

# **PRACTICE READY WORKSHOP**

## **A Guide to Outlining Your 12-Week Plan**

# PRACTICE READY

During this workshop you'll learn how to create a Professional Development Plan (PDP) that identifies your top two professional development goals over a 90-day period. Your plan is the roadmap you'll use to implement the skills and concepts we discuss that will help you become “practice ready.”

The purpose of the plan is to keep you laser focused on your goals *and* to outline the action steps you need to take — on a daily and weekly basis — to make incremental progress toward achieving the goals.

This guide walks you through the 3 steps in the goal outlining process:

- Step 1: Identify your “Why”
- Step 2: Identify 2 development goals
- Step 3: Identify action steps and timeline

Use the guide to help you complete the 12-Week Goal Template, and review the Keys to Success at the end for some tips on how to approach executing your plan.

## **Step 1: Identify Your “Why”**

The first step — identifying your *Why* — is an integral part of identifying your goals in Step 2.

If we really want to become better and make significant changes, then working toward the goals we identify will likely cause us to become a bit uncomfortable. That's because goals and actions that are difficult to achieve and make us feel uncomfortable are generally the ones that cause us to make the most progress.

As a result, when we step outside of our comfort zone and start to tackle difficult tasks, we need to have a vision and reason for working toward our goal — a “Why” — that outweighs the temporary feeling of being uncomfortable that we know we'll experience.

In other words, we have to have a clear picture of the benefit or change in circumstances we want that will come from achieving the goal, and we need to always keep it top of mind.

So it's important at the outset to identify your underlying motivation so that you can use it to build a clear and concise goal.

## **Step 2: Identify 2 Development Goals**

The second step is to identify two goals that you want to achieve during the 12 weeks. Here are some things to consider:

### Choosing Goals

Identify goals that are achievable but that will require you to push yourself to achieve it—something that may make you a bit uncomfortable, require you to change a routine for the better, or push through some mental barriers. In other words, the goal must be achievable but should require you to “stretch” slightly past your current limits or ability.

Here are a few development categories for you to consider:

- legal and practice skills
- network building
- securing employment / externship
- productivity and organization
- wellness

### Writing Your Goals

A well-written goal is one that's specific, measurable, action-based, and time-bound. For example, note how changing the language of this goal makes it specific and measurable:

- “Increase the amount of time I spend studying”
- “Devote 15 hours per week to uninterrupted study time, specifically outlining and preparing for class”

And the difference between these:

- “Find a job”

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- *“Devote 5 hours per week to submitting job applications to Bay Area immigration firms and to networking with potential employers”*

Clearly written goals make it easier to identify and outline action steps, track your progress, and measure whether you’ve succeeded at the end of the 12 weeks. You should be able to capture and describe the goal in 1-2 sentences.

### 12-Week Goals

Why are we planning for 12-weeks instead of an entire year? Although mid- and long-term planning is important, having a 12-week plan forces you to focus on the most important daily and weekly actions that will move you closer to your goals. It’s difficult to break out big goals into achievable chunks and map out accurate action steps if we view our goals on too large of a scale. Mapping out our development in 12-week periods allows us to focus on the micro-changes we need to make, which is where the real improvement takes place.

### **Step 3: Outline Action Steps + Timeline**

Standing alone, a goal is not worth much unless it’s connected to specific action steps that will move you closer toward achieving the goal.

The action steps in your plan should be the highest priority daily and weekly actions you can take to make incremental progress toward your goal. Like your goal, your action steps should be specific, measurable, and something you can realistically accomplish in the time frame you’ve identified. Some of the actions you will take on a daily basis, others are weekly actions, and others may only occur for a few weeks at a time.

Focus on outlining 3-4 action steps at the most. You can outline more than 4 action steps if you want, as long as adding these additional steps doesn’t make your plan complicated and overwhelming. Review the **Keys to Success** below for tips on how often you should review your action steps.

### **Keys to Success**

Here are a few important tips to help you create your plan and execute your action steps.

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- **Keep your plan simple.** One of the main reasons we abandon plans is that we make them too complicated or inaccessible—and then they become overwhelming, we resent having to follow them or get discouraged, and end up abandoning them altogether. Don't overthink your goals or make them too complicated. We can make incredible strides and achieve big goals by repeatedly executing a few simple actions over a 12-week period. Note that *simple* is not the same thing as *easy*—your plan should require you to stretch a bit past your current comfort level.
- **Focus on consistency, not perfection.** Don't enter the 12 weeks focused on perfection. There may be weeks when you won't hit your goal, or you may need to adjust your plan along the way to account for the unexpected. That's fine and to be expected — as long as you commit to being accountable and excuse-free. If you miss a few action steps one week, just acknowledge it and commit to getting right back at it the very next week. Don't let imperfection cause you to slip back into old habits.
- **Review your plan at least weekly.** You must review your plan at least once a week. Why? Reviewing your plan weekly (or preferably, daily) is important because it keeps your daily/weekly action steps, your ultimate goals, and your Why top of mind. Take 15-20 minutes Sunday night or first thing Monday morning and, using your calendar, identify how you're going to execute on your action steps for that week. Also consider starting your day by taking 5 minutes every morning (as part of the "open up" technique you will learn) to map out your day with your action steps in mind.

Before you decide that this level of planning and preparation isn't necessary ("I already know what I've got to do in my head, I don't need to look at this every morning"), consider this: studies have shown that if you take time to plan before starting a difficult task, you can reduce the overall time required to complete the task by as much as 20 percent. Just a few short minutes of focused planning can go a long way.

- **Focus on small wins.** One the keys to making significant progress over a 12-week period is focusing on small, consistent wins. Measured on a

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daily basis, the difference between achieving our big goals and keeping the status quo is actually *razor thin*. For example, studying for 20 more minutes a day, sending one or two more applications to potential employers, spending 20 minutes walking or taking a study break, or taking 10 minutes to send an email to someone in your network — these are the kinds of small commitments that compound into big results.

If we're focused on racking up small wins on a daily and weekly basis, over time those small wins are what turn into the overall effort we need to reach our big goals.