6 steps to reach and retain the highest levels of individual commitment to improve the quality of your personal and business life.

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Before we start one of my clients want to say something nice!

“As a past client of Steve’s, I have been inspired by his commitment to his clients to help them to create order from the chaotic environment that often surrounds them. I am a teacher, and I believe that teaching is about **listening, giving** and **supporting** – **listening** to what the student wants – **giving** the tools and the strategies needed – and **supporting** their efforts to make it happen. In this eBook, Steve is your teacher, sharing many of his tools and strategies with you. You can’t get the other two things from a book - **listening** and **supporting** - and I know from experience that these are the things that will make the biggest difference to you and your business. So enjoy the tips that Steve has shared in this book, and give him a call if you need more than tools and strategies – I did!”

Kay Lyons  
Director  
Alfa Test  
Brisbane Australia  
April 2012
INTRODUCTION

“At the moment of COMMITMENT the universe conspires to assist you”
Johanne Wolfgang van Goethe

ABOUT ME

I have been empowering people to reach their potential in their personal and business lives since 2000. We help identify the problem or roadblock, set goals and ensure action is taken on whatever steps are necessary to be successful. In essence this is a basic coaching model except that our approach combines the science of motivation with the process of business improvement. This combination is vital and will be discussed throughout the book.

I am a mentor, coach, consultant, trainer and facilitator, all of which are needed in some combination to meet the many challenges people and business owner’s face today. More information about me is shown on my web site at www.performancekeys.com.au.
1. EXCITEMENT VERSUS FRUSTRATION

I am always intrigued when working with clients and observing the characteristics of those that “commit with a passion” and those that simply “commit in a lukewarm fashion”. Chapter 5 explains the key differences in detail.

I am also frustrated to the extent that many people have successful businesses and yet their “current” performance falls exceedingly short of their “potential” performance. Although many appear to demonstrate a high level of “surface commitment” the reality fails to live up to what is expected. Winston Churchill’s quote says it nicely; (The capitals are my emphasis)

“It’s not simply enough to do your best, you must do Whatever Is Required”

Many business owners fail to recognize that the business asset they have at their disposal can provide:

1. A strong cash flow providing opportunities for wealth creation by investing in other assets such as property, shares and superannuation.
2. A valuable future retirement nest egg.
3. A business where the owner can reduce their day to day work load over time through the use of efficient work practices and processes including technology. This will enable them to seamlessly manage the business without loss of profits and/or control.
4. Positioning for possible full or partial sale or transition to family members, management or external third parties.

Of course the benefits of commitment do not rest solely in the domain of the business owner. At a personal level you have the opportunity to change your life for the better and positively impact on people that you love and care about.

However the desired outcomes do not come without some form of planning, commitment and execution. This is why I wrote this book, so it’s imperative that you understand the following as key starting points.

1. Be very clear about your desired business and/or personal outcomes and possess a strong desire for their achievement.
2. Have a very clear understanding of what is required for these goals to be achieved. If that is not obvious at the outset then you commit to find out what is required.

Once agreed upon my process is that clients and I sign a joint letter of commitment that provides a clear roadmap for our performances to be measured against. Experience has demonstrated that this step is critical to the success of the improvement process.

Around 50% of first marriages fail and I don’t want our business partnership to be one of them. Failure is not an option!
2. WHAT IS COMMITMENT? WHAT IS NOT COMMITMENT?

"Commitment, that ever elusive trait often promised yet rarely delivered in full and even measure to satisfy the intent to which it was given”
Steve Clark 2012

My definition of commitment is:

“Doing everything in your power to deliver on the promises you have made to yourself and others in the pursuit of worthwhile goals, actions and/or obligations”

Note that the emphasis is on doing everything in your power which is not the same as “doing your best”. Doing your best is often a throwaway line that allows one to withdraw from their commitment because they feel they have done enough. When people say they have “done their best” I am initially skeptical until they are able to convince me otherwise.

After all this is their success we are both striving for and I certainly can’t ‘drag people along kicking and screaming’; they need to want it and be prepared to do whatever is required. At times that will be very reasonable and at times unreasonable; be prepared for both.

In simplistic terms people commit for 2 main reasons:
1. They want to (Intrinsic Motivation or internally generated).
2. They have to (Extrinsic Motivation or externally generated).

Both reasons can be powerful motivators. For example if you have your back “against the wall” where achieving success is literally a matter of “life and death” then you are more likely to persist and push through the pain barriers along the way. No absolute guarantees, but more likely. I describe this as an example of Extrinsic Motivation.

On the other hand Intrinsic Motivation is doing something not because you Have To but because you Want To; you consider it’s ‘the right thing to do’. Although not restricted to this group alone younger people are more motivated by why they are doing something rather than simply being told by a parent or boss to “just do it”!

A. OTHER BENEFITS FROM BEING COMMITTED?

Genuine commitment builds character, trust, dependability, confidence, self esteem, and you reap the emotional, mental, physical and spiritual benefits accruing from having achieved a worthwhile goal.

B. WHAT ARE WE COMMITTING TO AND WHEN DOES IT FINISH?

Commitment to a cause, belief, goal, dream, behavior, outcome or action. Committing means ‘pursuing until that has been achieved and/or there are absolutely valid reasons to discontinue and/or change’"
The only valid reasons I would accept are;

1. Outcome has been achieved.
2. The goal is no longer worthwhile, lost its appeal and hence motivation.
3. External events have occurred beyond your control which means you can no longer continue.
4. Health or other reasons prevent you continuing.
3. THE STAGES OF COMMITMENT

The stages of commitment are:

1) **Totally committed** from day 1 and maintain that throughout until outcomes achieved

2) **Totally committed** from day 1 but fail to sustain that commitment

3) **Somewhat committed** from day 1 and whose commitment increases over time

4) **Somewhat committed** from day 1 which fails to increase it and in fact it wanes/falls

5) **Not committed** at all from day 1

The reality is that people falling into categories 1 and 3 are ideal to work with; I would not give up on 2; 4 is extremely doubtful and 5 likely a waste of time.

So you can imagine how important it is to gauge people’s commitment at all stages during the process. There will be highs and lows and it’s important to recognize this and, as a professional advisor, to react and adjust the strategy and approach accordingly.

4. COMMITMENT CHALLENGES

Based on my practical experience they can range from;

1. Committing too quickly without clarification of the precise goals and/or what is required.

2. Lack of organisation, planning and process skills.

3. Other people that you rely on fail to deliver on their promises.

4. Lack of accountability and/or consequences for failing to commit.

5. Expecting results too quickly.

6. ‘Genuinely’ unforeseen events causing the priorities to be placed elsewhere and efforts to be re-directed.

7. Self Sabotage by sub consciously not believing they can deliver on their commitments and/or are worthy of the resultant benefits.

8. Lack of mental toughness, personal strengths and other related attributes necessary to push through and overcome obstacles.

9. Health or related issues.

10. Sometime a person’s ‘ego’ gets in the way and they are simply stubborn and recalcitrant in terms of making the required changes to commit.

The solutions for the above will be shared throughout this book.
5. THE SIX STEPS

1. Creating the initial commitment
2. Clarifying what commitment means and what commitment does not mean
3. Commitment by showing intent
4. Clarifying expectations and implementation
5. Reflection and review
6. Maintaining the commitment

A BIT MORE ABOUT ME - AND A BIT ABOUT YOU

Since 2000, I have been a practicing business coach, advisor, mentor, trainer and occasional consultant which means I am coming up to my twelfth year as a full time self employed practitioner. I am not an academic. However, I have read countless business and professional development books, attended numerous courses and conferences to supplement my practical knowledge gained in the field.

This book is primarily aimed at 3 sets of people;

1. Individuals looking to improve and sustain their own commitment levels.
2. Individuals responsible for people who are keen to improve and sustain commitment at all levels throughout the business.
3. Professional advisors, coaches and others who can utilize some of the strategies to make a more positive impact with their clients.
CHAPTER 1

The Motivation to Commit

“...This is the true joy in life, being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one” George Bernard Shaw

1. THE POWERFUL WHY

The Powerful WHY is the strong desire or motivation to deliver on a promise made to ourselves or others. This WHY will help sustain the motivation required to start, persist and overcome the obstacles that will inevitably be encountered along the way. Your motivation or lack of it could be a result of:

- Your frustration in knowing that you are not delivering on your potential; you know you can do a whole lot better than you are.
- Your promises made to an individual or team in a business environment.
- Your promise made to your family and/or friends.
- You have no choice: Your back is against the wall and you have no option other than to commit and be successful.

THE HUMAN CONDITION

Studies undertaken by Dr Daniel Kahne-man (who won the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2002) proved beyond any reasonable doubt that we behave emotionally first and rationally second. Knowing this reinforces the need to ensure there is a deep emotional connection to the desired outcome that will motivate and sustain your commitment.

When presented with an opportunity to commit, you need to be sure that you have this ‘powerful why’. Whilst working with a client we ensure that the desired outcomes are more of a ‘must have’ rather than just a ‘nice to have’.

I believe Will Smith (the actor) sums it up best when he says;

"This is what I want, and I’m prepared to die for it"

That is obviously a very dramatic and arguably over the top statement but WOW does that drive home the point!

HOW BADLY DO YOU WANT IT? WHAT ARE YOU PREPARED TO DO?
2. COMMITMENT IN PRACTICE

People often promise without really exploring and taking the time to understand what it means. Some people say ‘count me in’ or ‘I’ll do that’ to simply please others. This often results in disappointment and a lowering of trust levels with that person in the future.

In my own practice, I have introduced a ‘commitment test’ where I ask people a series of questions to determine whether I believe they have the commitment as well as the willpower to carry through on what is required for success. Of course everyone is not blessed with those attributes in full abundance from the beginning but it’s the willingness to learn and acquire that captures my interest most.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THIS IS WHAT I WANT TO ACHIEVE</th>
<th>BENEFITS OF ACHIEVING</th>
<th>CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ACHIEVING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘insert goal or outcome’</td>
<td>‘insert responses’</td>
<td>‘insert potential consequences’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce the level of staff attrition by 20%.</td>
<td>Reduce costs of hiring and training new staff; improve retention of key staff; improve engagement, morale and productivity.</td>
<td>Business could be put at risk; other staff consider leaving; downward spiral and erosion of culture.</td>
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**Practical Examples**

Examples of a powerful WHY that some of my clients have allowed me to share are:

- “To leave a lasting legacy my children can be proud of and provide them with a level of financial security that I never had”
- “To build our dream home on 100 acres of pristine bushland in the Gold Coast hinterland that will also serve as a small refuge for endangered bird and animal species”
- “To create a company that is leading the field in terms of environmental solutions in Australia and to be invited to speak at International conferences having being recognised as the industry expert”

3. OTHER KEY FACTORS

A. TRACK RECORD OF SUCCESS

If you have committed to something in the past, been successful and enjoyed both the journey and the fruits of your labour then you should feel more confident about continuing to commit.

**Why is this Important?**

Reflecting on previous successes sets up a powerful ‘can do’ in our subconscious mind. This, combined with the power of Visualization and Affirmation techniques, is a
powerful brain motivator. These techniques and more are part of our coaching program undertaken with clients. (See Chapter 5 on Sustainment).

B. CONFRONTING OUR FEARS

As the popular saying goes; “When you face the thing you fear, the death of fear is certain”.

Statistically, we know that 92% of people’s fears never actually eventuate. However what is less clear is how many of that 92% were a result of people taking action and doing what the quote says; ‘confronting the fear’ which in turn resulted in an actual ‘quelling of the fear’.

We will never know except that my strong belief combined with experience leads me to conclude that facing one’s fears head on is a far better course of action than simply ‘burying one’s head in the sand’ like an ostrich and hoping for the best. That’s like not submitting tax returns for 5 years and hoping the tax department will simply forget because they are busy with other matters.

C. Doing what you love

“If the majority of your time is spent doing what you love then you will never work another day in your life”

Popular saying

Why is this Important?

- Whatever you commit to, if it’s doing what you already love then your chances of being successful are significantly enhanced.
- If not, then what you are committing to must not occupy so much time that it takes you away from doing what you love unless it is discovering just what your passion and love really is.
- Don’t commit to something that you know you are going to hate. This means being really honest with yourself and others.

As the above quote infers ‘find out what it is you love doing and spend most of your time participating in that endeavour’. Now I can hear some of you saying ‘that’s easy to say but hard to do’ because we all have so many priorities like finding a job/career, raising a family and juggling commitments etc.

Of course that is all true and again the reality is that far too many people will be swept along with the tide of life and end up being passengers rather than captaining their own ship. However despite all of these challenges there are people who do make or find the time to discover what it is they love to do and work in that industry, profession or calling even if later in life.

AS HARD AS IT MAY BE, PEOPLE ARE DOING IT. WHY CAN’T IT BE YOU?
D. UNEXPECTED BENEFITS

Positive changes often lead to other positive results that were not anticipated at the time of committing. When I’m working with clients I will ask them to recall and reflect on past events that may have yielded surprising positive results. This can provide a further stimulus to commit to the opportunity they currently have.

At a personal level, when I made a decision in 2010 to forego alcohol for 12 months I found that initial commitment and the resultant action steps led to the following unexpected benefits:

- I closely regulated food I ate, particularly avoiding fatty foods and unhealthy snacks.
- I prepared healthy meals in advance, something that was unheard of before!
- My exercise regime increased and was planned for in advance.
- I was drinking more water.
- My sleep definitely improved.
- Overall I felt a whole lot better about myself in terms of my self esteem (plus my family and friends gave me some nice pats on the back).

*PS This alcohol restriction was not a commitment from any Alcoholics Anonymous meeting it was simply something I decided to do!