

Lessons From the Professionally Ambitious: Common Themes Among the Industry's Most Dedicated Leaders

By Thomas Passalacqua

“Thomas, that is a really good question...”

Once I hear those words, I can't help but smile knowing that things are going well, and we are making great progress. As an executive coach who specializes in helping professionals better reach their goals, this phrase embodies a powerful moment where those I work with are on the verge of achieving a significant breakthrough in the challenges that are holding back their success. It's a sacred moment where I am guiding them through layers of exploration to overcome a stubborn sticking point, and they are just reaching their capacity to enable a substantial discovery; this is when true growth really happens.

With just the right amount of time and applying a laser-focused process, usually what follows is another profound expression, even more satisfying to hear, as a wave of reassurance washes over them: “Wow, I can't believe this!” The relinquishment of a long-established obstacle and landing a relevant and effective solution.

Throughout my programs, I have the honor to work with some of the industry's most passionate, brightest, and ambitious individuals who are consistently striving to grow and reach a higher level of performance and achievement. It is natural for me then

to observe that there are some similar challenges that we all may experience, as well as similar strategies that can help one best navigate through them.

We all may feel that we are on a unique journey, and our struggles are our own to endure. And while yes, we all are experiencing the world in a particular lens, many of these events are rather ubiquitous and common themes continue to arise. Although we as individuals may respond differently to them, generally we can navigate them in a similar manner to overcome the challenge or manifest the desired change.

Here are a few of those challenges and solutions that our fellow colleagues navigate which may be quite relevant and familiar to many of you.

GAINING CLARITY ON ACHIEVING OUR GOALS.

A common topic that often comes up for a variety of ambitious professionals is a general sense of unclarity on how to achieve a specific goal or how to accomplish a task. The drive and purpose are there, but the logistics on how to execute it are not yet established.

What specific actions do you need to take that will get you closer to your goal with the least amount of resistance and the highest likelihood of being successful?

I often witness where one wants to get to a certain endpoint but isn't yet confident or clear about how to get there.

Throughout the process, we discover relevant resources one can use to close this knowledge gap:

- Identifying the most important information needed to start to achieve that goal
- Pair a specific action and timeline that enables execution
- Ensuring that accountability measures are in place

Before many of these action items are even established, getting laser-focused on exactly what the goal is in the first place is vital. Identifying the true goal and envisioning precisely what you want to achieve is half of the workload needed to accomplish that very goal. The rest is just relevant execution and tracking progress.

Challenge yourself to identify the true sticking points that may be giving you resistance and strategize on how to best overcome them. How can you then close your knowledge gap when you don't have anyone or any means to supply you with the precise knowledge that you need? You'll need to create systems and an approach to source that information organically and then analyze the process to determine if you are on the right track.

NAVIGATING DOUBT AND IMPOSTER FEELINGS.

One of the most frequently identified topics when speaking with high performers are the feelings of doubt and inadequacy. Within a wide range of various roles and positions, nearly everyone, at some point, expresses difficulty truly believing in themselves or expresses hesitation when making decisions or plans for their achievements. Many of these individuals openly confess they have these doubts, and the solution to overcome them generally is beyond their vision. However, we can usually lessen these doubts with the following guided process:

1. We aim to identify precisely what that doubt is
2. Gain proof from your past experiences that you are already competent and reassure you that you are in fact capable
3. Being as objective as possible without feeling the need to default back into a familiar emotional safety zone

We often experience being a victim of our emotions and this clouds our objective vision to best perform and execute our tasks; we usually see that it's ourselves standing in our own way.



So, how do we break free of that challenge? We get specific, and we get active. We work to objectively identify what precisely is affecting us and causing that doubt. Then we establish realistic actions we can easily take that will help us move forward. Finally, recognize what is working and repeat the process.

Overcoming imposter feelings becomes an operating system, not a battle of emotions. We'll work to identify effective tasks, strategies for completing them, tracking the results, and neutrally recognizing that the results were due to those specific actions. Just by simply realizing that the more you separate yourself from emotional reactions and act more objectively empowers you to make progress. Next time you question your abilities, ask yourself "Is this true or just my emotions getting the best of me?"

MANAGING OVERWHELM.

In this modern age, with all of our responsibilities, stress, and ambitions paired with the unique time that the world is in, it is no wonder nearly all of us can say we're overwhelmed. An effective method for cutting through this noise is to keep in mind the very priorities you have at the moment and how your near-term actions and activities support your long-term goals. Managing overwhelm is a matter of constant prioritization, not a challenge to push yourself to the brink and see how long you can endure discomfort. Here are some common habits that I hear could help many of us:

- Aligning your internal drive and passions with the purpose of your work
- Consistency beats intensity: needing grit to continue to drive forward even though you may be unclear on where you're going
- Having tenacity and resilience to continue to press on will help break through moments of uncertainty

So, what can one do if they find themselves feeling overwhelmed, stressed, doubting their abilities, or just too busy to even start thinking of strategies? Generally, one key ingredient that many of us forget to incorporate when we operate at such high capacities, would be intentional attention. It's taking focused time to think

and create space to identify and work through what is preventing you from operating more efficiently. Homing in on these specific issues and sourcing effective solutions to overcome those very problems will enable compounding success. Even after just a few minutes of deliberate navigating, one usually sources a variety of solutions or a significant method to better achieve their goal.

Another familiar solution that many people often mention helps them is having community or an advocate to gain a different perspective. Having someone to be a sounding board, someone to console you, someone to challenge your process and share another view can provide so much more clarity and reassurance than you ever can get on your own. Who can you identify that you could speak with and would be willing to listen and offer support?

My approach as an executive coach focuses on having one digging deeper and internally reflecting to uncover more layers of oneself. The goal is to explore solutions they haven't yet considered. It's a precise process, and I am honored to enable the growth and success of those I work with.

These common experiences are just some of the most prevalent challenges that many of us in this industry are facing. Perhaps the accompanying solutions are as applicable to those who can relate to these struggles. My mission is to empower the success of others, and I hope some of these examples can provide you with reassurance that there are effective strategies to better achieve our goals.



Thomas Passalacqua is a certified Executive Coach and specializes in customized professional & leadership development. With a master's degree in education, Thomas started his career as a founding teacher in New York City and then transitioned into dental sales where he was an award-winning consultant who trained and mentored other sales professionals. Currently, Thomas is the director of business development for a growing group practice in the northeast. In his executive coaching and training platform, Ascend Professional Pathways LLC, he works with a variety of industry professionals to better navigate their challenges, maximize their success, and empower them to best reach their goals.



LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/thomaspassalacqua/>

Website:

<https://ascendpropathways.com/>