truth. When you have a clear mission, you are now prepared to share it with someone who can help you.

Reflect and Share: Clarify what you want to be known for—your “why”—and put yourself in a position to live your truth as a leader, partner, and community member. You already have a list of projects and goals for your professional AND personal life. Before you add to that list, review what you’ve said yes to and ask, “Does EACH project here lead to what I want to be known for?”

Question #2: Whom Can I Learn From?

“One of the greatest values of mentors is the ability to see ahead what others cannot see and to help them navigate a course to their destination.” —John C. Maxwell

Back in 2013, we were 100 days out from the launch of our online leadership academy, Get Momentum, when we started to set up meetings with our mentors. After each conversation, we debriefed what we had shared, what we learned, what our actions were and how we would follow up with our mentor. We attribute the growth of our company to receiving and applying the great

advice given to us by the people who counseled, encouraged, and mentored us along the way. Because of this, we truly believe in the principle, “We are smarter together.”

Who in your life can you seek out for this same type of encouragement, support, and advice? Who in your life will help you get the momentum you need? Who in your life can you learn from? Find this person (or persons) and schedule time to meet with them to share your dreams, your goals, and what you want to be known for. These discussions will focus on important projects you’re working on, and how they help you achieve your “why.”

A few days before you meet with your new mentor for the first time, write them an email thanking them for meeting with you and giving them a heads up on what you are wanting to cover when you meet.

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Here is a sample email you could send:

Hello Irene,

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me at 10:15am next Thursday. I promise we'll finish by 11:00am as your assistant told me you have another meeting to get to.

The question I'm going to ask for your advice on is [describe what you're working on in detail].

My job is to listen and make sure I walk away with an actionable idea. I'll send a progress report back to you between a week and a month after we meet.

Talk soon,
Jason

The sooner you start meeting with people who care for you and your success, and will offer to help you, the faster you will get unstuck and find the momentum you are seeking. As you gain perspective from your mentor, you will start to find your rhythm and begin to phase into Question #3.

Reflect and Share: You've heard the saying, "It's not only what you know, it's who." Talk with people in your network who will give you their time and ideas; you just have to ask. The best time to build your network is NOW! You may even see if you can provide your expertise to something they are working on. Being a mentor is a great way to learn how to maximize meeting with one.

Question #3: What Are Three Sub-Projects I Can Complete?

"Success is a staircase, not a doorway." —Dottie Walters

As you identify where you are headed, your mind will become flooded with ideas and specific steps to get you there. By breaking these steps up into sub-projects or milestones, you have now created a path of small victories that you will be able to celebrate along the way. These small victories are in fact significant events in the progress or development of a project. Thinking this way puts you in a position of control, making it easier to see how smaller parts of the project come together, ultimately growing closer to your end goal.

Review your calendar for the next 90 days and identify three things you can complete, each about 30 days apart, that will get you closer to achieving what it is you are wanting to complete.

These are now your sub-projects. When solidifying these sub-projects, make sure they all stem from your answer to Momentum Question #1: “What do you want to be known for?” It is important you keep your “why” in mind through each stage of momentum.

In an effort to creating your sub-projects, you may want to consider implementing the 30/30 Rule to your daily routine. The 30/30 Rule: spend 30 undistracted, uninterrupted, completely intentional minutes every day on something that is 30 or more days out. By checking into your schedule 30 days out, you are not only seeing what is coming up, but gathering perspective on your life by acknowledging what you have already said yes to.

Reflect and Share: You never get to the end of a task list and think, “I’m done.” You consistently take on more. Take that thing you have always wanted to do and identify 3 specific milestones you can achieve in the next 90 days. Implement the 30/30 Rule starting tomorrow. Block time to work on a project that is due 30 (or more) days from now.

“It is important you keep your “why” in mind through each stage of momentum.

Question #4: What Positive Things Are Happening that I Can Acknowledge?

“You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose.” —Dr. Seuss

Do you recall the last time you got a compliment? One great compliment can change a terrible week into the most incredible day! As humans, we seek affirmation of a job well done—from our parents, co-workers, spouse, and even children. It feels good to be acknowledged for our accomplishments! This is why we recognize others in regards to their good works. We want them to feel that same sense of pride and accomplishment that we feel when we receive those compliments.

The truth is, acknowledgment actually increases the probability of that person repeating similar behaviors again. If acknowledgment influences success, why is it so hard for many of us to acknowledge our own success? We are so quick to point out what hasn't been done and identify what isn't working instead of focusing on the good, the milestones or the small victories along the way. The progress we notice is what creates and sustains our momentum. Speak positively to yourself through the process and always find ways to speak momentum into other peoples' lives as they seek to reach their own goals.

Start today by looking for opportunities to reward someone who moved their mission forward. When you notice it, reward them for what they did. How? It's easier than you think.

Open a new email to that person and in the subject line write: "thanks" then open the body of email with "I appreciate the way you..."

This acknowledgment will boost their momentum and encourage you to acknowledge your own success as you move forward toward your dreams.

Reflect and Share: Celebrate the small victories along the way. They will continue to create momentum. When you see success, make a big deal about it. Acknowledge someone every day, whether it's a customer, a vendor, or a colleague. Engaging the reward system of the brain is one of the easiest ways to keep the team engaged.

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Question #5: What Small Change Will I Make Next?

“Life is trying things to see if they work.” —Ray Bradbury

Having to make changes does not mean you have become defeated. It means you are becoming more wise! In order to see the big picture and monitor your practices, schedule a monthly review and reflect on the progress you’ve made on the project you are working on. Specifically, look at your routines. The goal here is to look for tasks to delegate or activities to automate.

For example, one of our clients, Susan, found that a single “info-gathering” email process was costing her about 3 hours each week. She started emailing people on Thursday morning, and over the next two days she had to collect, remind, enter, and publish the group’s total data. After monitoring this process, she booked 3 meetings with a technical analyst who created an online system on the company’s internal database system that now automates much of the work she used to do manually.

Each Thursday morning, the system generates an email to everyone in the group. Then, checking the database every 3 hours, it automatically sends reminders ONLY to those who haven’t replied yet. Then, Friday at noon, the system creates a spreadsheet and emails the final data to Susan.

A well-designed plan of action makes it possible to move forward on that thing you have always wanted to do. Small changes can make big differences!

Reflect and Share: Don't let the way you used to do things be the way you always do them. Be open to iterative improvement. Review your workflow and results; you'll surely identify something to do... better. Change is easier if you have someone holding you accountable. Asking someone to support you in making a change means they will help you along the way. Remember, we are better together.

Momentum is defined as “the impetus and driving force gained by the development of a process.” Getting started takes a boost of energy, but long-term engagement is the reward when you use the fundamentals listed in the checklist above. When you answer the five momentum questions, you will make progress faster and more gracefully than if you'd rewritten dozens of to-do lists, downloaded another time management app, or let yet another project get overcome by events.

Clarify and solidify the legacy you want to leave, find your support, define your milestones, acknowledge your progress, and be willing to try new things, and you'll be closer than you ever thought possible to accomplishing that thing you have always wanted to do.

Get momentum and GO! 🏃

Info



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