

# 6 habits that turn dreams into reality



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When I was growing up, I wanted to be an entrepreneur. I discussed this aspiration with career advisors, family and friends. I outlined my plans in university student kitchens at three in the morning. It was the main conversation in the staff cafeteria of the large corporation I joined to tide me over until I launched my enterprise. I met up with an old friend whom I had not seen for fifteen years, and we chatted about old times. After the talk of foreign assignments, pension plans and leadership roles had died off, I mentioned that I was looking to start my own company. My friend took my hands in hers, looked me in the eye and said, “ Ric, you’ve been talking about that dream for twenty years. Don’t you think it’s time to do something about it?”

Walt Disney once said, “ The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing.” I finally turned my dream into a reality, not by wishing upon a star,

but by converting it into a concrete vision. Today, I own my own leadership development company.

## **Dreams and visions are quite different.**

Dreams are... Visions are...

Inward	Outward
looking	looking
Ephemeral	Enduring
Aspirational	Intentional

A dream is something, a vision does something; a dream is a place to be, a vision is a place to go. A vision, in other words, is more structured, intentional, enduring and rooted in daily living than mere wishful thinking.

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In his seminal text, *Practical Wisdom*, Robert Fritz describes a vision as a hybrid between future state (the result you want to create) and current reality (the starting point). Fritz argues there is an inherent tension between these two states that can help you “organize your actions, focus your values, and clearly see what is relevant in current reality.”

## **Moving from one to the other.**

And herein lies the secret of turning ephemeral dreams into tangible outcomes, of launching that company that's been on the bucket list for decades, or publishing that novel that's been languishing in the bottom drawer since the dawn of time -- it's being able to structure the dream into something that inspires action and momentum.

Here are six habits that can help turn dreams into tangible outcomes:

### **1. Materialize your dream using visualization.**

Visualization, or what Shakti Gowain calls ' Creative visualization' in her , is a technique in creating what you want from life using the power of imagination. Using some common visualization techniques can help participants convert their dreams into future possibilities. Sportsmen and women, for example, use visualization to inspire them toward excellence and success in competitive events. Visualization techniques are also widely used in business contexts for people to create goals and aspirations for themselves.

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### **2. Prioritize your dreams.**

One of the habits in Covey's , is to begin with the end in mind. Having a clear idea of what you want to achieve and being able to prioritize sundry aspirations into a single sustainable " highest goal," as Michael Ray terms it, is a way of beginning to work strategically with your dreams. Goals should have a degree of tension --not too removed from current reality (which will make them impossible to achieve), neither should they be easily attainable.

Consider an elastic band. A slack elastic band has no tension. An

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overstretched elastic band can snap. Fixing a goal which is challenging, but not impossible, motivates us to work toward our vision. Fritz says in , “ In fire building, a log on top of the pile will drive the flames upward. In the creative process, a place that is bigger and higher than where you have gone so far can increase momentum, energy and creative power.”

### **3. Set key milestones.**

Warren Bennis once said, “ Mountain climbers don’t start climbing from the bottom of the mountain. They look at where they want to go and work backward to where they’re starting from.” It is the same for goal setting -- when you begin with the end in mind and set an action plan, you can begin to work backwards and set interim goals which advance you toward your vision. Achieving things in small incremental steps has great power.

Professor Stephen Morris posited a that if dominoes were lined up starting with five millimeters and increasing in size by one and half times, it will take just 29 dominoes to knock over the Empire State Building. Best-selling author, Ramit Sethi, applies this principle to goal setting in his domino strategy which advocates starting small and creating momentum through incremental steps.

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### **4. Monitor progress.**

One of the benefits of a structured approach to goal and vision setting is that individuals can clearly see how each action and effort propels them toward their highest goal. This helps build momentum and motivation. Dreams, on

the other hand, are wispy by nature and it can be baffling to know how to get a handle on them.

## **5. Enlist support.**

Dreams that are not anchored in reality and lack structure or outcome can be crushed by “ dream stealers.” In his poem, “ The Cloths of Heaven,” WB Yeats writes: “ I have spread my dreams under your feet; Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.”

A realistic, goal-orientated vision withstands all these negative forces and increases the likelihood of people sharing their vision. In his book Joe Jaworski explores the positive outcomes of openly sharing structured goals and visions -- people begin to understand your aspirations and priorities and how they can contribute to your success.

## **6. Know when to give up.**

I know we are taught through motivational stories that we can achieve whatever we put our minds to and make our dreams come true; but as Robert Fritz says, goal attainment is linked to current reality. Give up on those unrealistic dreams that suck up your energy and creativity and set achievable aspirations -- otherwise that elastic band will keep snapping in your face.

We should never stop dreaming; after all, our dreams are what makes us human. They shape and guide us. But there is a world of difference between being a dreamer and transitioning your dreams into something tangible. This ability to build personal momentum and achieve realistic objectives is the

cornerstone of self-mastery, and every effective entrepreneur that I have ever met gets this right.