

# Winning Way 2

## Focus on Positive Outcomes and Expect Success

*Imagination is more important than knowledge.*

—Albert Einstein, physicist and  
Nobel Prize winner in physics<sup>1</sup>

Organizations across the world are clamoring for ambitious and creative people who focus on opportunities and not obstacles—people who see the possibilities and not just the problems. In short, people who would absolutely agree with Albert Einstein’s approach to work and life.

Unfortunately, these visionary, problem-solving people are harder to find than a contact lens in two feet of snow. Collectively, most of us have lost our ability to see beyond what we believe is wrong, is broken, or won’t work or, worse, what we believe is possible. Pessimism and negativity appear to have the upper hand. But so what? You and I are on a personal crusade to change all that and develop a healthier mind-set. So let’s get going by dissecting the problem.

### **Getting Honest**

As I noted in the beginning of this book, it’s really hard for us to be honest with ourselves or even others. Even when we know full well we’re to blame for a problem—whether it’s a minor one or a complete train wreck—we just can’t

be honest enough to look in the mirror and place the blame where it really belongs.

Admittedly, this approach is effective in some ways. It does absolve you of any blame or responsibility for the problem, and thus you avoid embarrassment or maybe your career stays on track as a result. The downside, however, because you spend all your creative energy and time trying to find ways to blame others, is that you miss the opportunity to offer an effective solution or suggestion to fix the problem or situation. You, and perhaps your organization, just keep rolling along making the same bad decisions. In practical terms, this means that you only focus on:

- What others think about you rather than what you think about yourself—forget having self-esteem.
- Your vulnerabilities and not on your strengths—forget getting picked for the A-team.
- Not standing out and allowing others to shine—forget that promotion or the possibility of developing a valuable friendship or relationship.
- Anger and resentment—forget much of a social life. Who wants to hear all the pessimism, blame, and self-pity you bring to conversations?

Does that sound like a good choice to you? Of course not, and it's not a choice you would consciously make. The fact is, for most of us, our negative attitudes grow over time—one unchallenged, but remembered, insult, rebuff, or put-down at a time, or one missed leadership or take-charge opportunity at a time. It's the seemingly small, insignificant cuts that add up over time to a big problem. By the time we realize that our blaming and excuse habit is allowing others to define who and what we are, it's too late and only those

who are truly willing to put the time, sweat, and energy into clawing their way out of the deep excuse hole will ever get out. That's what this book is all about. It's an acknowledgment of your fear and pain, and it's a hand down the long shaft of despair ready to pull you out into a better future.

That's why I offered Albert Einstein's quote at the beginning of this chapter. He nails the idea with powerful simplicity. You must start imagining a different future and more positive outcomes and success no matter what you "know" to be true from past experiences. Imagining a different outcome trumps past experience every time.

## **Still, It's Not That Simple**

Even with years of experience helping people find new and more productive paths, I still wonder why, in a group of people with similar experiences, grooming, schooling, coaching, or mentoring, some people sink while others soar.

Clearly, an individual's innate ability to maintain a positive attitude no matter what life throws at him or her is a significant piece to this attitude puzzle. I see this dynamic play out all around the world in the seminars and workshops, whether I am speaking to an audience in Beijing, Istanbul, Shanghai, Holland, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, the Bahamas, Bangalore, or Oslo, or among local clients, friends, or even family members. Once you are stuck in blame mode, it's incredibly hard to switch gears. It's like trying to open a jar with wet hands; traction is nearly impossible to find. From the outside, you can advise, mentor, or coach someone until you are blue in the face about the upside of focusing on what you *do* have rather than what you *don't* have, but until the metaphoric "light" turns on for someone who's caught in the cycle of excuse making, it's nearly impossible for them to break through to the light.

## The Roots of Change

First of all, change begins when we see ourselves as outcome magnets. That's how my mentor Mike Jones—someone who I know focuses on positive outcomes and expects success—frames it. I explained to him my grand “magnet” conclusion after years of believing that focus alone was enough to ensure success and wins in school, in collegiate football, and in business. “‘If I keep one eye on the ball and one eye on the goal, I'll surely succeed,’ seemed a logical course of action,” I told Mike. “Boy was I mistaken. Without the expectation of success—thank you, Norman Vincent Peale and Dr. Wayne Dyer—focus would only take me so far. Focus is mainly about moving forward, not giving up, persistence. I had plenty of that. Expectation provides a direct connection to the world of possibility and it's all about the mystical or perhaps even spiritual idea that the universe is actually rooting for your success if you simply ask for it.”

Here's what personal empowerment speaker Rod Hairston has to say in his 2006 book, *Are You Up for The Challenge?* about the idea that whatever you send out is exactly what you will back:

Instead of wanting not to be poor, you need to hold the thought that you want abundance.... The intensity of emotion behind your thought adds to the strength of the attraction energy. So, the more vividly you picture what you want and the more you ratchet up your enthusiasm about achieving your desired result, the more likely you are to produce it. The intensity of negative emotion works the same way.<sup>2</sup>

Esther and Jerry Hicks, in their book *Ask and It Is Given: Learning to Manifest Your Desires*, offer a similar perspective on expectations:

By the powerful *Law of Attraction*, you draw to you the essence of whatever you are predominantly thinking about. So if you are predominantly thinking about the things that you desire, your life experience reflects those things. And, in the same way, if you are predominantly thinking about what you do not want, your life experience reflects those things.

When you understand the *Law of Attraction*, you are never surprised by what occurs in your experience, for you understand that you have invited every bit of it in—through your own thought process. Nothing can occur in your life experience without your invitation of it through your thought.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, my good friend Trish Uhl, founder and CEO of Owl's Ledge LLC, is what I'd call a living example of the notion that what you think becomes your reality. Here's a compelling, moving story she told me recently that really brings this point home.

Trish's story begins with her waking up in what she thought was a horror movie set. Her skin was swollen and on fire, and not only were her feet in straps, but she also discovered that her body had wire leads connected to a machine. "*It was like waking up in an alien body,*" she told me as a teaser to open up the story of her battle with cancer and the two weeks she had lost in an intensive care unit as doctors and nurses struggled to save her life. The only good news in her diagnosis—an extremely aggressive form of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma—was that it responded well to chemotherapy, even though she said the treatments made her feel like she'd been run over by an 18-wheel transfer truck.

*"Before my hospitalization and cancer diagnosis, my definition of 'success' included doing good work (in my work and community and running a reputable, rewarding*

*consulting business,”* Trish said. *“Waking up in the ICU that day in April, I redefined ‘success’ to mean basic survival.”* Later, success meant relearning basic human functioning, including elimination (how to go to the bathroom) and how to walk again. *“I wanted my life back,”* Trish told me, and she pushed hard to get it. However, at some point that determination got in the way of her recovery so Trish told me she had to redefine success as “surrendering,” to acknowledge how sick she was, so that her focus could be solely on recovery.

*“It was only then that I truly began to heal and started on my journey back to health,”* she said, before adding, *“And I made it back!”* Now, with this experience behind her, Trish sums up her success wisdom this way: *“It took my battle with a catastrophic illness for me to learn that having the appropriate focus and expectation [of a positive outcome] will change your life. I know it saved mine.”*

## Exercise

Do you think you can avoid “distraction thinking,” and begin to focus positively on the outcome and expect success? If you’re ready to move on, then here are a few basic steps that will start you down that path.

**1. Think deeply about your goals.** Get a thorough, clear picture in your head and in your heart of the goal you want to achieve. You should be able to touch it, taste it, smell it, and hear it speak to you. Can you clearly articulate your goal to others? You might surround yourself with pictures and reminders about how you will achieve your goal. I have a vision board hanging on my office wall that I consistently look at throughout the course of the day. I use a standard-size flipchart sheet of paper, positioned to hang on the wall in landscape fashion. Then I use markers along with cutouts from old magazines and tape to start visioning. (The ratio of

pictures to my words is about 50/50.) “Jim’s Vision Board” is written at the top, and the pictures and words that I place and write on it are a constant source of encouragement and inspiration. I include posts such as the places where I want to speak (Bangkok, India, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong, and Europe) in the next few years. I already have commitments to speak in India and Kuala Lumpur in 2012. I also have a note on my board about starting work toward my PhD in 2012.

**2. Remind yourself *why* you want the goal.** *Why?* is one of those great questions we often fail to ask even when it turns out to be the most important question of all. You need to have a clear understanding of why you want to achieve your goal because the *why* drives the actions you take. For example, if you wanted to move, then asking why you want to move out of your home would be an important question. The reason might be to shorten your commute, to find a better school for your children, or to reduce expenses. Stating that you’d like to move without a reason other than you “feel like it,” might not pass the motivation, logic, or sanity test.

If you need a little help getting to the *why* of your goal, use the Why Detector Tool Exercise that follows or go to [www.noexcuseguide.com](http://www.noexcuseguide.com).

—*Why Detector Tool Exercise*—

What’s your goal? Write your goal down as clearly and succinctly as possible.

---

---

---

Why is attaining this goal important to you?  
List three really good reasons.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Once you obtain or reach your goal, how will it make you feel?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**3. Visualize yourself obtaining your goal.** Visualization is a much-used technique for one reason: It works. See yourself accepting the diploma. See yourself on the plane going to a destination you desire. See yourself making a successful presentation (you can channel Alex, the Rutgers IEMBA student from the preface, if you wish). See yourself walking down the aisle with your soul mate. See yourself walking into your manager's office to inform her that you have accepted position with another organization. Pretend that you made a video recording of your success, and play it over and over in your head.

The following are some of my favorite techniques to burn your visualized success into your brain and being, using your eyes, mouth, feet, head, and hands:

*Eyes:* I close my eyes and imagine that I see my goal come to fruition. While imagining this scene, I create the time of day, the weather, the season, those with

me, and how I feel. I even visualize what I'm wearing and the cologne I have on.

*Mouth:* Share your vision with others. I find that telling others helps me to get clear and focused. It makes me intentional. I imagine the reaction of others and listen to their feedback.

*Feet:* If you can go the place where you want to imagine your success will happen, take the trip. It's a standard part of any presenter's routine to visit the venue of a presentation before the engagement begins. It really does work.

*Head:* While I'm imagining my goal, I think *big*. I'm not just going to fly to India; I'm going to fly first class. I'm not just going to write a book on personal responsibility and accountability; I'm going to write a *New York Times* best-seller.

*Hands:* When I travel, I bring along conversation-starting materials to get more people on my "Dream Team." If someone asks me about the item I'm carrying—a book, a magazine, or even an item of clothing—I use the conversation to engage others in the vision I have.

**4. Change your mental channel to root out pessimistic or negative thoughts.** You change the channel if the show or video you're watching turns out to be terrible, so why not switch the channel in your mind? The key point here is to be in charge of what you choose to focus on. Choose thoughts that will help, not hurt you. Again, I focus on:

- Seeing my workshop participants embracing my message and getting out of their comfort zone.
- Traveling to incredible places to speak and teach.

- Seeing the prospective client nod his head yes, indicating that we have a deal.
- Seeing how I grow spiritually and emotionally with my family.
- Developing ways to reinvent myself and my company and ways to continue to bring value to my clients, customers, and friends.

## 5 Ways to Get Your Focus Back on Track

Even with all the work you do visualizing your success and eliminating excuses from your life, you're bound to get off track. If this happens to you, use the Five R tools to set things right:

1. **Refocus**—by finding a quiet place away from distractions and thinking about your goal and really examine your *why* reasons.
2. **Revisit**—your vision board. Study it and perhaps add to it.
3. **Read**—something powerful and uplifting. Develop a reading list of books, Websites, blogs, and so forth to go to just in case negativity creeps in.
4. **Resist**—the temptation to give voice to any negativity in your mind.
5. **Review**—what you've accomplished thus far on your journey to your goal.

## A Specific Plan

It's all well and good to say you're going to make changes, but you will still need a specific plan to make something happen. Here are some of my favorite techniques to get it done and make a plan.

1. Break down the attainment of your goal into a set of specific steps that must be accomplished to reach your goal.
2. Contact your accountability partners and enlist their support. Perhaps they can help you with your step-by-step list and make valuable suggestions.
3. Establish creative rewards you can give yourself when you reach certain points in your journey toward your goal.
4. Use your social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Team JIMPACT on LinkedIn, or other networks you participate in) to solicit help and advice.
5. Create a business plan for your future success.
6. Contact former coaches or mentors for their guidance.
7. Relax and stop stressing while you regroup and visualize that all is in order and that you're ontrack and moving forward.

## STOP and START Personal Action Plan



Stop

STOP using these typical excuses to not focus on positive outcomes and expect success:

- I'm easily distracted.
- It seems like everyone is against me.
- I don't believe in all that "pie-in-the-sky" stuff.
- I can only do one thing at a time. Besides, I don't need help from anyone else. I've always been able to take of things myself.



Start

START using these timely exclamations to focus on positive outcomes and expect success:

- Beginning today I will FOPO (focus on positive outcomes) and ES (expect success)!
- I am not my past!
- I'm not going to see the glass half-empty or half-full. I'm going to see the *pitcher* (or picture) filled to capacity!
- I'm shifting my energy and my mind-set to practice being positive. I'm turning in my fault-finding membership card!

### START, STOP, CONTINUE DOING Habits

Now that you've given some thought to focusing on positive outcomes and expecting success as a way to rid your life of excuse making, add other **START Doing**, **STOP Doing**, and **CONTINUE Doing** habits that will help you attain this goal.



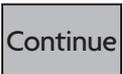
I will **START** Doing:

- ✓ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- ✓ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- ✓ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



I will **STOP** Doing:

- ✓ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- ✓ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- ✓ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



I will **CONTINUE** Doing:

- ✓ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- ✓ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- ✓ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### Twitter/Facebook Affirmations

Post or tweet your one key takeaway thought, quote, phrase, or lesson learned in this chapter. Enlist your social network community of friends and colleagues to support your efforts to make positive changes in your life.

Make a note of your Twitter or Facebook post here:

---

---

---

---

---