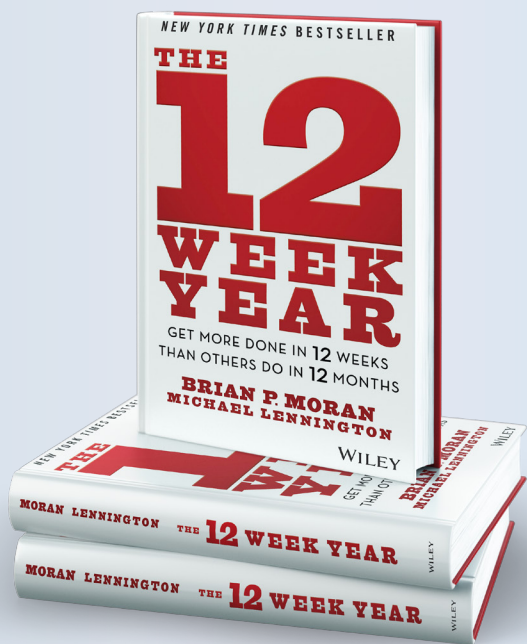


BOOK SNAPS™

Zooming In On Your Next Read



The 12 Week Year

By Brian P. Moran and Michael Lennington

Brian P. Moran, President and Founder of The 12 Week Year, has 30 years of expertise as a corporate executive, entrepreneur, consultant and coach. His background as a corporate executive combined with his experience as an entrepreneur positions him with a unique skill set to help individuals and organizations grow and prosper.

Michael Lennington has been a consultant for most of his adult life and has worked in the Americas, Asia, Europe, and The Middle East. Currently, he spends his professional time coaching his entrepreneurial clients, writing about leadership and business execution, and building simple tools for people seeking to accomplish more.

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The Secret to Help You Perform at Your Best

Brian P. Moran and Michael Lennington open their book by laying out a core concept that has been the focus of their thinking, work, and coaching for more than a decade. The “vast majority” of people never live up to their full potential. Most of us fail to set goals at all and among those of us that do, many of us fail to achieve them. What if that could change? What would happen in your life in particular if every single day you woke up and “performed up to your full potential?” The coauthors of *The 12 Week Year: Get More Done in 12 Weeks Than Others Do in 12 Months* are on a mission to “work with individuals, teams and corporations” in “unlocking the secret to helping individuals and organizations perform at their best and live the life they are truly capable” of living.

In a way, each of us has two separate and distinct lives. There is the life that we actually live day in and day out and then there is the life that we have the potential to live. Deep within us, we all know that there is a better life available to us, but we are not sure how to actualize it. In order to have that life, we have to show up as our very best selves each day. We have to avoid procrastination, conquer our doubts and fears, and “make things happen.” The aim of this book is to teach you “how to increase your current results by four times or more, in a very short amount of time. You will learn exactly what it takes to perform at your best every day” in order to “produce staggering results.”

The authors promise that this journey is not overly complicated. In fact, it is “quite uncomplicated.” However, that does not mean it is easy. It will take effort and focus and, most importantly, execution. Moran and Lennington say that “effective execution is the path to accomplish the things you desire.” *The 12 Week Year* provides the guidance to make that happen.

Redefining the Year

Corporations and individuals are programmed to organize their goals on an annual basis. The authors assert that annual planning and goal setting is often a barrier to high performance. They are not saying that annual plans can’t impact our lives and corporations in a positive way. Annual plans are better than



no plans at all. However, their research and experience shows that performance is limited by this annual process.

As the authors worked with an increasing number of clients, they noticed a pattern. People believed that “their success or failure” was a reflection of what they had or had not achieved over the course of the year. “They set annual goals, created annual plans, and in many cases broke the goals down into quarterly, monthly, and sometimes even weekly plans.” Despite the careful consideration and planning that went into it and the weekly, monthly, and quarterly benchmarks, people judged and “evaluated their success annually.” The authors say that this is a trap and they call it “annualized thinking.”

There are several flawed premises that make this annualized thinking problematic. The first is the false sense of security that an entire year brings. When the year begins, we think that we have “plenty of time in the year to make things happen.” January comes and goes and although we may be behind where we planned to be, we think we’ve got tons of time to catch up. This continues into March and then May and so on. Before we know it, the end of the year is approaching. We continually believe that there is plenty of time left and thus, we “lack a sense of urgency.”

The next flawed premise, which goes hand in hand with the first, is that many of us believe that our results will improve as the year goes on. If we fall short in the first quarter, we believe with all of our hearts that next quarter will be better. The authors write, “It’s as if something magical will happen in late September or October that will result in a substantial increase.” We are kidding ourselves. If the effort we have put in has not yielded the results we hoped to achieve early in the year, why would the results suddenly and dramatically improve? We want to believe they will and with the gift of time on our side, we kick the ball down the field hoping that our hail mary will result in a score at the end of the annual game.

The truth is that “every week counts! Every day counts! Every moment counts!” The key to working and performing at your absolute best is to rid yourself of this annualized thinking and “instead focus on shorter time frames.” Annualized thinking “blinds people to the reality that life is lived in the moment and that ultimately success is created in the moment.” Annualized thinking makes us complacent and we believe that things can be put off for later, even though putting things off is exactly what will stop us from reaching our goals.

You only need to look at year-end pushes in corporations to see this point clearly illustrated. As the end of the year draws ever closer, the entire organization rallies to generate the business needed to hit the annual target. Any tasks or activities that are not directly linked to the accomplishment of those goals are put aside to deal with once the goal is met. For the last months or weeks of the year, there is a “frantic rush to end the year strong and kick off the new one with gusto.” What would happen if people could harness this energy and focus and determination every month, every week, and every single day of the year? That is the power of periodization and the essence of the 12 week year.

Moran and Lennington recognized that they could apply the

principle of periodization to organizations and personal lives to increase success and achievement. They developed a “12 week approach to periodization” that allows people to “focus on the critical factors that drive income and life balance.” Long-term goals actually get achieved when daily actions and thinking are chosen based on what is important with a sense of urgency. Actions are “manifestations of your underlying thinking” and actions are what lead to results.

The authors propose redefining the year as 12 weeks instead of 12 months. Forget the old way of thinking in terms of quarters. There are only 12 week periods followed by the next 12 week period on and on, “ad infinitum.” Here are the implications of such thinking. All the buzz and energy and focus and excitement usually reserved for December is now happening all the time. This new 12 week year sets a deadline far sooner and you will act accordingly. The end game is just 12 weeks away, period after period, so in order to celebrate your success, you will get into gear and take daily action towards hitting that quickly-arriving target.

Three Principles, Five Disciplines

Now that you understand the shift from 12 month to 12 week periods, it’s time to integrate the set of “fundamental elements” that are essential to high performance and the 12 week year. The authors believe there are eight elements that they organize into three principles and five disciplines. “Those eight elements are: Vision, Planning, Process Control, Measurement, Time Use, Accountability, Commitment, and Greatness in the Moment.” The principles are organized in this manner as doing so allows “you to better understand how they operate as a holistic system,” which leads to more consistent and simple application.

The three principles that determine how effective and successful you can be with the 12 week year are:

1. **Accountability:** At its core, accountability is ownership. It is the ability to take responsibility for an outcome, even when that outcome is unfavorable. It relies on an internal understanding that each of us has “freedom of choice” in how we spend our time, in the actions we take towards achieving our goals, and in how we react when circumstances beyond our control impact our lives. Those who are accountable will always be asking themselves, “What more can I do to get the result?” Accountable people own the result, regardless of circumstance.
2. **Commitment:** Commitment exists as a future effect of accountability. While accountability refers to owning an action or result in the present, commitment refers to making a promise to perform an action in the future. They go together. The principle of commitment allows you to build strong relationships, keep promises to yourself and others, grow your character, improve your esteem, and drive your personal success.
3. **Greatness in the Moment:** Most people think of greatness as the result of some set of actions or achievements. In relation to living in a 12 week year, greatness should be viewed as that moment “when an individual makes the choice to



You have to make choices in each moment to be great and the results will be confirmation of your greatness, not attainment of it.

do what is necessary to become great.” You have to make choices in each moment to be great and the results will be confirmation of your greatness, not attainment of it.

If you are able to fully embrace these three principles, you will have a solid foundation from which to grow your “personal and professional success.”

The above principles are a means to tackle your way of thinking in relation to the 12 week year. The five disciplines provide a framework for the actions you take. They are focused on execution, which is a key component to top performance. The five disciplines are:

1. **Vision:** You need a clear and compelling vision that encompasses what you want to achieve on the business side that is also aligned with your personal aspirations. This vision paints a picture of what the future will look and feel like. It provides “a powerful emotional connection that promotes a sustained commitment and continual action.”
2. **Planning:** Despite the near-magical effectiveness attributed to vision boards, it is not enough to create the vision, tack a reminder on the wall, and hope for the best. You have to put a solid plan in place that will move you ever closer to your target. An effective plan must include “top-priority initiatives and actions needed to achieve the vision” that is “constructed in a manner that facilitates effective implementation.”
3. **Process Control:** Once a plan is in place, you have to further break things down to daily events and actions. Process Control refers to the “set of tools and events that align your daily actions with the critical actions in your plan.” The point of putting these controls in place is to ensure that your time is spent strategically on activities that make money.
4. **Measurement:** Your process has to be regularly measured for effectiveness. You have to be able to determine if the process is working or if you need to make some tweaks. Measurement allows you to gain insight and feedback on the effectiveness of your daily actions and events. To be effective, your measurement should show “both lead and lag indicators” so you can accurately determine what needs to be done to correct the process.
5. **Time Use:** Everything comes down to how you use your time. You can have the most clear vision, thoroughly developed plan, airtight processes, and on-point metrics to analyze your results and still not reach your goals. It all means nothing if you do not spend your time intentionally. We live in a world that is ripe with distractions. Focused and productive use of your time is critically important to achieving your goals.

The five disciplines are interconnected. The authors point out that each affects the other. For example, a vision allows you to “live a life by design” while a life that is lacking that vision is being lived by chance. If you create a vision but fail to construct a plan, “then you have a pipe dream.” A vision and plan without process control leads to frustration. Your days will be inconsistent with equally inconsistent results. If you are too afraid to measure your success then you will never make necessary changes to improve your results. Finally, “if all of those are in place but you are not intentional about what you say yes to and what you say no to, then “the day is controlling you” instead of you controlling the day. Every discipline impacts the other, for better or worse.

The 12 Week Year presents readers with a life-changing way to think about time and organize life for better performance and results. As with any endeavor that seeks to shake up the way you live and work, you are certain to encounter barriers and challenges along the way. The authors acknowledge that openly and present readers with common pitfalls they can expect to encounter, such as the need for immediate gratification. Through gentle but persistent reminders, they show readers that all they need to do is follow the vision, plans, and processes they’ve put in place to overcome those obstacles and reach goals.

The big carrot that motivates people to switch to a 12 week year is the promise that doing so will bring results that outperform a typical 12 month year by four times. That is a bold statement, to be sure. The authors back it up with the experiences of clients and corporations who have implemented this ideology and made that happen. For those who are pushed to perform with the promise of a reward of a more personal nature, such as a mini-vacation or a weekend getaway with friends, the authors note that hitting milestones four times per year instead of annually is the perfect set up for such a situation. With shorter intervals, you will push harder, stay the path more consistently, and have that much more to celebrate at the close of each period. An excellent resource for anyone looking to create quantifiable change in short order, *The 12 Week Year* shows readers how to get way more from the time you’re given.