

Turning Passion into Purpose: Helping Others Reach Their Goals



Thomas Passalacqua

Copyright © 2026 Thomas Passalacqua

Ascend Professional Pathways LLC

Turning Passion into Purpose: Helping Others Reach Their Goals

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, transmitted or used in any manner without the prior written permission of the copyright owner, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review and certain other non-commercial uses permitted by copyright law.

Disclaimer: The author makes no guarantees to the results you'll achieve from reading this e-book. The reader is solely responsible for creating and implementing his/her own physical, mental and emotional well-being, decisions, choices, actions and results arising out of or resulting from reading this e-book. As such, the reader agrees that the author is not and will not be liable or responsible for any actions or inaction, or for any direct or indirect result of any services provided by the author.



To all of those who are passionate and strive to be more but feel less than, know that you are more capable than you've ever imagined. Everything you ever need is already within you. You just need to believe it.

Take action.

“Working with Thomas has been an absolute game-changer. He has an incredible ability to help me gain clarity on how to implement my vision — not just dream about it. What I appreciate most is the space he creates for me to discover my own answers while skillfully guiding the conversation in a way that always brings out new insight. Thomas doesn’t just tell you what to do; he helps you think differently. I leave every session feeling grounded, focused, and more confident in the direction I’m leading my business.”

“Tom is incredibly approachable and that's felt quickly through his coaching. He has a knack for recognizing patterns and asking probing questions that quickly get to the heart of things to help you move forward.”

“Thomas is a phenomenal coach and leader, who brings a creative and thoughtful approach to leadership development, entrepreneurship and the patient experience. He’s helped me create a clear path for myself and my business and he’s an excellent public speaker!”

“Working with Thomas was a game-changer. His guidance has been truly transformative for me. From our very first session, he created a safe and open environment where I felt comfortable discussing my goals and challenges. Instead of just telling me what to do, he asked powerful questions that helped me discover my own strengths and a clear path forward. His support has been invaluable, not just in achieving my specific goals, but in fundamentally changing the way I approach challenges. I’ve gained so much more confidence and clarity, and I’m deeply grateful for his expertise and genuine care.”

“Working with Thomas has been a powerful experience while we were both training to become coaches. He holds space with presence, asks the right questions, and challenges with care. Our sessions helped me gain clarity and take meaningful action. I’m grateful for his guidance and trust in the process.”

“The coaching that I have received from Thomas has been incredibly helpful! From the beginning of our coaching relationship, we connected easily, and his ability to ask great questions has consistently pushed me to think more deeply about the challenges at hand. His insightful coaching style creates an environment that fosters real growth and strategic thinking. He has helped me to navigate difficult conversations and achieve the outcomes I was looking for. I highly recommend him!!”

“I’ve had the pleasure of working alongside Thomas and can personally vouch that he’s the real deal. Thomas brings a wealth of expertise to the coaching world and keeps client centricity at the forefront. With Thomas, you will work with someone who is present, genuine, highly in-tune, and professional. If you’re looking for a trusted thought partner, Thomas is one of the best.”

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	6
Part 1 The Journey.....	8
Chapter 1 Thomas's Story.....	9
Chapter 2 Navigating Doubt.....	12
Chapter 3 My Coaching Philosophy.....	17
Chapter 4 Client Success Stories.....	22
Part 2 Supportive Articles.....	30
Chapter 5 Lessons from the Professionally Ambitious.....	31
Chapter 6 Where Does Confidence Come From?.....	35
Chapter 7 Thoughts on Imposter Syndrome.....	37
Chapter 8 Imposter Feelings Part 2.....	40
Chapter 9 Choose Your Distractions.....	43
Chapter 10 Thinking About Time & Overwhelm.....	46
Chapter 11 Balancing Input & Output.....	50
Part 3 Resources.....	54
Chapter 12 Professional Realignment.....	55
Chapter 13 Career Accelerator.....	57
Chapter 14 Professional Mission Statement.....	59
Chapter 15 Navigating Imposter Feelings.....	61
Chapter 16 Communicating as a Leader.....	63
Conclusion.....	65
About the Author.....	66

Introduction

To my closest friends and colleagues,

I am honored and grateful for your time and attention in reading this e-book. To be able to share my story and experiences with you means the world to me and I appreciate this opportunity to leave an impression on you. This work is a culmination of many months of my efforts and intentions.

At the time of writing this, I started on this endeavor just about a year ago. Although the actual execution of the actions that took place were only over the last 12 months, my passions and purpose behind the efforts started early in my life and led me to where I am today. As I reflect on my progress and where I was mentally and emotionally prior to pursuing this ambition, I am most proud of the personal development and emotional growth I was able to achieve. As many of us experience, we generally stand in our own way and delay our ability to pursue what is truly meaningful. Whether it is anxiety, doubt, fear, or uncertainty, there are many factors that can thrive within us that limit our potential.

I always had a deep sense of uniqueness and that I had more to offer in my life, it just took a long time for me to break through the self-limiting barriers that I constructed in front of myself. As you'll learn from my stories, that version of myself is not as relevant and influential as it once was. I am no longer spending that valuable energy on keeping myself bogged down but rather spending it on lifting others up. I realized that I myself am not the center of my purpose, it is those around me who are the focus. Being able to finally feel that I found my calling and true purpose in my professional life is absolutely liberating. I struggled for many years trying to align my passions and ambitions and ironically only learned that it was myself who was preventing me from doing so.

Being aligned within one's interests, skills, and values and pursuing an endeavor that resonates with who you are as a unique individual, is finding real meaning and is truly fulfilling one's potential. This is a vastly different experience than tolerating a life of mediocrity just because it's organized and dictated by external influences other than your own. The only real limits that are placed on us are the ones we dream up and establish for ourselves. We don't have to accept the status quo just because it is there. We are allowed, and able, to rise higher.

This is my journey of how I broke through a debilitating limiting mindset and found true purpose in helping others do the same. This e-book includes not only my experiences but resources and content which are the foundation of my executive coaching methodology and programs. You'll find samples of tools and frameworks, thoughtful articles, and client successes.

In the following chapters, you'll read some of the impactful successes that many of my clients experienced while they engaged in our coaching sessions and programs

together. Most of these individuals shared both similar challenges as well as the strategies to overcome them. I am excited to be able to showcase them in later chapters. Many of the ambitious professionals who engage in coaching are eager to improve and explore methods of getting closer to their goals. Part of a successful coaching engagement is the willingness to put in the effort and answer provoking questions and to challenge one's perspective. Those who I have worked with are all committed and open to the process. They value self-improvement and understand that in order to grow they need to push their comfort level and consider options beyond their current capacity.

A collection of thoughtful articles is also included within this e-book. These pieces are a collaboration of ideas and reflections on popular topics that I often contemplate, usually while I am walking my dog around my neighborhood. I believe they offer a unique perspective on some of the common dynamics within our professional and personal lives. It is my hope that they spark additional thoughts and viewpoints for readers to consider that may be beyond their usual position or stance.

The samples of coaching frameworks and tools that I also included are a result of many ideas, professional experience, and the coaching education that I have obtained over the years. These thought-provoking exercises are designed to be a self-guided and reflective process where new insights are discovered. One can then take their responses and use them during a coaching session for further exploration or simply pause and consider what arises when answering them. These sample worksheets are just an introduction to more robust and comprehensive programs that I offer where we dive much deeper into these themes for focused and specific development that aim for meaningful change.

I sincerely hope that this resource is valuable and helpful for anyone taking the time to read through it. Every sentiment was deliberately thought out, and every word was typed with authenticity, all with the intention of helping others to be the best versions of themselves. I have spent a significant amount of time and energy crafting every aspect of *Ascend Professional Pathways* simply because it is a calling that is beyond me as an individual and a mission that I must manifest. I truly believe that we all have the ability to positively impact our communities and the world for the better if we decide to do so. I also believe that in order to influence others, we must start with ourselves. Thank you for being a part of my journey and promoting meaningful development for those seeking growth and improvement so they can better impact their own success and the success of those around them.

To learn more about any of the programs, tools, or resources throughout this e-book, please visit my website:

[Professional development for sales, leaders, and executives. | Ascend Professional Pathways](https://ascendpropathways.com/)

<https://ascendpropathways.com/>

Part 1

The Journey

Chapter 1

Thomas's Story

The Start...

My passion for helping and supporting others stems way back to when I was young. I remember growing up with my parents being avid exercisers and fitness enthusiasts. I myself started exercising while still in grade school and have fond memories of both my parents teaching me how to lift weights and use proper form with the small gym setup we had in our basement. I found it a natural transition, once I joined a public gym as a freshman in high school, to help my friends as I had a few years of experience already. This continued throughout high school where I would often help classmates with fitness and nutrition advice. I always appreciated being asked to guide them to improve their performance and I really embraced enabling growth for those passionate to get results.

Naturally gravitating towards physical performance and the sciences, I became interested in being a teacher and started my college journey. This led me to pursue a master's in education, and I taught for several years throughout New York City. I had wonderful opportunities to teach in several different schools and in various settings. I created school-wide programs and initiatives and designed and established curriculums for health and physical education. I was even a founding faculty member of a three new start-up schools. This is where I developed strong organizational and engagement skills and the ability to embolden the success of the learner. My passion for supporting others' growth was further fueled as I refined these core principles and was able to provide consistent and predictable results.

The second step...

After several years, I transitioned out of education and into direct sales for a leading healthcare manufacturing company where I challenged myself to succeed in a vastly different field and industry. Applying the same guiding principles that I crafted as a teacher, I built strong relationships, became a valuable resource, and was relentlessly consistent in my role as a sales representative. Learning a completely new world of content and skills, I excelled in this role and became a top sales rep earning President's Club status numerous times in various categories. My passion for helping others succeed came to the forefront again as I started to train and mentor other sales reps and even present during national sales meetings and host web training for the company. I found that my education background paired with my sales experience was a perfect environment to help enable other sales professionals to better improve their skills.

I again found myself giving advice and helping those around me to better succeed in their roles. I really appreciated the knowledge and skills I had acquired during my years as a sales rep and started to truly feel the positive effects of being able to help someone who

desired improvement. During these years I started to seek out more opportunities to provide guidance for my colleagues and found that many were seeking me out as well! It's when I am a part of someone's own success and improvement is where I felt a true sense of purpose. It is very rewarding to know that someone's accomplishments were a direct result of my influence, and I did not take that responsibility for granted. I respected and honored that privilege and always gave my fullest intention to provide help to the very best of my ability. That time in my career was a pivotal moment and was the impetus for where I am today as well as being the foundation of many of my training programs I deliver now.

The third phase...

The next chapter for myself was in a business development role for mergers & acquisitions in a growing healthcare management company. I had built a wonderful network in the industry and since I had strong sales and communication skills, this transition seemed like a natural progression. This is where I had to expand my capacity to engage with successful practice owners and build trusting relationships and provide meaningful solutions. I was also leading the direct sales and marketing efforts for the team and had to apply strategies and be nimble to best support potential partners. Again, the foundational principles that I relied upon in the past as a teacher and sales professional allowed me to be successful and contributed to building one of the most recognizable multi-million-dollar management companies in the industry.

Today...

Still feeling the passion to help others, I embarked on the journey to getting certified as an executive coach and created this leadership development business. My goal was to bring all my experience, talents, and interests together to best support other sales professionals, business owners, and company executives. I am leaning into that internal drive to teach and support fellow professionals; knowing that I have so much more to offer the world as it is my purpose to help those around me to succeed in their own journeys.

The one constant over the course of my career was the drive to help others to improve. It was this relentless calling that inspired me to pursue executive coaching and create [Ascend Professional Pathways, LLC](#) where I now focus on enabling and empowering ambitious professionals to fulfill their potential, accomplish their ambitions, and gain clarity on how they can reach the next level in their business or career.

My past experiences allowed me to engage with and understand those who I worked with and provide relevant value. I honed the skills of effective communication, intense active listening, and developed trusting connections. It is always my intention to promote the success of others, and this aligned well with how the executive coaching process supports one's development. I could no longer ignore that internal calling that reminded me that I am meant for more. I have a wonderful network of like-minded professionals and so many of us could benefit from more support.

When I am not crafting ways to elevate others, you can find me in the gym, walking my dog around town, playing guitar, or wrestling with my kids. I will mention, however, that my journey was not always clear and confident. I had many trepidations along the way, and I will go into detail about my internal struggles within the following chapters.

It is my sincere hope that I can help inspire and empower you to know that every one of us is capable of improving our capacity for success. I am committed to supporting you in finding success in your own missions and realizing that you too can achieve the internal ambitions that drive you in your professional and personal lives.

Chapter 2

Navigating Doubt

I am honored and very much appreciate this opportunity to be able to tell you about my journey of aligning my passions to help people around me to be the best versions of themselves. This collection of thoughts and experiences reassures me that I am on the right path and where I am meant to be. As I reflect on the past months of what led me to where I am today, I appreciate the journey I took and the lessons I learned. Often times, the lessons were earned the hard way where I had to endure the discomfort of personal development and growth out of sheer necessity. It is through this lens that I am now helping others navigate similar paths and I have relevant experience that can improve the effectiveness of our work together.

As many of us strive to reach new levels in our professions, businesses, and careers, we often hesitate because of feeling inadequate, afraid, or uncertain. We feel stuck by the endless reasons we tell ourselves that we cannot or should not pursue a meaningful endeavor, but this only feeds those negative emotions and keeps us only dreaming. Many of the professionals that I work with are familiar with feelings of self-doubt, fear, and uncertainty. Sometimes, these emotions can be so severe that they debilitate one's progress in achieving their goals because they skew one's perception of their capacity for performance.

I struggled with insecurity for years until I realized it wasn't serving me any good, but I was resistant to the idea that I could improve and overcome that negative mindset. Every time I felt that I wanted to pursue a meaningful idea or endeavor, another version of me would speak up and convince me that it wasn't the right time, or I didn't have any experience, or a hundred other reasons. I remember two moments along my journey that are strong examples of this:

Towards the later years of being a teacher, I wanted to try a new career and often dreamt of what I would be interested in doing and what I should pursue. I debated myself for a long time where on one hand I had a lot of interests and researched possible opportunities, and on the other, would instantly give myself an excuse or reason that I couldn't be successful if I did transition. I ended up at a point where I remember declaring that all I ever did was being a teacher so I have no experience in anything else, thus I cannot do anything else! This, of course, was untrue. However, at the time that inner version of me was so influential that I believed it. But that only lasted for so long until I felt so uncomfortable I had to truly question if that declaration was valid. After starting to speak with other people about my interest in changing careers, many reassured me that I was in fact capable of many new roles and my skills would actually be an advantage, I myself just didn't believe it yet. Nonetheless, I did end up within a new opportunity and found that I did

quite well! That internal voice that was preventing me from trying turned out to be completely wrong!

The second experience was actually quite similar. After many years of succeeding in this new role, I again found myself striving for more. I wanted to consider another career path, but familiar doubts started to arise once again. I remember being frustrated that I experienced the same self-sabotaging mindset as I had just a few years earlier. The difference this time was that my inner voice wasn't able to influence me for as long. I still felt that I wasn't experienced enough but the overall timeline of getting past that negativity was a bit shorter and less severe. Perhaps since I had already successfully changed careers and proven to myself that I could not only survive but actually excel, I had some familiarity and was able to look at the situation with a bit more logic and less raw emotion.

In reflecting on these pivotal moments, I often question where did those fears and doubts originate? Why was I so convinced that I couldn't succeed? Why was this negative version of myself so influential and strong? I'm sure there are many methods and philosophies of diving into one's past that can help uncover why things are the way they are, however, I was more intrigued with the future and how to get where I wanted to go. Once I discovered executive coaching, I learned that identifying future action is a foundational principle of the process, but I had one more significant lesson to learn prior to that chapter. There was a third experience that I had to live through in order to fully break free of the internal doubts. The only problem this time around was that the inner voice was louder and stronger than ever.

During my time in my third professional position, I started to realize that I still haven't found my true path, my calling. There was always a small piece of me that strived to fulfill my potential, even though I had no idea what that potential was, only that there was an emptiness that yearned to be filled. At the time, I had the idea of perhaps I needed to further pursue the role I was in. I figured since I was fortunate enough to have the position I had, I should strive to follow that path and consider more advanced opportunities. The concern, however, was that this role never felt "right" or aligned with my true interests. I dismissed the sentiment that we should pursue something meaningful in our professional lives and decided to feel lucky that I had the role I was in and take advantage of this experience. The concern with this mindset was that it felt unnatural, it never sat well with me that I forced myself to commit to a career that didn't fulfill me and didn't provide much satisfaction. I ignored that instinct and continued to push through the indigestion of researching how to further imbed myself in this field until I hit a quite severe breaking point.

I remember it so vividly- one late night standing in front of my computer, obsessing over job searches and required education & skill experiences, going down dozens of rabbit holes of future scenarios which all felt wrong. Finally jumping back and literally yelling "What am I doing?! I am looking for something that I don't even want! I am forcing myself to consider something I have no interest in! Why am I doing this to myself?!"

The physical reaction in that moment was so powerful, my chest was pounding, breathing was heavy, and the guilt in the center of my stomach was enormous. In the same moment, I responded by saying to myself “I am meant for so much more, I have so much more to offer this world, why can’t I figure myself out?” And it was then that I truly realized that the only person who ever stood in my way of pursuing true meaning and purpose was myself, only this time I had enough. If I was going to give an authentic and whole-hearted attempt to fulfill my potential with an ambition that aligned deeply with my values and purpose, I had to change my approach.

Enter the Objective Mindset:

What came out of this transformational moment was that I had to re-establish my operating system of how I went about this new chapter. Reflecting back on the years prior, I realized that the emotional component caused many of the problems. I decided to test a theory that if I went about a new endeavor, I had to separate myself from my emotions and focus on tangible and objective aspects. No longer would I make decisions and react based on how I felt, I had to have data and reliable information. This way, I could control as many parts of the system as possible and prove what worked and what didn’t. I no longer had to hope things would work in my favor; I simply identified actions that would support the objective and track the results.

What resulted from this experience were many systems and processes that I now use in my coaching and developmental engagements. I came to realize that the creative process is violent in nature, and significant growth generally doesn’t occur without disruption. I am still unsure of why we have these fears, doubts, and self-limiting behaviors. Perhaps it’s a form of security and protection from risk, but now taking risk involves much more tangible information, not just assumptions. I would love to say that the inner voice of doubt has been eradicated, but it’s still there, albeit a fraction of its former self. The voice just doesn’t have nearly the influence that it once had. I now believe that I discovered a systematic approach to objectively overcoming these internal struggles. If I simply identify the actions and behaviors that allowed me to break free from that debilitating mindset, I have a repeatable process that is again, based on objectives, not emotions.

I was able to step beyond my comfort zone and create an objective system to separate myself from the negative emotions that had been in control for so long. I had such a strong internal pull that I could no longer ignore- that I am meant for so much more and I wanted to help other people to be successful. I struggled for years ignoring this calling and forced myself to focus on a career path that did not resonate with me until I had a breaking point. I realized that I wasn’t going to find true meaning and resonance in my professional life unless I created it myself. Still afflicted with self-doubt, I crafted a structure to help me one step at a time to make forward progress. Over time, the limiting beliefs and doubts had faded in their impact and eventually became irrelevant. This process is now the foundation of my executive coaching programs and how I help other ambitious professionals to get out of their own way and find clarity to reach their goals.

Here are the key discoveries I learned throughout my journey:

- In my experience with self-doubt, I realized that I am the only person preventing myself from personal and professional growth and only delayed breaking free of that debilitating and limiting behavior.
- Establishing an objective mindset and focusing only on beneficial actions and emotions will empower one to break through assumed limitations and gain momentum towards accomplishments we once thought were unobtainable.
- Acknowledging that the resources we often desperately seek are usually within us, we just need to uncover them by removing our self-inflicted barriers.
- As ambitious professionals who are continuously pushing to grow beyond our current capacity and comfort zone, we are vulnerable to doubts, stress, and uncertainty.
- Many of us face common internal struggles: feeling stuck regardless of having relentless drive, held back by doubts or fears, having vision but not knowing how to start, or establishing limiting beliefs that prevent us from even trying in the first place.

What was born out of my past experiences and new knowledge of executive coaching is a system I call the ***Ascend Clarity Process***. We'll learn more about this system in the following chapter as it encompasses how I broke free of severe self-doubt and created a structure to empower ourselves to taking action on aligning our strengths to achieve our goals.

When you hear someone speak of imposter syndrome, what comes to mind? How would you define imposter feelings? The ***Ascend Clarity Process*** aims to empower individuals to overcome the deleterious effect that doubts, insecurities, hesitations, and overall negative feelings can have on themselves. The system includes working through targeted exercises and questions to challenge our perspective and focus on truth, objectives, and actions that will allow us to reframe how we think and feel, ultimately changing how we respond to those difficult moments. We identify what strategies can be put in place to keep us on track and accountable for sustainable progress and how to apply effective solutions for more established personal and professional growth.

We are not alone in these experiences, acknowledging that experiencing imposter feelings is common among our colleagues can help diminish their effect, however, deliberate action is still needed to overcome their hold on us:

- Being aware of when imposter feelings occur and identifying them as such.
- Homing in on the specific fears and doubts to better overcome them.
- Looking at things objectively and removing the emotional response.
- Identify effective actions to take to move towards results.
- Reflect and reinforce what will continue to help us as we work towards our goals.

The foundation of the process is to identify specific actions that allow us to effectively navigate through obstacles and overcome limiting beliefs to get closer to our goals.

As many of us strive to reach new levels in our professions, businesses, and careers, and when we push ourselves to grow beyond our current abilities, we usually experience emotions and challenges that may seem out of our control. However, there are some aspects that can help ground us in a healthier mindset and ensure we maintain progress and stay on the right track:

- Be assured that feeling fear, doubt, and uncertainty about your path is common and results from stepping outside your comfort zone.
- Staying as objective as possible and focusing on facts, progress, and your goals will prevent your emotions from getting the best of you.
- Focusing on consistent actions, and tracking progress, throughout your process will empower you to move past obstacles, even when you feel unsure.
- Most of the time, when we feel stuck, it is a result of our own limiting perceptions about our ability to reach our goals. We often have more capacity and resources than we generally credit ourselves with.
- Distractions and overstimulation are constantly present in our modern lives. Being diligent about keeping our attention on core actions and objectives is vital to reaching our goals.

Continue reading to learn about the ***Ascend Clarity Process*** and how it empowers us to take control of the many factors that we assume are beyond our influence.

Chapter 3

My Coaching Philosophy

Executive coaching is a focused, thought-provoking and creative process that inspires one to maximize their personal and professional potential. We aim to identify specific and obtainable goals and implement realistic actions to drive you towards your objectives. It's a stimulating environment where you create space to explore different perspectives. My role is to help you get unstuck and challenge you to consider solutions based on the resources you currently have and enable you to future results.

Coaching creates an environment where you are guided to focus your attention, stimulate your thinking, and give you space to organize your thoughts and emotions. We go through a deliberate process and get as detailed as possible to influence the change that you desire. We'll identify your most important goals and home in on your sticking points and craft your unique strategy for success. Measuring and tracking your progress ensures you are making decisions based on facts and actions. Throughout the engagement, taking time to reflect and implement consistent habits ensure ongoing progress and build in accountability.

It's not necessarily getting new tools but sharpening the ones you already have. It's a space where I am very intentional to help you navigate your challenges and best source solutions to solve the problems that are holding you back. We get from where you are today to where you want to go with the least amount of resistance. Coaching is different from other modes of support and is unlike consulting, mentoring, advising, or therapy. I am not providing you with knowledge or a particular philosophy of content or me dictating what you should or shouldn't be doing, nor are we diving into the past. Rather, it is a means to shift your thinking to a solution-oriented mindset and taking action. My job as a coach is amplifying your strengths, skills, and the tools and resources you currently have. Anyone at any level could use a coach just to sharpen their abilities and empower them to take a step forward. We aim to cut through the noise and get clarity of what actions are going to move you closer to your specific goals.

How clear are you on your goals? We aim for you to be laser-focused on precisely what you want to achieve and then we navigate how to overcome the obstacles in your way. Can you identify what your sticking points really are? We explore going after those challenges with surgical precision of how you get over them with relevant and effective solutions.

When you are constantly pushing the boundaries of your personal and professional growth, and trying to continue to achieve, you're likely to experience doubts and unclarity because it is unfamiliar territory. You do not have direct experience of being in that situation, and you're often on your own driving the movement and mission. This is common and a coach can help you be more competent and confident in the unknown. I'm sure we

can all agree that there are more distractions, challenges, stress, responsibilities, unclarity, and overwhelm in every corner of our lives. Especially if you are in a demanding role, building a business, running a company, or raising a family.

Many of the individuals that I work with are business owners, entrepreneurs, or high-level professionals who want to grow and level up. However, when one does get to a certain advanced point where a lot of the pre-established structures and boundaries are not organically in place, it is difficult to gauge where their productive perspective is. When one is venturing into the unknown, there is no one dictating their routines, schedules, or other parameters. Those who are ambitious, passionate, and driven to get to a new level in their career, business, or profession, are constantly pushing their boundary of their comfort zone and abilities. And once one is beyond that little edge of their comfort zone, there's no one telling them what is or isn't going well. It's hard to get the reassurance or validation because they're constantly in this self-perpetuating echo chamber of asking themselves vague questions to try and determine if they are on the right track. There's no gauge or barometer once one is beyond that comfort zone because they don't have the experience and it's not familiar territory.

So regardless of whether one is launching or scaling a business or trying to break into another level in their career or pivot to a different direction, it's hard to get that reassurance to either continue or to adjust. These professionals who are continuously pushing to grow beyond their current capacity are vulnerable to stress, uncertainty, and many debilitating mindsets. Some of the common struggles one can experience within that unfamiliar territory are constant doubt, getting too far in one's own head, feeling like they are their own worst enemy, or standing in their own way.

I think these situations are ubiquitous with most of us who are pushing our boundaries. I myself suffered from self-doubt for a long time. I crafted my coaching systems based on my own experiences and what not only allowed me to break through but also keep myself in check. A significant part of having success past these challenges is being reflective and focusing on what worked what didn't. Separating the emotional component from it all and trying to be as objective as possible. Trying to systematize everything and trying to think what are the actual levers I can pull, what are the decisions I have to make, and what are the actions I take to give me forward momentum. What was not working was feeling scared, doubtful, afraid, or angry. Our emotions can really be the biggest barriers to getting us that forward movement.

So, how does one gain that feedback? My approach to coaching empowers individuals to gain clarity on how to take action and achieve success. One aspect is trying to be as self-reflective as possible. Identifying what we can actually influence, what can we control because no one is going to do it for us. No one is there to tell us how or what to do. Another important aspect is paying attention to the results from one's direct influence. What specific behaviors or actions produce specific results? Was it positive or negative? Did it move us in the right direction or not? And how one amplifies the positive while

adjusting the negative. We aim to build in this constant feedback loop of identifying what we can do, checking the result, and either doing more or less of it.

In this modern age we rarely build in time just to think. And for successful coaching, that alone is 50% of the process. Just taking a moment to reflect and navigate everything that's going on. All of the thoughts, feelings, and decisions that one goes through. It's important to pause and open different perspectives, challenge one's assumptions and their current thinking patterns. Coaching creates an environment where you are guided to focus your attention to stimulate your mind and give you space to organize your thoughts and emotions. Simply being present with the client, the coach allows a deep connection of trust and the space to materialize the internal dialogue one has within themselves. They then reflect deeply on their insights and identify solutions that keep them accountable. Most of the time they have the resources already and it's my job to help uncover those resources. Coaching is often a very powerful experience. Almost every session, many clients have these "aha" moments and at times are almost out of words because it's so powerful that they actually made that discovery or advancement. Replicating these experiences on your own is very difficult, as there are many factors at work during a true coaching session that allow it to be so effective.

The more people I work with, the more I see that many share a lot of the same experiences and challenges, but are all driven very differently. Some of those differences are the motivating factors, such as their why or meaning behind what they want to achieve. One matter that I am certain is that we all can use better support, clarity, and community to best ensure success in these initiatives. Taking intentional time to work through the noise and getting refocused on what is truly important can be the difference in helping us feel effective and purposeful and bring true meaning to our endeavors. Incorporating more support can not only make a difference to getting through tough times, but to allow you to excel and thrive. I am an educator at heart, and this system that I created is the best vehicle for me to make a difference in many of our colleagues' journeys.

The Ascend Clarity Process

This process is applied for both long-term initiatives, short-term goals, and during sessions.

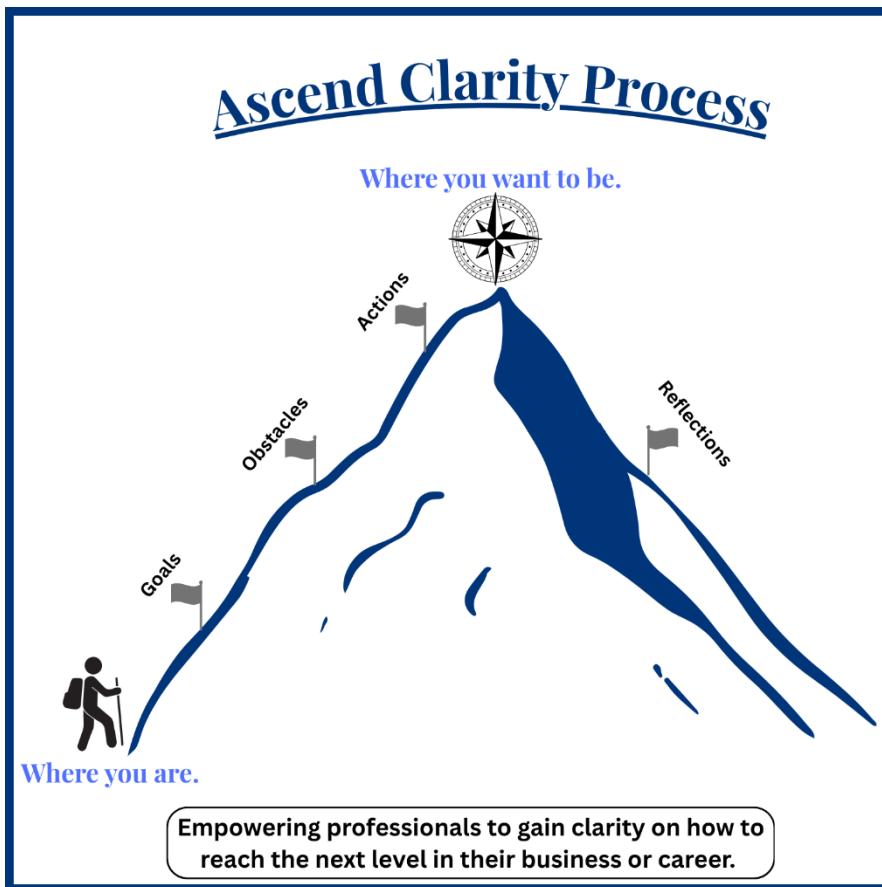
- 1. Establishing and solidifying one's goals, vision, and purpose**
 - a. Get as specific as possible for what you want to achieve
 - b. Identify why the goal is important
 - c. Establishing how to measure success
- 2. Identifying the obstacles and aligning your strengths to overcome them**
 - a. Internal or external obstacles? Self-inflicted or out of your control? Reactive or proactive?
 - b. Internal: Reframing limiting beliefs, doubts, assumptions, and fears etc.
 - c. External: Lack of clarity on strategy, execution, adoption, resources etc.
 - d. Strengths: Identifying what effective solutions are best paired to overcome these challenges
- 3. Identifying what actions will get you moving forward**
 - a. Specific and immediate actions to make progress
 - b. Short-term actions to support long-term goals
 - c. What specific actions will overcome that challenge
 - d. Incorporate accountability and follow up
- 4. Reflecting on what worked and what didn't**
 - a. What mindsets, behaviors, and actions either helped or hindered
 - b. Lessons learned for next time
 - c. How to build habits that last

This approach and framework were a result of the self-guided process I navigated throughout my struggles with uncertainty and doubt and how I was able to break free and gain forward momentum. Once I reflected on my experiences, I identified what worked and this system came about naturally. With a little refinement and a lot of application, this process generates results with many of the individuals I work with who have common challenges. The core of the approach grounds one in reality, logic, and objective actions and separates them from the grasp of negative emotions.

The beauty of this process is that it can be applied to both long-term initiatives and short-term immediate situations. The mental checklist of questions and the processing of the stages are the same, we just focus on the appropriate timeline of experiences. This is the underlying foundation to how I guide a client through an executive coaching engagement as well as an individual session. My role as the coach is to keep the ultimate goal in the forefront as the client navigates various perspectives, choices, and scenarios.

To read more about my client's results with this process, see the chapter on client success stories. For an extended overview of the ***Ascend Clarity Process*** and how I help my clients get to their next level, please visit: ascendpropathways.com/executive-coaching.

My core mission is helping ambitious professionals better accomplish their goals, maximize their capacity for success, and perform at their very best. Many of us experience the same journeys and struggles, we don't have to navigate it alone. Throughout the process, I promote self-discovery to lead the client to solutions that are relevant and effective. We aim to discover strategies that are specific to their needs. Taking deliberate, focused time on a very specific problem allows one to effectively process and explore the issue which often leads to sourcing a solution. Each day is so full of stimulation, tasks, and distractions that simply carving out time to think is half the work!



Chapter 4

Client Success Stories

Consultant struggling to gain new clients:

The Situation: A consultant who specializes in higher education was starting to grow her business. She experienced a “dry season” and a long unproductive stretch of struggling to gain any new clients. Even building a potential client pipeline was challenging.

The intervention: Through the coaching process, she discovered how to best leverage her network and put herself in front of influential partners. By aligning her strengths and passions she demonstrated to an industry leader that she could be a valuable asset at their next national conference.

The success: She secured a speaking opportunity at the industry conference, and while there she met several attendees who found her presentation meaningful. She built a trusting relationship with one of those members who soon later engaged with her as a client.

Reflections: She discovered that she had more resources and viable opportunities in front of her than she initially believed. Taking time to identify those opportunities and stepping just beyond her comfort zone allowed her to secure the success that she felt was out of reach.

Business consultant struggling with self-doubt on a client proposal:

The Situation: A business consultant who is scaling her company was preparing to discuss a proposal with a high-priority client. After spending time on creating the proposal and prior to reviewing it with the client, she was doubting her worth and nervous that it wouldn’t be accepted. She had fears that she would be underselling herself and that the target client would get offended if she proposed a price too high. She also feared that they would decide to pass on working with her if she didn’t meet their expectations for her workload.

She felt that she was overthinking everything, focusing on what could go wrong, and started to question her abilities as a valuable solution for the client. Despite having a career of direct experience as an industry expert and a successful track record of being an effective operator, she still doubted herself.

The Intervention: During our session, we focused on getting very clear on precisely what she wanted to achieve for herself and her business. The clearer she was about her work/life balance, her worth, experiences, and the value she can bring to the client, the more her confidence grew. We also established a productive mindset for separating her actual hours

worked from the problems the client needs solved, so that her skills allow her to be effective and efficient.

The Success: She felt more confident in her proposal and more aligned with her vision for her business and life. She was also more confident in the value that she could bring to the client.

The proposal review was received better than she expected and the client not only agreed to her suggested workload and strategic approach, but they also suggested working at a higher capacity and offered \$2,000 over her proposed price per month!

Reflections: She realized that she was “too far in her head” and her fears and doubts were leading her down the wrong path. She learned that focusing on what could go right vs what could go wrong helped her the most. She also identified relevant strategies that she can use for future struggles if those fears come creeping back in future situations. Overall, she benefited the most from getting through the noise in her mind and focusing on more productive thoughts and behaviors which led to building traction. Over the course of our work together she often felt like giving up but since she had a coach to keep her accountable, she continued to trust the process and gain forward momentum to break past her limiting mindset.

Dental professional seeking clarity on her career path:

“Before working with Thomas, I was completely burnt out, lost, and had zero confidence. He helped me reconnect with my passions and realign my career goals. Now, I have a clear framework to move through anxiety and confusion and stay laser-focused on what truly matters.

My confidence has skyrocketed, and I even received a promotion just two months into a new position!

Thomas’s calm yet assertive style is the perfect balance of support and accountability. He’s like a personal trainer for your mindset, pushing you harder than you’d push yourself, holding you accountable, and celebrating your wins along the way.”

Two clinical educators gaining clarity on growing their consulting business:

Two passionate dental professionals with over 30 years of combined experience founded a clinical coaching company with the vision of transforming the culture of dentistry. At the time, their business was small, just the two of them, but their ambition was big. They knew they wanted to focus on dental teams, but they were uncertain about how to effectively reach their audience. Their energy reflected this uncertainty. They felt the pressure of wanting to scale, yet the overwhelm of not knowing where to start. It was clear they needed support to gain clarity, direction, and momentum.

Sticking Point:

Coaching became essential because they were at a critical crossroads: they had the expertise and passion but lacked focus and systems to scale with confidence.

Their biggest challenges included:

- Feeling overwhelmed by all the moving parts of building a coaching business.
- Uncertainty about how to hone in on their niche and target audience.
- A desire for growth without clear strategies to get there.

When they came across Thomas' content on LinkedIn, it resonated deeply. His approach stood out as both practical and empowering, and they felt confident that working with him would help them move forward.

Finding Solutions:

Thomas didn't simply hand them the answers. Instead, he guided them through powerful questioning and re-framing. This strategy helped them uncover their own intuition and build trust in their decision-making. He also provided tools and frameworks to evaluate their work objectively. By tracking results and learning to review outcomes without emotional attachment, they could make adjustments that drove real, measurable progress. This shift not only improved their business but also boosted their confidence as leaders.

Since working with Thomas, both partners have experienced transformations in their business and personal lives:

- New Opportunities: With clarity, they confidently developed new coaching programs that aligned with their mission.
- Reduced Stress: By having systems and tools, they eliminated the constant overwhelm and created more peace in their workflow.
- Clarity on Direction: They now know exactly where they are headed and how to get there.
- Personal Wellbeing: They both experienced a renewed sense of balance and confidence.

The consultant's story highlights how working with Thomas created clarity, structure, and renewed confidence. Through his guidance, they moved from overwhelm and uncertainty to growth and empowerment.

The most notable transformation was one of the partner's personal journeys from uncertainty to clarity. They now feel grounded and aligned in her leadership role, a change she directly attributes to Thomas' coaching.

"Our main objective was to gain clarity on our business direction and scale in a way that felt aligned. With Thomas' coaching, we achieved exactly that. He never gave us the

answers; instead, he guided us to find them within ourselves. That gave us confidence in our intuition and in the steps we take. The biggest personal win has been gaining that clarity. We now have structure, reduced stress, and clear goals. I would absolutely recommend Thomas to any entrepreneur feeling stuck. His tools and strategies don't just move the needle forward- they empower you to trust yourself and your vision. My advice to others is to be ready to grow, because Thomas will take you there!"

Clinical educator gaining a clear vision for his consulting company:

A dedicated and experienced consultant who provides clinical and operational strategies for scaling treatment withing dental practices hit an inflection point. He had substantial growth but along with the success came the pressure of demanding responsibilities.

"I would say the most pressing challenges I've been navigating is getting out of my own way and getting clarity."

Sticking Point:

He was well aware of needing a better strategy to manage himself and the company:

"There's always been a struggle in personal as well as business to find that balance and responsibility. The biggest challenges that I face are identifying what's the biggest priority and if my actions are matching the direction towards the goal that I'm trying to accomplish." He expresses his internal struggles with how he feels about his business, despite the overall success: "Oftentimes, it is the perception of what I believe others will think about my business or what I believe it should be or where I should be at any particular point in time...it's not so much the reality of the situation, it's my perception of the situation in many respects."

Finding Solutions:

Once this consultant started working with Thomas, he quickly experienced the clarity he needed:

"He has an incredible ability to help me gain clarity on how to implement my vision — not just dream about it. What I appreciate most is the space he creates for me to discover my own answers while skillfully guiding the conversation in a way that always brings out new insight."

Thomas' programs are intended to develop the clarity to find the actions that will help one move closer to their specific goals:

"Working with Thomas has allowed me to set aside some of those preconceived notions

and some of those misinterpretations and expectations...which has really been extremely helpful. Thomas doesn't just tell you what to do; he helps you think differently. I leave every session feeling grounded, focused, and more confident in the direction I'm leading my business."

He also explains how Thomas' approach helps him the most:

"And it's more of I want somebody with the experience to be able to create the space for me to talk myself out of exhaustion, to open up, drop the defensive wall, not allowing me to make excuses. It's the forward momentum and not allowing me to get stuck in the past. And that is the way that he guides conversations through his coaching, through a business lens that helps me to be able to feel like I'm the one who's actually being pulled, not pushed."

"I don't remember the circumstance, I don't remember the specifics, but I remember the feeling. And for me, that was everything. That's what a business coach is all about. It's about helping me to unburden myself of a business challenge by creating this space and allowing me to come up with my own answers."

Operations expert finds confidence in her management business:

A passionate and dynamic dental professional started her own operations & management consulting company. She started to gain traction and experienced a whole new level of performance.

"I've always had mentors and people I could go to for advice, but at this stage with a lot of personal and professional changes, I needed and wanted consistency and accountability."

Sticking point:

As she was expanding within her consulting, she had an opportunity to lead her first public workshop, where she had some doubts about how successful she would be and the direction she wanted to take it.

"I signed up for my first talk at a conference and while I wanted to have this experience, I had a great deal of anxiety sorting through my thoughts and how I wanted the talk to be perceived by others. I lacked confidence, and when I saw Thomas was offering his services, I thought we could both benefit. I didn't have any expectations going into it, just that I wanted clarity and to let my true self shine in my business."

Finding Solutions:

After she started working with Thomas, she started to discover strategies that improved her focus on taking actions, staying positive, and refining the goals she wanted to accomplish.

"Thomas allowed me to utilize our sessions in ways that I needed. Some sessions I didn't know what I was going to say and contemplated skipping them, but every session proved to have great "aha" moments. I wanted to start posting on social media, but I was afraid around what others would think, say, or people being overly critical of me. Thomas helped me continuously identify my "why" and what I wanted to achieve, reminding me helped me stay on track and keep my authenticity at the core."

"One revelation I had after many sessions was that I was still trying to fit into something I didn't want anymore - leadership the way others I've been around and how they perceive it. I wanted to get back to when I felt my most authentic self and we were able to identify that time period and feed off the passion I had in that time. I told him how I am super creative and do my best work when I am making things. He asked me what it would be like if I viewed my business as a new recipe or a blank canvas - that set my wheels in motion, and I started making videos, writing articles, and completing my website."

Her experience highlights the benefits of how working with a coach who's intention is to amplify the client's strengths and passions can enable their success and align their purpose.

"I wanted to be myself, to start my company on a foundation that really resonated with me and built passion in me. I was like a writer with a writer's block, and I believe everyone needs a coach. We have so many thoughts, feelings, and emotions running through our minds and they can be very distracting and debilitating. Thomas takes a kind but clear approach to helping you see what's already inside of you and draws that out and plays on your strengths."

"You have to be willing to be fully open. It doesn't happen at the first or second session, I noticed after a couple of months I really started to get out what was at the core of me and what was holding me back. Once I was able to say those things out loud, Thomas helped me put those thoughts in perspective and see them for what they really were - feelings, not facts."

Business consultant finding harmony with a demanding work/life balance:

An established and seasoned professional who provides customized services through her consulting company had goals to gain clarity on career opportunities and managing her work/life balance for her business.

"I want to build a more sustainable business model that doesn't require sacrificing either business performance or personal wellbeing."

Sticking Point:

She started to feel the stress of the demanding responsibilities of owning and running her growing consulting business. Feeling that she was starting to lose control of her time with her family, she was overwhelmed and noticed the effect on her wellbeing.

"My primary challenge is operating at full capacity with no buffer. The "always on" nature of business ownership means the workday doesn't end. My challenge isn't poor time management; it's that I'm managing competing urgent priorities across multiple domains simultaneously without traditional employment boundaries or built-in recovery time."

Finding Solutions:

After she started working with Thomas, she realized that she was falling back into old habits that she wanted to avoid and reflected on what aspects she needed to focus on to get better balance.

"It's given me a space to think strategically rather than just reactively. In my day-to-day, I'm executing constantly. These sessions force me to step back and evaluate whether what I'm doing aligns with where I want to go...then we got into the real lesson - don't neglect your children while building a business. The result is I'm making more intentional decisions about work-life integration."

"That moment reminded me that I've built successful businesses before, and I know what the pitfalls are. Tom didn't lecture me; he just asked the question and let me arrive at that realization myself. That is powerful coaching which creates the space for self-awareness rather than telling me what to do. Tom helps me access my own expertise and experience rather than treating me like I need all the answers from him."

She expresses the significant benefits of how coaching has helped her recently:

"Tom asks incredibly insightful questions that cut through my mental noise. He also helps me identify what I actually need versus what I think I should need, which prevents me from creating unnecessary pressure on myself. What has been very helpful is Tom's ability to reflect back on what I'm actually saying versus what I think I'm saying. He also doesn't push his agenda; he supports mine, which as a business owner managing multiple stakeholders, is refreshing."

"Validated but challenged. Tom doesn't let me off the hook, but he also doesn't make me feel like I'm failing. I leave sessions with more clarity about what I actually need to focus on versus what I think I should focus on."

"Tom helped me recognize that I'm actually succeeding, even though it feels chaotic. His coaching gave me permission to trust my process and timeline rather than forcing decisions prematurely. He helped me access my own expertise rather than looking externally for solutions."

Part 2

Supportive Articles

Chapter 5

Lessons From the Professionally Ambitious

“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 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 fears.

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 in uncovering more layers of oneself. The goal is to explore solutions they haven't yet considered. I have refined this approach into a system I call the **Ascend**

Clarity Process, which empowers ambitious professionals to break through their obstacles and gain forward momentum. It is especially applicable when one is consistently pushing past one's current capacity, ability, and comfort zone. This is unfamiliar territory without any gauge to reassure if one is on the right path or not, and is where the self-inflicted doubts, unclarity, and overthinking can thrive. Nonetheless, I have experienced many of these professionals finding their success and reaching their goals.

These common experiences are just some of the most prevalent challenges that many of us 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 navigate difficulties and achieve our goals.

Chapter 6

Where Does Confidence Come From?

Where does confidence come from? Is being confident a prerequisite for achievement? How does one obtain their confidence in performing any given task or element of their lives?

Does confidence come from believing or seeing that something can be done, and out of sheer will, one would achieve their desired outcome? What if it's something that someone has not done before themselves? Is being confident a prerequisite for achievement?

This is my experience in navigating the unknown and the process that helped me.

We can agree that once you do something and you experience results, your confidence grows, but if it's the first time you're doing something, how do you get comfortable enough to move forward? What if you are not the risky type of person to just throw yourself into the unknown and see what happens? What if you feel that you need more familiarity first?

In my experience, it's by controlling as many aspects of the process as possible, and every small detail and nuance that you can influence will help best prepare you for succeeding in that task. This turns the situation from feeling that you must have the nerve to do something, to a situation of operations and follow-through, one of methods. Breaking it down as much as you can so it seems simple to perform without being overwhelmed, it's a matter of converting emotion into action.

Action, along with organization and consistency.

My most relevant experience of this process is one that I am navigating at this current moment in my professional journey. Over the past year I have been studying leadership development and obtaining a certification in executive coaching. It is my passion to help other professionals be the best versions of themselves, and I created a side business focusing on just that. Prior to starting this endeavor last year, I was paralyzed with indecisiveness, imposter feelings, and overall negativity about the sheer magnitude of such an ambition. Feeling completely unprepared and inexperienced to even consider moving forward, only to plague myself with believing that I do not have the confidence of taking such a risk to even think about pursuing this deep passion of mine.

I was able to finally break through by asking myself what exactly would it take if I were to start this journey, what specifically would I need to learn and actually do to begin moving forward? So, acknowledging that my negative self-talk wasn't serving any productive purpose, I turned to objective actions, organization, and relentless consistency to slowly expose myself to progress. I made the commitment to continue pursuing this

unknown path with one rule, that I do not let fear stop me from continuing, and anything that I was not familiar with I simply added as another action item on my ever-growing to-do list. From what initially I assumed was a problem with confidence simply became a matter of accomplishing specific tasks and timing their completion.

Over 6 months the progress I made was significant and as I reflect on what I achieved I realized that I didn't need to be confident, but rather I needed to be organized and diligent to take small steps every day. Now, as a result of seeing this process being successful, I do feel more confident for the next 6 months because all I have to do is continue to follow the process that got me to this point. I am feeling reassured that I can take risks even if I do not have the assumed natural born confidence that we may believe we need, and I discovered that confidence is the byproduct, not the catalyst.

This is an elaborate example of how I learned feeling confident, but it can apply to more acute situations as well. The process remains the same: to identify as many aspects as possible of how to obtain what you want to achieve, organizing them, and breaking them down into smaller tasks that you can complete within a reasonable timeframe.

However, one may experience that their lack of confidence is due to being uncertain of how to identify or what to even do with those aspects. In that case it's simply identifying specifically what it is you are unclear about, determining direct actions to perform, and ensuring their execution.

Action will breed momentum and ultimately make you feel confident, but first you need objective thinking and organization.

It is my passion to help empower those who are struggling with feeling inadequate or unclear of how to navigate accomplishing their goals. It would be through my coaching and development programs that we can turn these emotions into actions and look at the journeys ahead of us in a more objective lens rather than giving up before we even consider starting.

Chapter 7

Thoughts on Imposter Syndrome

Do you feel that it's truly a syndrome that you can't cure? Perhaps it just ebbs and flows and it's more of a periodic feeling that pops up to stall our progress. How do you navigate that doubt when it does occur? Are there ways to avoid or prevent it?

“Inaction breeds doubt and fear. Action breeds confidence and courage. If you want to conquer the negative elements in your life, don’t sit at home and think about it. Go out and get busy!” -Dale Carnegie

This quote often reassures me that there is a realistic and tangible solution to the universal experience of feeling inadequate or discouraged by one's own inner dialogue. Most often, professionals have some familiarity with imposter feelings throughout various points in their careers and lives, and at various intensities. I certainly have, and my experience may not be so different than others, here is what helped me in navigating those doubtful emotions...

Before starting this journey with Executive Coaching, I more than struggled with committing myself to pursue what truly resonated with me. I always felt this drive to want to help other professionals, and once I discovered that Executive Coaching was a path that I felt a strong interest in, I instantly had the opposite emotions of why I couldn't or shouldn't do it. I crafted stories and context on convincing myself otherwise. I eventually discovered, through an objective lens, that these “reasons” were really excuses hiding in disguise.

These excuses and doubts were a safety net for not taking risks, they protected me from the anticipation of failure because how can I fail at something that I don't even do? If I'm afraid of heights all I need to avoid is climbing up a ladder, however, if I want to get to a higher level, it wouldn't just happen by standing on the ground.

So, the question I asked myself was:

“How can I best prepare myself to achieve what I desire and maximize the chances of succeeding?”

The answer for me was in micromanaging my approach, making it so objectively based that it naturally eliminated doubt every step of the way. If I felt afraid or unsure of any small aspect, I could overcome that resistance by simply identifying what exactly I was doubting and pairing a logical and realistic solution to that issue. I was able to turn negative emotions into habits of actions and results, and make small, consistent progress.

Consider *The Obstacle is The Way*; it focuses on precisely that what is preventing you from moving forward needs to be the object to overcome. Thinking about your long-term goal but acting on short-term objectives. This method, broken down, simply became a routine to engage each day to steadily make progress. Soon enough, my actions and results

started to replace the doubts I had because seeing what I had achieved in the days prior proved that I can be successful despite initially feeling that I couldn't.

I then noticed a pattern that unfolded:

- Feelings of inadequacy
- Homing in on specifically what obstacle was causing that emotion
- Identifying an effective solution
- Applying that solution & acknowledging the results

I essentially became my own product of Lean Manufacturing and in time the imposter emotions diminished to a point where they no longer had any influence over me or my path forward.

We can agree that being active is a solution to feeling stuck, but how do you then even take the first step? For me, it was analyzing everything that was needed to do so. Converting that emotional component into small enough actions that I could have direct influence on, thus that negative emotion then becomes meaningless and starts to weaken.

Overcoming imposter feelings became a system of actions: identifying tasks and completing them, tracking the results, and objectively recognizing that the results were due to those specific actions. Not assumptions or guesses, but real actions that had a direct influence on success.

How then can you continue to sustain this process? In my experience, you arm yourself with information. Think back to when you were dreading doing something and then it turned out to be not as bad as you thought. Or when you were unclear of how to execute something, but you learned what was needed to complete it, and in reflecting back, it wasn't as daunting as you assumed?

Looking at situations through an objective lens rather than an emotional response can help free you from getting stuck in doubt by realizing all that it took was breaking down a large task into smaller parts applied over time.

Then, simply realizing that the more you separate yourself from emotional reactions and act more objectively it empowers you to make progress, despite how you feel, because you have a mechanical system in place: breaking down the overall task into small enough components that are easier to complete. It's a matter of distilling things down to more digestible parts and before you know it you are building momentum. You didn't have to force yourself to feel positive or find a way to get motivated, you just needed a system.

It's the system, not motivation, that enables you to overcome the doubt.

Negative thoughts and assumptions in anticipation of something can limit you to being able to act upon it. Being self-reflective on past experiences can help you make the next future decision. If that belief isn't serving your goal, then what's the point of spending energy on it? How can you get better at matching your beliefs with your achievements? Think back and prove to yourself when those emotions weren't benefiting you.

To close, another quote that I often use more as a mantra, which aids in building resistance against doubt because it again focuses on action, is:

“Make progress, not excuses.”

How can you set yourself up to make progress by having a more direct influence on your decisions rather than being a victim of emotion?

Imposter feelings are just that, feelings, it's action that allows you to continue to climb.

Chapter 8

Imposter Feelings Part 2

Why do we often allow ourselves to give up on our ambitions so easily? Identifying the facts and being aware of our emotional reactions can make the difference in either accepting defeat or pursuing our goals, regardless of how we feel.

Follow up thoughts on Imposter Feelings:

Have you ever had a really engaging thought about something you wanted to do or achieve and were really excited about that idea until only then instantly have the exact opposite feeling of doubt and discouragement? Did you tell yourself, “I can never do that!” or have another excuse to not even pursue it?

Have you ever considered why you were so adamant and definitive that you couldn’t or shouldn’t even consider it?

What if you defiantly resisted that negative emotion and did it anyway regardless of any excuse you offered for not pursuing it? Imagine what you could accomplish if you didn’t always listen to that side of yourself! Do you think that sometimes our emotions override the logical side of ourselves?

In my experience, it’s not a matter of getting motivated or finding ambition to start or accomplish goals. I have found that it’s the consistent habits that you build and engage in over the long term that will keep momentum flowing in the background of your busy life. It’s identifying simple habits that you can execute each day to continue making small and steady progress regardless of whether you feel motivated to do it or not. I believe it’s best not to wait for inspiration to drive you, as it often wanes and fluctuates. Perhaps you would benefit from a reliable system that operates regardless of how you feel each day. A system, perhaps, as within my first piece on imposter feelings.

For this piece, I’d like to delve into the strange phenomenon of our negative self-talk and outright disregard for one’s own aspirations when they do hit. Why is our initial reaction to the enthusiasm for something that we actually want to do so blatantly adverse to feeling encouraged to pursue it?

Consider if a friend came to you and shared the very same ambition, would your immediate response be supportive and encouraging or would you find every unfounded claim to try and prove that they couldn’t succeed?

If you wouldn’t respond to a friend in that manner, why do we feel that we can treat ourselves so harshly? Why is our self-talk so negatively skewed? If we’re the only people to tell ourselves that we couldn’t do something, based on no real information, why would we even listen to ourselves in the first place?

I challenged myself to try and confidently answer these questions when I feel the overwhelm of self-doubt:

1. What actual purpose does it serve me in being so internally pessimistic and doubtful?
2. What am I actually unsure of?

I believe that if we can't logically and objectively answer these questions then our emotions are perhaps getting the best of us, and they sabotage our abilities to accomplish meaningful and fulfilling goals in our lives. Even if the answer is being fearful of failure or being afraid of {fill in the blank...}, then we still haven't analyzed the situation enough to determine if that is the actual reason we can't do it or still just the perceived reason.

Our emotions are sly and tricky, especially if we're alone without someone else's perspective. We could bury ourselves in hesitation and excuses which may all be based on false beliefs, and this mindset can seem to perpetuate endlessly.

So then, what is a realistic solution to prevent this downward spiral of self-doubt? I believe it's information. According to [Jon Acuff](#), it's data that defeats doubt. You look at the unadulterated facts about the situation and separate from your emotional self.

If it is fear that you feel which is preventing you from committing, can you further identify what you are afraid of? Without judgement, without any implications, what aspect makes you afraid? When you diagnose these specific reasons, perhaps the answers are not so vague after all, and you can see that there are things in your control that can override that fear and doubt. You discover that you are empowered to pursue a goal because you are focusing on action and pairing solutions to objectives. You gain agency rather than succumbing to misleading emotional responses.

You'll need some time to think and reflect and sit with these feelings and thoughts. Oftentimes we can't effectively navigate through all the noise in our minds and making progress best occurs when we are intentional.

Often our emotions jump to conclusions quickly, but it takes time to figure out logic. Don't shortchange yourself by settling on the first response you feel, pausing to reflect could help navigate you in identifying those fears and doubts and discovering appropriate solutions. Give yourself the opportunity to uncover a solution before you unknowingly accept the first thought that comes to mind, and you give up without even trying.

Would you rather regret things you tried and failed at or things you didn't even attempt because you cut yourself short before you even gave yourself a chance?

Failure doesn't have to be finite; it's just another opportunity to continue to learn and improve. The best part of failing is the next time you have the advantage of starting with experience.

I also learned another vital habit that helps to mitigate doubt is being able to acknowledge the small wins. Stepping back and identifying when things went well and

when you had a positive result will help you realize that there is progress being made, even if it's the slightest. You don't necessarily need an overwhelming windfall to prove to yourself that you were successful. Simply observe the facts and know that your direct actions produce direct results, all you must do is remain consistent.

The same theory still applies- remove yourself from your emotions and don't let the excitement of acknowledging the win distract you or cause you to become complacent.

To close on these thoughts about imposter feelings, it could be wise not to believe everything negative that pops into your mind when you find inspiration. Just reassure yourself that there is a process in place, you just need to apply it!

Chapter 9

Choose Your Distractions

Life is full of distractions, especially when we are working towards large ambitions. Staying focused and diligent seems to be obvious, but perhaps another perspective to maintain progress is being deliberate about the distractions that we know will get the best of us...

Choose your distractions...

Think about your ambitions, your goals, and your dreams that you want to achieve—either immediate goals you may be currently working on or future larger aspirations that you haven't yet started. How do you see yourself accomplishing them? What are your actions, habits, and mindsets that will enable you to bring them into fruition? How would you plan out your process, and in what timeframe, to make the necessary progress?

These may be obvious questions to consider when you are working on goals, however, perhaps also thinking about your intent throughout the process can help keep you dialed in and focused. Your intention for not only for *why* to achieve the goal itself, but your intention on *how* you plan to keep yourself on track when there are often many obstacles in the way.

As far as being focused and how to best maintain it, our attention seems to be under constant attack. For the modern professional there is an onslaught of distractions all around us every day. Have you ever considered how to limit the excess noise and the steady stream of stimulation? Do you truly need to pay attention to all those things you are constantly thinking about? Perhaps we are standing in our own way with the amount of mental stimulation.

Perhaps it's not so much in learning how to do more each day, but rather how do you spend your valuable time on the most important and vital activities that drive the specific results you want?

When it comes to attention, more broadly, I believe that one of the more powerful mindsets we can instill to better materialize our achievements is actually being intentional about our distractions that can pull us away from our path.

In my experience, I tend to define a distraction as any activity or mental state that does not directly support and promote your core goals and mission; anything that pulls your attention and time away from the specific ambitions you want to accomplish. The natural consequence of a distraction is that it causes you to focus on something that isn't a priority and only delays achieving your goal; it puts happenstance in the driver's seat rather than progress.

Distractions don't necessarily have to be negative; they just don't directly compliment you in maintaining that progress. Rather, I prefer to focus on *intentional attention* where, quite literally, I am not only preparing to avoid the very things that I know can distract me but also being more deliberate and diligent about where I want my attention to go before it starts to wane. It's a shift in perspective that can help increase your efficiency throughout your achievements.

Have you ever heard of not relying on motivation to spark you to pursue your ambitions? Waiting to be motivated can often lead to being unfulfilled as you are depending on your emotions to propel you to success, but more objectively, having a logical system based on actions is much more reliable and effective.

Consider shifting your perspective from trying to get motivated and forcing yourself to focus, to literally identifying the actual activities or thoughts that you know will pull you away from your process. Not hoping or trying to just stay on track but being prepared and having a specific strategy to navigate what would distract you before it even happens. Instead of trying to avoid distractions in general, you identify them before they even occur. Think about what would likely pull your attention away and create a system to avoid those specific situations and mindsets.

Most of us are aware of what events will get the best of us. This approach empowers you to stay in control and to better influence your time and attention by remaining steady and not being a victim of randomness. You already know what will distract you during your process, so you won't be surprised or caught off guard when the distraction does creep in. You are expecting it to occur and when it does, you know how to respond. You won't fall victim to feeling drawn to it and end up feeling guilty that you had to make a choice to either waste time or to work on your goal. The choice was made by you prior to that moment, and it would be easier for you to then ignore or redirect that distraction. You get to declare what your distractions will be and avoid being surprised when they pop up, you already predetermined both the diversion and the solution.

Would you agree that certain mindsets could also be a distraction and misleading you to ultimately procrastinate? Does a distraction need to be an activity, or could it simply be an unproductive thought? How well is your inner dialogue preparing you to stay diligent in your process?

How can you identify these potential deviations and then pair a tangible solution?

Instead of listing random situations that I assume will distract most of us, consider these questions with the intention of being honest and open-minded to see what resonates with you:

- When do you tend to procrastinate the most? How do you spend that time?
- What actions for your goals are you avoiding the most? Which tasks can you complete that will provide the most progress and relief?

- How do you feel when you engage in certain activities for your goals, what emotions do you experience, are you looking forward to working on your ambition? What would need to change to improve your perspective?
- What nominal activities are you spending more time on over your more important items? How can you reprioritize your tasks?
- What activities do you notice that are taking longer than necessary? When you reflect on why, what comes up?
- What excuses do you notice you are making when deciding to work on your goals or spend time doing something else?
- How engaged do you feel when you are working on your goals, do you feel that you can easily be pulled away or are you in flow?
- What specific tasks do you simply not enjoy doing? Are there methods you can use to better endure the activity and produce a quality result?
- Do you dedicate any specific times, places, or methods to work uninterrupted and solely on one objective? How consistent are you in your days, weeks, and months? How do you feel about your progress?
- Are you setting timelines for each stage and each activity you are working on? How does your progress look over the course of a longer stretch of time?

Life is full of distractions, so you must be very deliberate about how you manage your free time unless these unexpected diversions come in and steal that time from you. If you don't identify and structure the specific activities that you are intentionally working on, as well as strategizing against the ones that you know will compromise your progress, then anything can come in and jeopardize your schedule.

At some point, intentional or not, certain thoughts and activities which are not your immediate priority will occupy your mind space. How deliberate are you in dictating exactly what they are and how they will affect you?

Building resilience against distractions involves consistent systems, time management, objective routines, and the right mindset. For this particular approach, you are anticipating what could potentially slow you down and you are just preparing yourself, so it won't. Again, being more intentional about your process.

In this context, could we then ultimately redefine what a distraction is?

Perhaps we can define a distraction as an unexpected event or surprise that causes us to lose focus because we were not prepared to navigate it when it showed up. However, if we prepare for the unexpected, then it wouldn't derail us when it does come about, and we won't ever be distracted to begin with.

Nonetheless, choosing your distractions empowers you just a bit more to tilt the scale of progress in your favor.

Chapter 10

Thinking About Time & Overwhelm

How often have you said to yourself, or heard someone say any of the following:

“I just don’t have any time to do what I need to do.”

“I feel like I just can’t get anything done.”

“If I can just get this one thing done, I’ll have so much of my time back.”

Sound familiar?

If we often feel that we are constantly trying to catch up or find the time to complete the tasks that are continuously pending in our minds, how likely is it that’s its due to an actual lack of hours and minutes? If we take a moment to pause and analyze the situation that we’re reacting to, we can agree that every successful and accomplished professional still operates within the same 24-hour cycle as the rest of us. So then, what separates one from being efficient and productive with their time versus floundering and never feeling caught up?

Perhaps then, would you agree that there may be a corresponding relationship between time management and prioritization?

How does one manage preventing overwhelm with all of the priorities they have? How do you prioritize your priorities without getting completely paralyzed? Our schedules fill up faster than we want them to and beyond our influence to control, so how does one ever get ahead of the inevitable jam-packed day/week/month/year? And, more importantly, at the end of said “busy” day/week/month/year, how would you rate the quality of what you actually accomplished? Did you truly get closer to your goals and achieve what you hoped you would?

There are endless systems, apps, and programs you can find about effective time management, efficient calendars and scheduling, and goal setting that can surely help. This piece focuses on the internal mindset of managing and preventing overwhelm regardless of what or how you use any type of management system.

Let’s start with prioritization. For any of your identified tasks that need to be accomplished, no matter the size, they need to be assigned a priority level. How a task is ranked will determine when it needs attention, dedicated time to perform, and completion date. Priorities need a time stamp. Can you assign a timeline to accomplish that particular priority so that it actually gets crossed off the list rather than pending endlessly until an inevitable new task gets added and everything then gets delayed? How would you manage the ever-flowing cadence of new tasks, current ones, and old ones?

Being intentional and planning in advance for both when the items should be completed, and when you are actually spending the time executing them, allows them to ultimately get done. This then frees up your valuable mental real estate and empowers quality of work. Most of the foundation of overwhelm we experience generally comes from the ever-pending tasks that are not yet organized in a systemic manner. It's not so much the quantity or size of the priorities, but rather they are not yet categorized in a detailed enough environment over a specific time period. Once they are assigned a timeline and position, your approach focuses more on quality execution and allows space for new priorities to fit neatly into the system without derailing your mental capacity.

Accomplishing larger scope and overburdening tasks does take time but also takes planning. Just like the blueprints for building a house, most of the work and the details come in the planning phase and then the execution and materialization of the project follow. It's just a matter of assembling everything according to the plan. It allows you to enjoy the process more without stress and inconsistency as you go- you're not worrying about the details because they're all already laid out. Imagine a Lego set where everything is already organized neatly for you and you can just spend the time enjoying assembling the set rather than struggling to figure out how to execute it in its entirety. This approach also allows higher quality output because it frees up time to dial in on smaller details instead of staying broad to simply rush and get it done. The first step comes from setting time aside to make those plans in order to accomplish the task. This is where we need a little bit of space to get that structure in place- when and how can you dedicate uninterrupted time to start the process and get organized? If we can intentionally disrupt our current state of disorder and establish a neater systematic routine, we create that time and structure to make positive changes moving forward.

How can you then be more intentional about scheduling when you can work on those specific tasks that you need to complete? Identifying the priority timeline and building out the days and weeks to get organized in advance will allow this system to be successful. Where can you establish more consistency? More frequent, perhaps daily, engagement is better than one big chunk of time. Small steps over the long term will build momentum and strong habits that keep you reliable and accountable.

Next, we can focus on quality of work and identifying how to make true progress on your goals and crossing them off your list. Do you ever feel that your life is like running on a treadmill- putting in a lot of work but getting nowhere? Feeling busy and overwhelmed but not really accomplishing anything of meaning? Constantly feeling unproductive or struggling to actually achieve anything you need to get done? The solution is to control as many aspects of the situation as you can. Your calendar and time, your attention and intent, your distractions, and of course limit the variables you can't control.

Improving the quality of production while you are executing these tasks is vital. Think about how you can produce more mindful minutes or improve focus for each time you dedicate to one priority. How do you increase your ability or frequency to intentionally

focus without distractions? When and where? This encourages you to improve the quality of your work rather than always looking at the total amount of time spent.

Let's consider the delicate relationship between time, overwhelm, and anxiety. If you are feeling overwhelmed or you have a long to do list and are feeling anxious about it, having either ample time or a lack of time can have opposing effects. Some can operate well with limited amounts of time and thrive under that pressure; it's a built-in focus factor because you have an uncontrolled deadline and you need to prioritize and get it done. Others find it difficult to manage the situation of having more than enough time because the task lingers and takes up their attention simply from being on the list. This is where prioritization and categorization come in well. If it's scheduled for a future date, there is no need to dwell on the fact that it will eventually get done.

Keep in mind that you can adjust based on the type of task as well. Do you have a project that's pending, or are you procrastinating because it seems too massive to accomplish? You can either break it down into small incremental steps over many days or carve out larger amounts of time to get as much done as quickly as possible. Generally, if it's learning or growing skills, smaller incremental progress is better. However, if it's just a matter of getting something less developmental done, perhaps building out long blocks of uninterrupted time can help you to complete it quicker because you are focusing on the one task without distractions.

This does raise the question of where does procrastination come from? Is it avoidance of the work or a lack of an efficient plan? Many times, we avoid embracing a task not because we don't want to do the work but because we don't have an organized and effective method or blueprint to get it done. Can you identify if procrastination for you is more due to the actual workload or not having a thorough plan to start? How many times did you push off completing a task, and afterwards you felt that it actually wasn't that bad to get done?

Here are other strategies to improve your quality and efficiency:

- Leveraging information: According to [Jon Acuff, its data that defeats doubt](#). Focusing on the tangible and objective actions, habits, and behaviors that produce your desired results need to be your priority.
- Tracking progress: Making sure you stay motivated by seeing your progress is important. Assessing where you are currently, where you want to be, and acknowledge where you came from supports a healthy perspective. How can you best visualize your progress? Consider making trackers, charts, recordings, etc.
- Acknowledge the small wins: This keeps you progressing. Know that there is a process in place, you just need to apply it. Identify the progress you made with other methods on how to reassure yourself.
- Amplify what you are good at and focus on what gets results. At the core of it, what gets you the best results? What motivates and stimulates you, what excites you the most?

- Being self-reflective is key. Analyze your performance for every priority: What went well, what could you have done better, what could you have prevented. What worked? What didn't?
- Identify your purpose: Why this particular goal or this ambition? How do you benefit from managing your overwhelm better?

Final thoughts about efficiency: Moving fast vs not wasting time:

Being mindful of your pace as you work through your priorities is important because you want to produce a quality result, avoid making mistakes, and complete your tasks at a reasonable rate. If haste makes waste, then moving too fast implies sloppiness. However, we don't want to spend too much time on any particular task and delay our overall progress and success. So how do we in fact pace ourselves to perfectly match quality and efficiency? I believe they are directly related. The better quality of your output, the more efficient the process is. You are dialed in and focused and effective at accomplishing your tasks. If you are engaged in a quality process, then mistakes are naturally minimized. At the same time, the more attention you put into completing your tasks and getting through your to-do list, the higher quality result because you are limiting variables that can affect their condition as well as keeping up momentum and consistency in an ongoing process.

Keep in mind that your intensity does influence your quality and efficiency. If you are aiming to save time but stress out over the process, are you really improving your quality? Have you ever felt that you worked so hard or worked yourself up so much just to get the same result? Can you adjust your intensity and get the same or a better result and at the same time enjoy the process a bit more? How would your efficiency improve if so?

As we reflect on these thoughts, perhaps feeling overwhelmed is more of a matter of perspective rather than limitations. If we put consistent systems into place and reassure ourselves that every aspect is managed, we do not have to react or feel those negative emotions when we have a lot to get done. We simply follow the process and plan accordingly. Intentional systems that we oversee on a regular basis tend to improve efficiency the longer they are established. Like building habits, most of the effort is in the beginning. Once routines are set, they take less direct management. We feel that we are more productive and start to enjoy our time a bit more.

Chapter 11

Balancing Input & Output

When you think about pursuing and working towards completing your ambitions, how do you balance input and output? How would you rate the relationship between the phase of needing to acquire the necessary information in order to perform any given task at a reasonable quality, to then actually executing that task? Sometimes we think we need to obtain more information and resources in order to be prepared to accomplish the tasks in front of us. But how do you know that you have enough information in order to start? When do you actually perform? At what point do you act and produce forward movement rather than feel that you need to acquire more knowledge first?

I believe it's not necessarily that you need more information but rather need to focus on taking action and producing results with the capacity and capabilities you have at the current moment. We can generally agree that it takes the most effort to get started but how can you assess that you have the minimum viable amount of knowledge and information needed to in fact start? We can always acquire information along the way; it's action that will get us closer to our end goal and faster.

“Like our stomachs, our minds are hurt more often by overeating than by hunger.”
-Petrarch

When we plan to work towards any particular goal, and are motivated to achieve it, we often like to be prepared so we can maximize the likelihood of our success. Have you ever found yourself hesitant to transition from the preparation and learning phase to the execution phase? How do we gauge the point at which we have ample amount of information needed to successfully start that most important second step?

If we identify any successful professional who started a business or accomplished a significant ambition, we often assume they were thoroughly prepared and knowledgeable prior to getting started. Perhaps they had direct experience, lots of time and money, education and credentials, supportive teams, or other advantages to deploy before their journey. We feel certain that they were already experts prior to any decisions they made about that achievement. These assumptions can work against us as we portray a perspective that those individuals had resources that we ourselves do not. This mindset then limits our confidence that we would be able to accomplish any meaningful endeavor that is beyond our current capability. What if the most important aspect of any new accomplishment isn't necessarily information or preparation, but rather action and momentum?

In today's data-driven world where information is the next valuable resource that everyone is leveraging and is so readily obtainable, we can easily fall into the mindset that

we simply seek out the answers to whatever we need. This, however, conditions us to feel that all we need to do is find those answers and we'll be able to accomplish whatever task we set forth. This is only half of the equation, because we still need to apply that information and execute the task. Not just know what to do, but actually do it. We tend to spend more energy than needed on searching for and obtaining that knowledge rather than spending that valuable time on performing and working towards actually achieving that task. What if instead of spending time listening to more podcasts, reading more books, taking more courses, doing more research, or speaking to more people, we spent time just getting started with our endeavor and learning as we go? There needs to be a better balance between inputting resources and outputting results. If we are trying to get ahead, we need to execute.

“I have been impressed with the urgency of doing. Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Being willing is not enough; we must do”. -Leonardo da Vinci

So how do we actually get forward movement without feeling we need to continue to acquire knowledge before getting started? There needs to be a necessary component of action and experimenting, we can only learn and prepare so much but we can readjust as we go. Real world feedback will refine your focus faster and more accurately than endless theorizing or hypothesizing ever could. Building specific time for the learning process, knowing that mistakes will be made but valuable lessons as well, will allow you to make faster and more accurate progress. Once you start working towards your goals, you prove that you can in fact make progress and this builds your confidence which compounds as you continue. You see yourself gaining experience, knowledge, and skills. Keep in mind that [there is no failure, only feedback](#), so you can successfully make progress despite feeling that you were not fully adequately prepared. When reflecting on any of those individuals who did accomplish significant achievements, you will find that the one factor they usually have in common is that they simply started their journey regardless of being fully prepared and knowledgeable. They focused more on action and learning along the way and adjusting as they gathered that knowledge through trial and error. We can't be fully prepared for any endeavor, so we might as well spend the time and energy on making progress on what we can influence and improve the quality of results after we have some momentum.

A significant challenge many of us face is the real hesitation to take the first steps in applying what we know and start the journey. Whether we call it decision fatigue, analysis paralysis, or perfection procrastination, we aim to be so fully prepared, but we never actually get started. To avoid feeling stuck, we need to find action in order to move the needle. Having so much creativity and so many ideas without structure or the ability to plan and execute will have you continuing to brainstorm as valuable time ticks by. What would be a relevant system you can apply to take the most viable ideas and put them into action and manifest them? Nothing changes if nothing changes, and things won't just magically happen or appear. Achievements are built through planning, action, consistency, and follow through.

When engaging in learning new skills, acquiring knowledge, or increasing performance, there are no shortcuts. There are of course methods and strategies to increase efficiency, however putting in the necessary time and effort are still mandatory. Don't waste time and energy hoping for something to happen or for the perfect moment, focus on what you can control and start making progress towards your objectives and refine as you go.

One strategy that can help get you moving forward is to consider your perspective when thinking about your progress and looking at it in hindsight. If you were to project ahead and envision having already completed your task, what were the actions and decisions you made along the way? How did one action lead to another and ultimately enable you to achieve that goal? If you look at the progress you have made and reflect back on how everything fell into place, how are you setting yourself up for that success now? What is most likely to happen if you continue the patterns that led you to where you are today? How can you adjust your approach now to produce the results you want in the future?

Another challenge we usually face in this day and age is expecting immediate results and not giving ample time for any process to fully mature. Do you feel that you have to pursue the latest and greatest new popular trend? How often are you moving onto the next idea? The more you stop working on what is currently important to you and pivot yourself, you risk losing the progress and potential opportunity you were aiming for in the first place. What then, happens to those original initiatives? Over the course of a year what do you actually accomplish other than constant distraction?

Consider these questions:

- What are you actually intending to accomplish in achieving your goals?
- What is your purpose and ultimate mission you are seeking?
- What truly resonates with you when you envision yourself achieving that ambition?

Knowing your intentions prior to starting your journey can help empower you to influence your choices and behaviors and make the changes you need to be successful.

With all the various influences and processes throughout our lives, many systems and external factors dictate our experiences and how we navigate day to day. Both in the immediate and over the course of our careers, relationships, and overall existence. So, what can we do to better tilt the scale in our favor to best succeed? What are the actual aspects in our control that we can manipulate, rather than simply being a victim of larger influences that dictate our experiences to us? We are able to better manage our mindset, actions, attitudes, and how we react and respond to our situations.

Perhaps we seek out the wrong resources prior to achieving our goals. Instead of spending time and effort on information and knowledge to best inform our decisions and actions, what if we spent that energy on seeking ways to increase our determination, grit, and tenacity. Building habits of resiliency and consistency can pay dividends that last

beyond just the one isolated goal and can apply to how we approach all goals and ambitions. Developing these internal systems and behaviors are vital to our success because most of the time we are alone on our journeys. Having community and being resilient to your own emotions and stresses is important. Burnout can be caused not only by an imbalance in workload but also by misalignment and losing purpose. If we spend too much time on things that are not aligned with our values or true purpose, we risk losing interest.

"Don't expect to be motivated every day to get out there and make things happen. You won't be. Don't count on motivation. Count on discipline." Jocko Willink

As I reflect on my own relationship with input and output, I remember the times when I would have self-doubt and fear about pursuing the dreams I had. I would often look at other's successes and achievements and would feel a deep sense of inadequacy, telling myself that they must have experiences and resources that I didn't and they were primed for victory, and I was destined to struggle. However, I also realized that I wasn't necessarily doing anything in particular to achieve the goals that I wanted to. I would complain but sit on the sidelines while those other professionals didn't make excuses and simply acted regardless of their current qualifications. Why would I expect to have their level of success when they have been working diligently towards it, and I have just been wallowing in my emotions? So, I started to ask myself what can I do to replicate that success? I realized successful people really aren't that different and they didn't have any innate skills or abilities. They just had consistent habits and actions applied over time; all I had to do was to stop hoping for something to happen and stop wasting my time and just get down to start doing it.

Time goes by quickly and before you know it, we're making progress. This supports the foundation that output and action are more effective for achieving one's goals than endless input and seeking enough knowledge. As **Rumi** famously said, **"As you start to walk on the way, the way appears."** The key is to just start walking.

Part 3

Resources

Chapter 12

Professional Realignment

When reflecting on where you are in meeting your goals, how do you feel about your current position? How confident are you in reaching them? We aim for you to be laser-focused on precisely what you want to achieve and then we navigate how to overcome the obstacles in your way. Can you identify what your sticking points really are? We explore going after those challenges with surgical precision of how you get over them with relevant and effective solutions.

- Feeling overwhelmed by not knowing how you'll achieve your goals?
- Unsure of where to start?
- Unclear of what strategies will enable your success?

This program is intended to develop the clarity to find the actions that will help you move closer to your specific goals. Improve your focus and gain vision on your strategies that will have the most impact.

- Prioritize your most important goals to pursue for the next few weeks/months
- Identify what specific actions will enable you to achieve those goals
- Implement effective strategies to support those actions
- Develop a solution-oriented mindset to keep you achieving
- Identify and navigate challenges that delay your progress

The following questions will guide you to shift your perspective and discover relevant ways to identify solutions and improve your success.

Learn more: [Professional Realignment | Ascend Professional Pathways](#)

Thinking about your priorities, what are your overall goals that you want or need to achieve?

What are the most pressing challenges that you currently face?

Reflecting deeper, try to identify the precise sticking points that are preventing you from achieving your goals:

On a scale of 1-10, where 1 is low and 10 is high:

How would you currently rate the likelihood of you achieving these goals?

How would you currently rate your stress and anxiety levels in relation to achieving these goals?

If you didn't have any limitations, what would you see yourself accomplishing? How would you define success?

Why is achieving these goals important to you? What becomes possible when you reach them?

Describe one small action that you can take right now that would have the greatest influence on reaching your goals while reducing your stress. What will allow you to commit to that action?

List the behaviors needed that would enable you to take the next step to gain more support and clarity:

Chapter 13

Career Accelerator

The **Ascend Career Accelerator Program** is a customized approach to help you in exploring your options, aligning your values, and preparing you for change. It is designed to support and empower you to excel in your long-term career goals and will help you to get started and feel confident in your first step.

Whether you are a junior professional trying to determine your direction, or a seasoned executive looking to level up, the process is focused on your unique goals, aspirations, and abilities. The framework allows for creativity and flexibility and helps to uncover relevant actions you can take to make progress in your professional journey.

Career discovery, planning, and coaching

- Aligning your passions and aspirations
- Skill and attribute assessments
- Customized career plan
- Defining your ideal path

Personal branding and development

- Differentiate yourself and amplify your strengths
- Increase the value you provide to others
- Build your professional network
- Maximizing your potential

Solidifying your options

- Ensuring success in a new role or position
- Galvanizing your leadership presence
- Feeling confident in your decision

The entire process reflects your unique situation, ambitions, resources, and decisions. It is a completely client-centered approach and is custom-tailored to you.

Use this introductory worksheet to assess your current career status. If you find it helpful, consider the full Ascend Career Accelerator Program, which is a robust 3-month program designed to align your passions, skills, and values to better reach your professional aspirations. As your certified career coach, I am committed to empowering you to navigate this journey with confidence, resourcefulness, and adaptability. This program can enable any level of professional who may be in various stages in their careers.

Learn more: [Career Accelerator | Ascend Professional Pathways](#)

Reflect on where you are in your career and where you want to go.

How would you rate yourself on being clear on your career path and what you want to achieve?



(On a scale of 1-10: **Weak-Moderate-Strong**)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How would you rate yourself on being in control of your opportunities?



(On a scale of 1-10: **Weak-Moderate-Strong**)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How would you rate yourself on feeling fulfilled in your career?



(On a scale of 1-10: **Poor-Moderate-Very**)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What are your top 3 qualities that make you unique and allow you to excel in your profession?

1.

2.

3.

Who are the top 3 individuals or groups you can tap into for resources or new opportunities?

1.

2.

3.

What would you say is the most important aspect of your abilities that you need to develop in order to maximize your potential?

What is your ideal timeline to accomplish your professional goals?

Chapter 14

Professional Mission Statement

When reflecting on your career and professional ambitions, what do you see yourself achieving? Where do you want to be in the next 3-5 years? 10 years? How satisfied are you with where you are today? How confident are you in achieving your goals? How would you rate your current plan in getting to where you want to go?

Creating and establishing a professional mission statement can help guide you in your ambitions and better enable your success. How confident are you in your ability to influence the aspects within your control? Would you know where to start?

Use this worksheet as an introduction to better achieve your professional goals. This process of crafting your professional mission statement can help align your values with your ambitions.

This program aims to align one's passions, strengths, and intentions into a cohesive and meaningful approach that they can use to stand out in their professional networks. By identifying and amplifying your unique qualities, skills, and attributes, you can best enable your success in achieving your goals. This will help to drive your purpose, find meaning in your work, and increase your fulfillment in your career.

- Assessing your current brand: Get a baseline of how you are being seen by others.
- Craft your mission statement: Aligning your strengths and purpose.
- Your value: Identifying your relevant value that you provide.
- Your uniqueness: Homing in on how you differ from everyone else.
- Your impact: How you provide meaningful influence on others.
- Putting it all together: Crafting the verbiage and emotions.
- Moving forward: Applying the intention to your goals.

Learn more: [Programs & Tools | Ascend Professional Pathways](#)

Assess your current brand: Are you aligned with your values?

What are the top 3 adjectives that others would say best describe you?

1.
2.
3.

What is most unique about yourself?

Reflecting on the above, how well would you rate that others recognize these attributes?



(On a scale of 1-10: **Weak-Moderate-Strong**)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Your value and impact: How well are you influencing others around you?

Who is your target audience? What specific value do you provide for them?

What do you want people to say about you after they meet or work with you?

List 3 actions that you can focus on that would allow you to stand out more in your network.

1.
2.
3.

Chapter 15

Navigating Imposter Feelings

In this technological day and age where we seem to be living in a perpetual echo chamber, if you speak with enough people, you will realize that most of us are familiar with feelings of inadequacy and doubt. Sometimes, the severity can be so much that it would be debilitating to one's progress in achieving their goals as it can skew one's perception about their capacity for performance. Acknowledging that experiencing Imposter Feelings is common among our colleagues can help in diminishing its effect, however, deliberate action is still needed to overcome its hold on us.

- Being aware of when imposter feelings occur and identifying them as such.
- Homing in on the specific fears and doubts to better overcome them.
- Looking at things objectively and removing the emotional response.
- Identify effective actions to take to move towards results.
- Reflect and reinforce what will continue to help us as we work towards our goals.

This program aims to empower individuals to overcome the deleterious effect that doubts, insecurities, hesitations, and overall imposter feelings can have on themselves. We work through targeted exercises and questions to challenge our perspective and focus on truth, objectives, and actions that will allow us to reframe how we think and feel and ultimately respond to these difficult moments. We identify what strategies can be put in place to keep us on track and accountable for sustainable progress and how to apply effective solutions for more established personal and professional growth

- Identifying their origins: Develop your attention and awareness of when doubt occurs.
- Homing in on doubts & fears: Identifying what you are doubting and pairing solutions.
- Looking at things objectively: Removing your emotional response and shifting perspectives.
- Taking action: Getting active and working towards improvement and reflection and reinforcement for positive change.

Use this worksheet to assess your relationship with doubt and determine how you can best overcome its grasp. This could be helpful in those situations where you are feeling unsure and hesitant and could use a new perspective on how to start moving towards your goals.

Learn more: [Programs & Tools | Ascend Professional Pathways](#)

Being aware of when Imposter Feelings occur and identifying them as such can empower you to shorten their effect and lessen the severity.

How would you define “Imposter Syndrome”? *What words would you use, what emotions do you feel?*

How often would you say you experience these feelings?

- A few times a month
- Weekly
- Daily

What would become possible if you were able to overcome these feelings? What could you achieve?

Removing your emotional response and shifting your perspective.

When you are in the moment of doubt, ask yourself: “Is that actually true or just an emotional reaction?”

Then ask: “How is my current attitude or thinking actually helping me to achieve my goals?”

How is your current mindset enabling your success or preventing it?

Identify immediate actions you can take to reframe your approach.

Oftentimes being alone causes you to stay within one perspective, speaking with others can help shift the viewpoint. In addition, how can you best interrupt the negative spiral when you do experience it? What has helped you in the past to break out of that debilitating mindset?

List three people who you can call or text to talk it through with.

List three activities that you can do to help break you out of that mindset.

Chapter 16

Communicating as a Leader

In this digital age with seemingly less and less direct interaction between people, and the compounding factor that we live a part of our lives online, interpersonal communication is a skill that needs to be continuously developed. Effective communication involves not only how one speaks and transfers information to another, but the meaning and intention behind what we say and what we do. This program focuses on building mindful and calculated means to portray purposeful information with those you work with. We aim for you to be deliberate in how others receive your messages and for you to gain the influence you intend.

- Individuals will work to improve effective and intentional communication between their colleagues
- Increase mindfulness on how one communicates with others to achieve a common objective
- Improve the positive impact of the team's overall performance and support the success of the organization
- Build trust and transparency between staff and to efficiently work together towards common goals
- Aligning one's strengths and natural tendencies to their objectives and promoting engagement in their roles

Use this worksheet as an introduction to improve your communication skills and how to ensure you are sending your intended message to those you work with. Being deliberate and purposeful in how you communicate with others can enable you to better reach your goals and the goals of your organization!

- Intentional Messaging: Analyze how you are being perceived by others and ensure your behavior matches how you want to be portrayed.
- Listening with purpose: Considering the other person's perspective to better align your common objectives.
- Adapting your style: Adjusting how you interact with various colleagues can better align your intentions and ensure progress.
- Strengths & Reflection: Focus on your natural skills and develop areas of improvement.

Learn more: [Programs & Tools | Ascend Professional Pathways](#)

Reflect on your current communication skills that you portray within your workplace.

How would you rate yourself as an effective communicator?



(On a scale of 1-10: **Weak-Moderate-Strong**)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How would you rate yourself as an active listener?



(On a scale of 1-10: **Weak-Moderate-Strong**)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How well is your behavior reflecting your core values within your workplace?



(On a scale of 1-10: **Weak-Moderate-Strong**)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What would you list as your strengths as an effective communicator?

What would you list as the strengths of your colleagues?

Where and how can you get better aligned in your communication styles?

Think of an upcoming interaction you are anticipating having with a particular colleague in your workplace where communication is a key aspect.

Consider this mindset shift where you replace "what do I need to say?" with "what do they need to hear?"

How will that shift in perspective help you to achieve your intended outcome for that interaction?

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to invest in your personal development. I truly hope you found value and meaningful strategies within this e-book. If I were to summarize the past year into one sentiment, it would be to truly align yourself with your passions and purpose.

You may feel deep within you, as I did, that you strive for more in your professional ambitions but ignore it for many years. Although we do face many obstacles that delay us in reaching our aspirations, I encourage you to not be the one standing in the way. As you learned, there are systems and resources to break free from that self-inflicted doubt and paralysis.

Please don't discourage yourself from meaningful achievement when you look at others who have already succeeded to a higher level. Everyone at the summit of the mountain had to start at the base. Don't sell yourself short before you even take the first step. Those higher than you simply started earlier. What's preventing you from getting there yourself is your reluctance to start; it is simply a matter of time and effort. At the end of the day, we are ever just competing with ourselves.

Know that one day you will surpass all of the challenges ahead of you and the very limitations that you feel are so unachievable will eventually be irrelevant. You are meant for amazing accomplishments, and I hope you realize your full potential as the world will surely benefit. Imagine that world where everyone is aligned in their passions and deeply fulfilled within their unique attributes and contributions. Starting with yourself will pay dividends in all aspects of your life.

If any of my experiences or resources inspired or intrigued you, I invite you to reach out to me. I would welcome the opportunity to meet any passionate individual who is seeking fulfillment. Thank you again for your time and attention, I truly value the relationships and connections I have made over my career, and I look forward to many more.

All the best,

Thomas Passalacqua

About the Author

Thomas Passalacqua is a certified Executive Coach who 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. He then transitioned into dental sales, where he was an award-winning consultant who trained and mentored other sales professionals. Transitioning again, Thomas was the director of business development for a growing group practice in the Northeast focusing on sales and marketing for the acquisition team. In his executive coaching and professional training platform, *Ascend Professional Pathways LLC*, he works with various industry leaders to help them gain clarity and reach the next level in their businesses and careers and overcome doubts, fears, and uncertainty. His specialized coaching process empowers his clients to set specific goals, overcome obstacles, and take meaningful action. Thomas lives in New York with his wife, two children, and family dog. Outside of his professional endeavors, Thomas enjoys getting out into nature and often walks his dog around town, wrestling with his kids, playing guitar, or exercising in his garage gym.

Visit Thomas's website at ascendpropathways.com and feel free to email him at thomas@ascendpropathways.com.

