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BE YOU IN THE WORKPLACE

If-then Planner & Exercise

BY JANE FRANKLAND

Tips & tricks

IF THEN PLANNING

Your 'if-then' planning instructions

Research suggests that people who use 'if-then' planning are between two and three times more likely to achieve their objectives—whether they use them for work and productivity or weight loss and fitness—than those who don't. Robert Cialdini, a well-known professor of marketing, business and psychology and perhaps best known as the author of 'Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion' believes it's because people:

"become prepared, first, to notice the favourable time or circumstance, and second, to associate it automatically and directly with desired conduct."

He relates the way this works to a computer and explains that a computer programme typically contains links that launch with one click because they've been readied or hyperlinked to the information you want. Web browser engineers call this process 'prefetching' and Cialdini believes that just like a computer, people can set up similar systems in their brains to achieve high performance or new, healthy behaviours. He writes that goals...

"exist as prefetched sources of information and direction that have been placed on standby, waiting to be launched into operation by cues that remind us of them."

Now, there are many advantages to using 'if-then' planning, especially when it's used with either positive-future imagery (visualisation) or mental contrasting. Let me explain what both are.

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Positive-future imagery is when you visualise the completion of the objective you've set (your goal) and can imagine having attained the rewards. It works well when you ground your imagery in reality. That way your brain reacts by careful planning and consideration. It helps to motivate you to success because it works on the basis that if you can conceive it, you can achieve it. Your brain literally thinks the goal you set must not be that hard to acquire.

Now, positive-future imagery is particularly good for those with lower self-confidence in achieving the goal. However, it's not for those who believe the goal will be easy to reach. The reason why is simple—the brain assumes the goal is easier to acquire than it actually is. Because the subconscious mind is hyper-efficient, it only allocates as much energy as it believes you need to accomplish the goal—anything more would be wasteful.

To combat this, people with more confidence in their success can use mental contrasting¹—a visualisation technique developed by Gabriele Oettingen, a motivation psychologist who wished to improve the effectiveness of traditional self-control strategies like positive-future visualisation. Mental contrasting helps your subconscious, energy efficient, mind understand. It ties together the promise of future reward with obstacles which must be overcome in the present.

Now you know about these techniques, let's look at how you can use them to plan.

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- 01 Write down what you want to achieve in the 'Objective' box.
- 02 Take a moment to visualise both your desired outcome AND the possible obstacles that could get in your way. Write those down in the 'After-effect' box.
- 03 Write out how you intend to fulfil your objective in the 'Action' box. What might prevent you from accomplishing your objective? Write down everything that comes to mind. Consider external pressures and internal ones, including your thinking patterns.
- 04 Think through 'if-then' scenarios and any barriers or obstacles that could get in your way of you achieving it. These could be related to your mood, as well as being a circumstance or something tangible.
- 05 Visualise these, just as you did when you were thinking of the after-effects. Compare the two and pay close attention to how you feel. You must be aware of any obstacles that can get in your way. This is important as we all move towards pleasure and away from pain. By doing this final step, you increase your chances of fulfilling your objective.

Remember, you can use 'if-then' planning for all areas of your life. I gave an example in the blog I wrote about this (<http://jane-frankland.com/what-everyone-in-cybersecurity-ought-to-know-about-planning/>) so you could just use a specific goal you'd like to improve upon in your work setting. Or, if you completed the Clarity and Planning Workbook, pick a goal from each category and plan it out.

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I'll give you an example now. It's something most people can relate to—regular exercise and following a specific nutritional programme! ;)

OBJECTIVE

To become physically fit and strong.

AFTER-EFFECT

I visualise myself in that state. I feel what it's like to be in that state. I access a photo of myself when I was in that state to remind myself that my goal is achievable with consistent work. I ensure it is prominent so I can see it often. I imagine how amazing my life will be once I've accomplished my goal.

ACTION

To stick to my exercise and nutritional programme, and to workout four-times a week (twice a day) for the next four-months.

OBSTACLE

Travelling (inc school drop offs) and working back-to-back with clients.

IF-THEN SCENARIO & OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

If I'm travelling, I'll prepare my food in advance and pack it up, so I can eat it 'on-the-go.' If I'm working with clients, I'll ensure that my meal times and workouts are marked in my schedule as priority activities that are non-negotiable. That way my PA can't book me into meetings with clients and I won't be working back-to-back, all day long.

Worksheet

IF THEN PLANNING

OBJECTIVE

What do you really want to accomplish in a given time period? Your objective should stretch you but be attainable, so ask yourself if this is important to you, and if it's possible to accomplish in the time period you've set.

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AFTER-EFFECT

This is where you're visualising you achieving your objective. So, think what will be the best outcome for you when you achieve your objective? How will your life change? How will you feel? Hold the after-effect in your mind for a moment. Write down the after effect and describe how it will feel once you've achieved it.

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ACTION

How you intend to fulfil your objective? What is one effective action step that you could take?

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Worksheet

IF THEN PLANNING

OBSTACLE

What might prevent you from accomplishing your objective? This could be something external i.e. a person, situation, or event, or it could be something internal i.e. a limited thinking belief. Consider where and when this obstacle might arise? What might trigger it? Explore if there's something you're feeling, doing, or saying that's standing in the way of you achieving your objective. Take a moment to reflect on it, then write it down.

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IF-THEN SCENARIO & OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

What is the one effective action step you could take to overcome your obstacle? Complete this statement "If I encounter [obstacle], then I will take [effective action]."

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About Jane Frankland



Jane's career in cybersecurity spans two decades. She has a growing network of 42K+ and her authority has been recognised by Wikipedia, LinkedIn, and UNESCO. In 2020 she won two high profile awards - Women in IT's Security Leader Award and the National Cybersecurity's Cyber Citizen Gold Award. She built her own global penetration testing firm in the late 90s and has also worked in leadership roles at Accenture and the NCC Group. She's a founder member of CREST and the ESCO initiative, Women4Cyber. With a unique global presence, she judges numerous awards such as the European Business Awards, TeenTech Awards, NZ Hi-Tech Awards, SC Awards and the Cyber Security Awards, and serves as a board

adviser to Black Hat Executive Summit (Europe), and SC Magazine (UK). Jane is the best-selling author of IN Security and is the world's leading authority on women in cybersecurity. Through her IN Security Movement and company she's performed ground-breaking research, led initiatives to keep women safe at events, and awarded more than 352 scholarships to women, a value of over USD 500,000. She often works as an "influencer" for major brands, is quoted in the media and top broadsheets, and you'll find her speaking about gender diversity, sustainability, and the future of cybersecurity at events globally, including the EU Commission, UN Women, Web Summit, Sibos, and Black Hat. Or, training and consulting on leadership, female empowerment and gender diversity.

About The Source

The Source exists to help women and businesses who value them in cybersecurity. It's where we come together to add value, not point fingers. It's where we collaborate, unify and create communities that are positive, accessible and valuable. It's where we empower women to build their networks, grow their skills and access essential resources. And it's where we help forward-thinking businesses to draw on a rich, diverse pool of female talent.

The Source operates on a global basis and while most of our clients include some of the world's best-known brands, many of whom are listed on the global stock indices, we also have a selection of start-up and mid-range organisations.

Our solutions incorporate consulting, training, mentoring, certification and talent acquisition. They align to the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5, 10 and 16.



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