LEADERSHIP SERIES FOR SUCCESSFUL LIVING

VOLUME ONE
COMPANION WORKBOOK



Ambition

"Ambition is the spur that makes man struggle with destiny."

ORISON SWETT MARDEN

Companion workbook by Richard Gorham

Leadership-Tools.com

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VOLUME ONE

Ambition

COMPANION WORKBOOK

Written by

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A companion to the Ambition ebook, based on
Ambition and Success (1919) by Orison Swett Marden

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Leadership-Tools.com

ABOUT THIS EDITION

Richard Gorham wrote this companion workbook in 2006 to go with his ebook and audio edition of Orison Swett Marden's *Ambition and Success* (1919). This 2026 edition has a new design with fill-in spaces you can type into or print, and links to free tools and articles that help with several of the exercises.

The ebook and audio edition are free at Leadership-Tools.com.

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Getting the Most From This Workbook

Read or listen to a chapter of *Ambition* first, then come back to the matching chapter here. Each one starts with a summary of the key points and ends with questions and exercises. The spaces are there for you to write in, by hand on a printed copy or by typing straight into this file.

Give the questions some time. A few of them are easier to answer after a day or two, and it's worth coming back to them once you've thought them over. Where a free tool or article on Leadership-Tools.com can help with an exercise, you'll find a link to it at the end of the chapter.

CHAPTER I

What Is Ambition?

"Ambition is the spur that makes man struggle with destiny:
It is heaven's own incentive to make purpose great, and achievement greater."

— Orison Swett Marden on Ambition

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Multitudes of people, like an unmagnetized needle, lie motionless, unresponsive to any stimulus until they are touched by that mysterious force we call ambition.
- If we obey this honorable call to excel in life, we expand and blossom and we enjoy the fruit of our labor.
- That mysterious urge within us never allows us to rest. The urge is always prodding us for our own good, because there is no limit to human growth and there is no satisfying human ambition—man's higher aspiration.
- A Divine impulse constantly urges us to reach our highest ideal.
- Aspiration of one person often becomes an inspiration to others. All parties touched by either sensation are better off for the experience.
- This can be done effectively with a simple choice, a clear moment of decision when you say, “Never again!”
- Many people mistakenly believe that ambition is a quality that one is born with and which cannot be materially changed or developed.
- Like any other quality or function, a person’s ambition will deteriorate and eventually disappear when ignored or unused.
- That inner call to go forward, to push on to a higher good, is God's voice; heed it. It is your best friend and will lead you into light and joy.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

As you read or listened to this chapter, what were the 1-3 most important points that you feel you need to remember as you move forward?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Identify the one thing that you would do if money were no object. What is it that you are truly passionate about? Why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

READ NEXT

Personal Development Plan Templates to Fuel Your Ambition

Step 1 of the 10 Steps series picks up where this question leaves off, with five steps for turning what you care about into a written plan.

CHAPTER II

The Satisfied Man

"There is no use trying to help people who are unwilling to help themselves. You cannot push a man up a ladder unless he has a desire to climb himself.

— Andrew Carnegie on Ambition

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Man's destiny is to be not dissatisfied, but forever unsatisfied.
- What a tragedy there is in being content with mediocrity, in getting into a state where one is indifferent to the larger, better things of life!
- Man's ambition to improve something somewhere every day, to get a little further on and a little higher up than he was the day before, an insatiable passion for bettering things all along the line, is the secret of human progress.
- Multitudes of capable employees are satisfied to plod along in mediocrity instead of rising to reap the higher rewards of their God-given talents, where their ability would naturally carry them.
- Do not bury your opportunities because they do not come freely. Instead, grasp them and enjoy the satisfaction which comes from the feeling that you have made good.
- We tend to become like our aspirations. If we constantly aspire and strive for something better and higher and more noble, we cannot help broadening and improving.
- Civilization has made its greatest advancement under the stress of necessity. We do our best work while we are trying in earnest, under hardship, to reach our dreams.
- One of the most discouraging problems in the world is that of trying to help the ambitionless, those who have decided to walk through life half-satisfied.
- Activity is the law of growth; and effort is the only means of improvement.
- Really great men and women never reach their goal, because they are constantly pushing their horizon out further and further
- Do not allow yourself to become the sufferer of “permanent potential”.
- With each goal achieved, another stepping stone has been mastered that will support our effort toward reaching the next. Each new task is another step toward actual achievement of our dream.
- Once you get a glimpse of yourself as you were intended by your Maker to be, with all of your latent possibilities fully developed; when you finally see yourself as the superb man or woman, it is possible for you to be that successful individual.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

How much more could you achieve in the next month if you were offered a grand prize, such as a 4-week paid vacation around the world? 10%, 20%, 50%? What would it take?

How much more could you achieve in the next month if your family was in danger? Assuming you had to double your production – how could you go about doing this?

What additional tools or resources could you leverage in order to gain momentum and reach your goals?

What groups or associations could you join that would assist you in your efforts?

What could you do right now to get started? (Example: make a phone call, conduct a brain-storming session, reach out to a potential mentor, decide once and for all that things are about to change for the better.)

CHAPTER III

The Influence of Environment

"Give me a stock clerk with a clear goal
and I'll give you a man who will someday make history.
Give me a man with no goals and I'll give you a stock clerk.

— J.C. Penney on Ambition

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Environment has a great deal to do with man's ambition and achievement. It's important that you truly know where it is that you allow yourself to reside.
- We unconsciously reflect the people with whom we associate.
- If you were to interview the great army of low-achievers, you would find that the vast majority has failed because they never got themselves into a stimulating, encouraging environment.
- Whatever you do in life, make any sacrifice necessary to keep yourself in a supportive, ambition-arousing atmosphere, an environment that will stimulate you to self-development. Keep close to people who understand you, who believe in you, who will help you to discover yourself and encourage you to make the most of your life.
- Too many ambitions are buried deep inside, just as rough diamonds are locked into the mountainside.
- Ambition is contagious. When a man meets others in social ways, and hears accounts of their great successes, greater achievement, he immediately says to himself, "Why can't I do it?" "Why don't I do it?" and if he has the right stuff he probably says, "I will do it!"
- It is a characteristic of the winner that he is always thinking about how to improve upon his life.
- Like attracts like. Successful people attract successful people. Failure attracts failure.
- Each person must struggle to face his fears and to overcome the most unfavorable environment. He must walk away from the guilt of those things he cannot remedy and move on to Learn and Grow and Contribute, and to get the greatest possible quality out of his remaining life.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Who are your major supporters? Who encourages you to be your best self?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Who around you would not be supportive of you pursuing your passion?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Identify the “diamonds” that you could offer to the world? What are you good at? Do you have a special talent? What “could” you be good at?

_____

_____

_____

The failures get together and complain, blame and rationalize; the successes come together and speak of big ideas and new inventions. What big ideas or creative solutions could you pursue?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What must change in your life for you to grow to your full potential? What must you add to your daily experience, and what must you eliminate?

_____

_____

_____

_____

CHAPTER IV

Unworthy Ambitions

"Without ambition one starts nothing.
Without work one finishes nothing.
The prize will not be sent to you.
You have to win it!"

— Ralph Waldo Emerson on Ambition

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- There are scores of people in our world today who do not really live at all, they merely exist.
- Such people have a perfect mania for trying to make other people think they are better off than they really are, that they amount to more than they really do, that they own a larger estate in the world than is actually the case.
- Unworthy ambitions eventually overtake your right mind, they end up ruining your health and will rob you of all that is dearest and sweetest in your life.
- Debt has made more people miserable, ruined the peace of mind of more human beings, the comfort and the happiness of more homes, than almost anything else in the universe.
- It is an unfortunate thing that so many of our youth should start out in life with only one aim; simply to make money.
- Without quality relationships, what is there left in a person worth any value?
- By keeping our ambition clean it will lead to our best and highest welfare. Maintaining our honesty and integrity will give us our greatest satisfaction.
- Always remember that “he lives most who lives truest to his best self.”

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

How many people do you know who are stressed about the amount of debt they carry? What do they have to show for it?

Why do so many people compromise their ability to excel in life by accepting so much debt? Why do so many sell themselves to a large mortgage?

Does your household suffer from the burden of debt? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, list your debts in order from smallest to largest below. This is the order in which you must tackle the debt. Pay off the smallest one first, add that payment amount to the next, and do the same – creating a "snowball" effect.

My List of Debts

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

(Include credit cards, personal loans, lines of credit, auto loans, student loans, your mortgage and anything else you owe.)

> **NOTE**
> By writing down your list of debts, you've taken the first step necessary in identifying any problems. You can now begin to plan how you can effectively address the situation. Your ability to eliminate debt from your life, highly impacts your chances of succeeding long-term.

TRY THIS FREE TOOL

Debt Snowball Calculator

Enter the debts from your list and the calculator puts them in snowball order and shows the month each one is paid off.

CHAPTER V

Ambition Knows No Age Limit

"It's never too late to be what you might have been."

— George Eliot

"I've got a great ambition to die of exhaustion rather than boredom."

— Angus Grossart

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- One of the earmarks of old age is the cooling down of the fires of ambition. As long as a man aspires, as long as he is eager to grow, as long as he yearns and struggles to better his best - he is not old.
- One of the most difficult things one is called upon to do as the years pass is to keep our ambition from dying.
- The secret of keeping the ambition fresh and bright is in keeping up our interest in something we are passionate about.
- There is no one quality in our lives that requires more careful watching and constant attention than our ambition.
- There is always hope for a person, no matter how bad he may be, as long as his ambition is alive; but once ambition is gone, the driving motivation is missing, a downward spiral in one's life begins.
- The soul that aspires, other things being equal, has the longest life. An aspiration for self-improvement is a long-lasting tonic for life; a healthy ambition stimulates all faculties, no matter what the age.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Our minds, just like our muscles, decline quickly when they are not used. What do you do daily and weekly to ensure you are taking good care of your body and mind?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What has become of that something, which in your younger days strengthened your determination? Is your ambition alive and well, or lacking in some way?

Ambition must be backed by a strong desire, stern resolve, physical energy and mental endurance. How would you rate yourself in these areas? (1-Excellent, 2-Above Average, 3-Average, 4-Below Average, 5-Poor)

	1 EXCELLENT	2 ABOVE AVG	3 AVERAGE	4 BELOW AVG	5 POOR
Desire	○	○	○	○	○
Willpower	○	○	○	○	○
Ability	○	○	○	○	○
Energy	○	○	○	○	○
Belief	○	○	○	○	○

CHAPTER VI

Make Your Life Count

"Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions.
Small people always do that, but the really great ones
make you feel that you too, can become great."

— Mark Twain on Ambition

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Everywhere we see men and women doing the bare minimum, they've created a daily routine of lower expectations.
- Many people do not start out with ambition enough to do big things. They make a large career practically impossible at the very outset, because they expect so little of themselves.
- Continual reminders to expect more of yourself will make your life broader, deeper and more rewarding.
- "I am determined to make my life count," Now, there is a resolution that is worth while, because it is backed by a high ambition!
- Our thoughts determine our actions. Our actions determine our results.
- The trouble with many people is that they start out with no definite plan, no one unwavering aim for success. They have no noteworthy or worth while goal in view.
- Between the great things that we cannot do and the small things we will not do, the danger is that we shall do nothing.
- If the motivation is big enough, the ability to answer it is usually available.
- Quit the side issues. Cut out the diversions.
- Success in life is a process of selection and elimination—a choosing between the worthless and the worth while. To get time for things that count you must save time by eliminating time wasters.
- The person who does not look up will look down, and the spirit that does not soar is destined to grovel.
- Desire and a strong work ethic, fueled by an unwavering ambition, can provide a person with limited talent more opportunity than most folks who seem to naturally attract success.
- Life certainly does make way for the determined man or woman. We are all capable of greater things than we realize.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

If you continue to do what you've done in the past, where do you see yourself in six months' time? Where will you be at the end of 1 year, 5 years, 20 years?

6 months _____

1 year _____

5 years _____

20 years _____

What diversions or, "side issues", can you identify that are holding you back?

_____

_____

_____

How much time do you spend daily on the following things?

Activity	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly
		× 7 days	*× 4.2 weeks*	*× 12 months*
Example	*2 hrs*	*14 hrs*	*58.8 hrs*	*705.6 hrs*
Email				
Social media and browsing				
Phone calls and texting				
TV and streaming				
Sleeping or napping				
Total				

Divide your yearly total by 24 to see how many full days it adds up to: _____ days a year.

> **NOTE**
> In the above example, you can see that by wasting only 2 hours per day, you end up losing 705.6 hours per year. When you divide that by 24 hours, you see that it equates to wasting 29.4 days per year. This is the equivalent of one entire month.

READ NEXT

Life Management Skills for Busy Leaders

Once you see where the hours go, Step 10 of the 10 Steps series shows how to give your time to the parts of life that matter most to you.

CHAPTER VII

Visualize Yourself in a Better Position

"Anybody can do just about anything with himself that he really wants to and makes up his mind to do. We are all capable of greater things than we realize."

— Norman Vincent Peale on Ambition

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- No matter what type of business you may be in, or whatever your profession, your prime ambition should be to excel in it.
- There is nothing so important in your life as your mental attitude towards yourself, what you think of yourself, the standard to which you hold of yourself accountable.
- You must see yourself above your current circumstance or you will never be anything higher than your present position.
- Make certain that your self-talk is positive, energetic, enthusiastic. Ensure that your own thoughts are that of encouragement and support so that you can begin to be in the positive habit of healthy self-assuredness.
- Every successful person can quickly recall the one or many life experiences that provided massive fuel to their ambition.
- The best of every person's work is above and beyond their current skill level. Improved results are accomplished as each person struggles to attain a loftier ideal.
- We put forth our greatest effort, our most strenuous struggle, while we are climbing, not after we have arrived at our goal.
- Common sense and good judgment must accompany the ambition, or the unbalanced ambition will very often run away from the person.
- Study your own talents and skills. Try to get a true measure of your own unique possibilities. Self-assess regularly.
- It is a great thing to be able to measure our talents so accurately, to understand ourselves so thoroughly, that we will only take on that which we are fully able to accomplish with pride and dignity.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Describe yourself in five words. (Example: Honest, Hardworking, Lazy, Timid, etc. – use the words you say to yourself inside your mind. “I’m so _____”.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

How would others describe you? What do they base their perceptions on?

_____

_____

_____

Are you currently perceived by others the way you wish to be perceived? If not, what would you like to change in the way others perceive you?

_____

_____

_____

Who do you admire most? Why? (Be specific. Identify the traits in others that you admire.)

_____

_____

_____

In your past, what has inspired you to act; to get involved? (Example: A sermon, a play, a speech, a movie, a tragedy, a book, a special relationship, etc.)

What proactive steps could you take over the next 7 days that might put you on a path toward your dreams? Commit to doing at least one of these tasks in the next 24 hours.

READ NEXT

360 Degree Feedback for Leadership Development

If you want to know how others see you, the surest way is to ask them. Step 4 of the 10 Steps series explains how to gather that feedback and what to do with it.

CHAPTER VIII

Thwarted Ambition

"My philosophy of life is that if we make up our mind what we are going to make of our lives, then work hard toward that goal, we never lose – somehow we win out."

— Ronald Reagan on Ambition

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Wherever we see discontent, unhappiness, unrest, we may be sure that the person exhibiting these conditions has not identified his or her right place in life, and has no clear purpose.
- It is very easy to criticize other people, who have not risen in the world, and perhaps at times we have done this. But they may be heroes compared to us. We can never tell what tragedies may be going on in their hearts, or from what turmoil they may be working to recover from.
- The highest love you can show to your spouse is one that supports him or her in obtaining their own success.
- Do not waste your vitality in hating your life; find something in it which is worth liking and enjoying, while you keep steadily at work to make it what you desire.
- Be happy over something every day, for the brain is a thing of habit, and you cannot teach it to be happy in a moment, if you allow it to be miserable for years.
- Man was made for growth; to realize peace, poise and satisfaction.
- An ambition to be someone, to stand for more in the community, to push our horizon farther and farther away from us, to think a little higher each day, to think a little more of ourselves, to have a little more faith in ourselves and in others, an ambition to be of real use in the world is an ambition worthy of the person God created. An honorable ambition will most definitely bring happiness to the individual.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

What special talents are you hiding; putting off developing, or fearful of failing at? What "could" you possibly enjoy and be successful at?

Is someone or something in your life, getting in the way of you pursuing your passion? If so, who or what is it?

> **NOTE**
> Decide today to no longer allow anyone or anything to hold that sort of power over you, or your future. You deserve to become your BEST SELF!

How much greater will your children's chances of realizing their higher calling be, if you were to begin to pursue your own? How might you limit their chances for success if you limit your own?

CHAPTER IX

Why Don't You Begin?

"It is common sense to take a method and try it.
If it fails, admit it frankly and try another.
But above all, try something"

— Franklin D. Roosevelt on Ambition

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- At some key point your aspiration must turn into action or nothing will be accomplished.
- Our visions are the plans for what is possible in our life; but they will end merely in plans if we do not persistently follow them up with a vigorous effort to make them real.
- Three things we must do to make our dreams come true. 1) Visualize our desire. 2) Concentrate on our vision. 3) Work to make it real. The tools and resources necessary for this to happen are inside of each of us.
- There is a tremendous amount of ability that is wasted and unproductive. This is the great failure of so many people that remained handicapped with low expectations.
- Confidence, self-assurance, self-faith— these are the great friends which will kill the traitor known as - doubt.
- Expect more of yourself than any other person would expect. Set your goals higher than the goals set for you. Associate yourself with only those people who are going somewhere you want to reside. Take ownership of your present day situation and never allow yourself to blame or convict others for your reality. Take ACTION daily toward your ambition.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

When do you expect to do the wonderful things you have been dreaming about? Why don't you begin? What are you waiting for? Why don't you start? Are you waiting for a "good opportunity" to present itself? Are you waiting to be invited in or supported by others? Are you expecting someone else to provide your motivation? In what direction are you moving?

Now that you've read the above list of questions, what was going through your mind? Was it something like this:

"There is no one that can shut the door to your ambition, to a larger, fuller life - but yourself."

Oliver Wendell Holmes says it does not matter so much where we stand as the direction in which we are moving.

Whatever comes to us in life we create first in our mind. Create a clear picture in your mind. Develop the plan of the man or woman you long to be and that you are resolved to be, and stick to your mental plan of a glorious future

1) Visualize your outcome. 2) Focus on your vision. 3) Work to make it real.

What is the one step you will take toward your ambition in the next 24 hours?

TRY THIS FREE TOOL

Master Action Plan (M.A.P.)

Put your vision, your goals and this week's next steps on one page, and look at it every Monday.

NOTES

PUT THIS VOLUME TO WORK

Keep Going

The answers you wrote in this workbook are the start of a plan. These free resources help you finish it and keep it in front of you.

- **Growth Roadmap Template** Map where you want to grow and the steps to get there.
- **Goal Setting for Success Course** Turn a big ambition into goals with dates.
- **Vision Board Apps** Keep a picture of the person you're working to become where you'll see it every day.

THE LEADERSHIP SERIES FOR SUCCESSFUL LIVING

VOLUME ONE	**Ambition**
VOLUME TWO	Character
VOLUME THREE	The Hour of Opportunity
VOLUME FOUR	Diligence: Do It to a Finish
VOLUME FIVE	Persistence: An Iron Will

Each volume comes with the ebook, the audio edition and a companion workbook, free at **Leadership-Tools.com**.