

CHAPTER 1

THE CHALLENGE

How is it that some people seem to accomplish so much while the vast majority of people never accomplish what they are capable of? If you could fully tap your potential, what might be different for you? How would your life change if each and every day you performed up to your full potential? What would be different six months, three years, and five years down the road if each day you were at your best?

That set of questions, that core concept, is what the past dozen years or so have been about for Mike and me. For years, we have been helping our clients to execute more effectively. We work with individuals, teams, and corporations to make plans to help them achieve their goals. Our quest has been to unlock the secret to helping individuals and organizations perform at their best and live the life they are truly capable of.

“If we did the things we are capable of doing, we would literally astound ourselves.”

—Thomas Edison

I agree with Steven Pressfield, author of *The War of Art*, that most of us have two lives: the lives we live and the lives we are capable of living. It's the latter that intrigues me. It's the life,

I believe, that we all deeply desire. It's the life that we know exists somewhere deep inside us that we wish we could actualize. This life isn't driven by the you who settles or gives in to procrastination and doubt, but by the optimal you, the best you, the confident you, the healthy you. The you who shows up with your best stuff, making things happen, making a difference, living a life of significance.

Being your optimal self sounds great doesn't it? But *how* do you become that other you? What does it take to be your best? That's an interesting question, and as I've had the opportunity to travel and meet thousands of people, I often ask them, "What does it take to be your best, to be great?" As you might imagine, I get a lot of different answers.

In this book we will show you how to increase your current results by four times or more, in a very short period of time. You will learn exactly what it takes to perform at your best every day. We will unwrap the secrets of top performers in a way that allows you to align your thinking and your actions to produce staggering results. You are about to learn that creating greatness in your life or in your organization isn't complicated. In fact, it's quite uncomplicated, but that doesn't mean that it's easy.

The number-one factor holding people back from achieving what they are truly capable of is not a lack of knowledge, intellect, or information. It's not a new strategy or idea. It's not a larger network of connected people. It's not hard work, natural talent, or luck. Of course all these things help, they all play a factor, but they are not the factors that make the difference.

You've no doubt heard the saying *knowledge is power*. I disagree. Knowledge is only powerful if you use it, if you act on it. People spend lifetimes acquiring knowledge, but to what purpose? Knowledge alone benefits no one unless the person acquiring it does something with it. And great ideas are worthless unless

they are implemented. The marketplace only rewards those ideas that get implemented. You can be smart and have access to lots of information and great ideas; you can be well connected, work hard, and have lots of natural talent, but in the end, you have to execute. Execution is the single greatest market differentiator. Great companies and successful individuals execute better than their competition. The barrier standing between you and the life you are capable of living is a lack of consistent execution. Effective execution will set you free. It is *the* path to accomplish the things you desire.

Think about the areas in your life where you've fallen short, accomplished less than you desire, or less than you feel you're capable of. In each of those scenarios, if you look critically, the breakdown is most often in the execution. Take for instance a new idea that someone else has used to create success. How often does that idea fail when a different person tries it?

One of our clients is a large insurance company with more than 2,000 agents. Within the company there is one agent who is a perennial top producer year-in and year-out. As you might expect, over the years, other agents have asked him if he would share his approach with them. Without hesitation the top producer would take time out from his busy schedule to walk them through exactly what he did to create his success. Do you know how many people replicated his success? You guessed it, zero. He now refuses to share his secret because no one follows through with what he teaches them.

Sixty-five percent of Americans are overweight or obese. Do you think there is some secret to losing weight and getting fit? The diet and fitness industry is a \$60 billion industry. Each year new books are published on diet and exercise. When I searched "diet books" on the Internet my search came back with 45,915 results. Almost 46,000 books; some with familiar titles like *The Atkins Diet*, or *South Beach Diet*, some with less familiar titles

like *Run Fat Bltch Run*. Yet Americans continue to be overweight and out of shape. Most people know how to get back in shape—eat better, exercise more—they just don’t do it. It’s not a *knowledge* problem; it’s an *execution* problem.

Our experience has shown that most people have the capacity to double or triple their income just by consistently applying what they already know. Despite this, people continue to chase new ideas thinking that the next idea is the one that will magically make it all better.

Ann Laufman is a great example of the benefits of executing the right idea. Ann is a financial advisor with Mass Mutual in Houston. Ann had always done well and by any measure was successful, yet she felt like she was capable of more but was not quite sure how to get there. When her managing partner introduced The 12 Week Year to the agency, Ann got involved. In the end, Ann experienced a 400 percent increase in production and became the first female associate of the year in the 103-year history of Mass Mutual Houston.

What is interesting about this is that Ann didn’t start to work with more affluent clients, write bigger cases, or expand her target market—all things that most advisors would pursue to increase their production. Instead, Ann focused on improving her execution by doing what she had already been doing, just doing it more steadily. By consistently executing the critical few tasks and strategies that most supported her success, she was able to create a huge increase—and all of this without working longer hours.

Ann’s situation is not unique. We have thousands of examples where individuals and entire organizations have experienced amazing results by simply learning to execute.

“It’s not what you know; it’s not even who you know; it’s what you implement that counts.”

In *The 12 Week Year*, we will show you how to perform at your best and achieve the things in life that matter most to you through effective execution. Most of the stuff that we'll discuss, you already know, but as I mentioned earlier, there is a big difference between knowing and doing. We will teach you how to consistently take action on the things that will shape your success.

The concepts in this book have been developed and proven in the field through our ongoing execution work with clients. We've included only what works, and have eliminated the rest. The final product is a concise but powerful book that delivers. While we do hope the book is thought-provoking, it's more important to us that it inspires you to action.

We have written *The 12 Week Year* to close the execution gap. It is written in a way that allows you to understand the fundamental concepts of execution and actually apply them right away.

The book is split into two parts. Part I helps you understand the process to achieve your most valuable goals in only weeks. Part II is all about making your goals happen. It gives you the specific tools and tips needed to support the ideas in Part I of the book.

Our 12 week execution system is both flexible and scalable. The concepts apply equally well for individuals as well as groups, both personally and professionally. We have had entire organizations as well as individuals apply the 12 Week Year with great success.

While the book is concise, the concepts it contains are powerful. It is possible for you to dramatically improve your results by applying them. We know this to be true because of the thousands of responses from the readers of our first edition.

In this book, we will show you how to substantially increase your current results, lower your stress, build your confidence,

and feel better about yourself. Not by working harder, but by focusing on the activities that matter most, maintaining a sense of urgency to get those things done, and shedding the low-value activity that keeps you stuck.

Get ready: You are about to experience the 12 Week Year!

—Brian P. Moran and Michael Lennington