

CREATING AN ACTION PLAN

Time: 1 hr. min. **Age:** All

WHAT IS AN ACTION PLAN?

An action plan is nothing more (or less) than carefully listing all the things that your team needs to do. It outlines your strategy for completing the project.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOU?

- Action plans make your work more intentional.
- It is difficult to hold each other accountable for the project goals unless there is a written plan of work to be accomplished.

WHEN IS THIS USEFUL?

Once you have clearly defined your problem, decided on what project to do, and power mapped.

MATERIALS: pen and paper

CORE CONCEPTS: personal improvement, accountability, planning for success

ACTIVITIES / STEPS:

1. Pre-Planning: To create an action plan, start by looking at and thinking about the resources and obstacles that will affect the project idea. Keep the following questions in mind when developing your action plan:

1. What is the 1 overall goal? Write one concise sentence as a detailed mission statement.
2. How much time do I have to accomplish this objective? Write the end date MM/DD/YY.
3. What information, resources and power do I need to implement this mission?
4. What are the possible barriers I could encounter?
5. What are the alternative courses of action if barriers do interfere with my successful completion of this goal?
6. How will I measure the success of this overall goal?
7. How will I praise myself for accomplishing the small goals leading up to my big goal?
8. How will I reward myself for accomplishing my big goal?
9. How will I discipline myself if I mess up along the way to my big goal?
10. What will be the worst case scenario if I do not accomplish my goal? Write this down on your action plan paper so that you can and will look at it often to keep yourself on track.

2. Intermediate (Bigger) Goals: The next step is to begin thinking of the large things you need to do to get to the end goal. Helpful questions might include: Overall, what do I want to accomplish? What things do I need to do in order to finish this goal? How will I know I have succeeded (how will you measure success)? This is a good time to revisit (and even potentially revise) your project's mission statement.

3. Prioritize goals: Which goals are most important (which goals are absolutely necessary to complete your project)?

4. Which Comes First? Draft a plan of goals in sequential (numbered) order. You might have to come up with a series of preliminary goals that need to be accomplished in order to arrive at the final goal, and now is the time to get that all figured out, written down, planned, and dates for implementation added to your action plan. Sometimes you have to put off your major goals until later, sometimes you need to work on more than one goal at the same time. While you may not be ready to develop a specific weekly timeline at this point, try to prioritize tasks—what needs to happen first? What is the logical way to order the goals so you can complete your project? What dates are you confident you can do each task by?

4a. Possible mini-exercise (can be used for step 3 Prioritize and step 4 Which Comes First?): Once you have identified your major goals, sometimes it is good to rank the goals in order of importance and/or the order in which they should be done.

5. Brainstorm: Next, take one of the project's intermediate goals—i.e. if the project is starting a community garden, one of the project's major goals may be to make sure that the garden is visible in the community and that neighbors are encouraged to participate. Begin by brainstorming a big list of all the things that need to be done to implement that goal. What are different possible strategies for promoting the garden to the community? How would neighbors feel welcome? What would make people want to participate? This list can be huge, so try to think as broadly as possible to get everything down on paper.

6. Setting Objectives: Building on the large list of *possible* steps, next try to think of more specific objectives that will enable you to reach this goal. While you may have many ideas of how to make the garden visible (buying billboard ads, giving away vegetables, etc.) some ideas may be more realistic than others. Good objectives clearly state how you will reach a larger goal. It may be helpful to keep in mind that a good objective is "SMART," or:

- **Specific:** It addresses the matter specifically
- **Measurable:** It can be measured to determine whether it has been achieved.
- **Achievable:** It is within your means and capacity to achieve this goal.
- **Realistic:** It is practical and can be accomplished within a reasonable time frame.
- **Time-bound:** The time period for reaching it is clearly specified.

7. Setting Tasks: For each objective, brainstorm all the possible steps that would be required to complete the objective. Next, prioritize these tasks. Which things are more important than others? Which intermediate steps must be done first before moving onto other steps? What different strategies are appropriate to each step? Try to make a logical progression of each thing you need to do.

8. Creating Timelines: Next, match these preliminary goals and immediate steps up with timelines. What is realistic to get accomplished in a certain time? While timelines are important, keep in mind that they may change as you move forward into implementing this project, but nothing much ever gets done without a good plan.

9. Creating accountability mechanisms: What things do you need to do to make sure the work gets done on time? Sometimes it helps to have someone as an accountability checker, they check in on you to make sure you are doing what you need to do to accomplish this goal.

10. Plan celebrations! As long as you are doing all this work, you might think how you will celebrate this accomplishment!!!!!!!!!!!!

EVALUATION:

- What was it like to make this action plan?
- Was it difficult to make decisions on what to do? What can you do differently for your next action plan that could make it easier for you to make your next action plan?
- How will this help you get your work done? What can you do to be accountable for your own action plan?

WORKSHEET BEFORE YOUR ACTION PLAN

Pre-Planning:

1. What is the 1 overall goal? Write one concise sentence as a detailed mission statement. *(ie: Graduate college with a Bachelor of Science degree by June 2015 and an overall 3.5 GPA+)*
2. How much time do I have to accomplish this overall goal? Write the end date MM/DD/YY.
3. What information, resources and power do I need to implement this mission?
4. What are the possible barriers I could encounter?
5. What are the alternative courses of action if barriers do interfere with my successful completion of this goal?
6. How will I measure the success of this overall goal?
7. How will I praise myself for accomplishing the small goals leading up to my big goal?
8. How will I reward myself for accomplishing my big goal?
9. How will I discipline myself if I mess up along the way to my big goal?

10. What will be the worst case scenario if I do not accomplish my goal? You will also write this down on your action plan paper so that you can and will look at it often to keep yourself on track.

Intermediate (Bigger) Goals:

What are the large things I need to do to get to the end goal?

Overall, what do I want to accomplish?

What things do I need to do in order to finish this goal?

How will I know I have succeeded (how will you measure success)?

This is a good time to revisit (and even potentially revise) your project's mission statement.

Prioritize goals:

Which goals are most important (which goals are absolutely necessary to complete your project)?

Setting Tasks:

For each objective, brainstorm all the possible steps that would be required to complete the objective.

Next, prioritize these tasks.

Which things are more important than others?

Which intermediate steps must be done first before moving onto other steps?

____/____/____ _____

____/____/____ _____

____/____/____ _____

____/____/____ OVERALL GOAL:

ie: 06/20/15 Bachelor of Science degree, 3.5 GPA Degree from my college

Creating Timelines: Next, match these preliminary goals and steps up with timelines. What is realistic to get accomplished in a certain time?

Creating accountability mechanisms:

What things do you need to do to make sure the work gets done on time?

Who will be your accountability checker?

Can you answer yes to all of these? If so, proceed. If not, revise your plan.

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Plan celebrations! As long as you are doing all this work, you might think how you will celebrate this accomplishment!!!!!!!!!!!!

EVALUATION:

- What was it like to make this action plan?
- Was it difficult to make decisions on what to do? What can you do differently for your next action plan that could make it easier for you to make your next action plan?
- How will this help you get your work done? What can you do to be accountable for your own action plan?