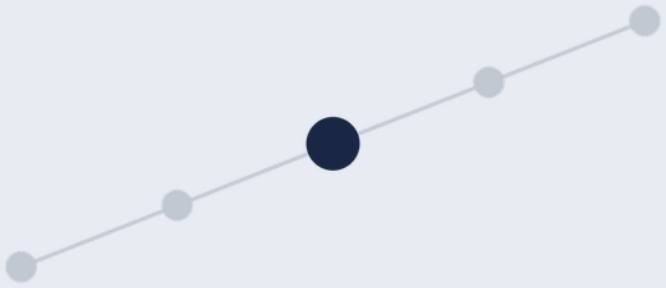
LEADERSHIP SERIES FOR SUCCESSFUL LIVING

VOLUME THREE
COMPANION WORKBOOK



The Hour of Opportunity

"A determined individual will find a way, or make one."

ORISON SWETT MARDEN

Companion workbook by Richard Gorham

Leadership-Tools.com

LEADERSHIP SERIES FOR SUCCESSFUL LIVING

VOLUME THREE

The Hour of Opportunity

COMPANION WORKBOOK

Written by

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A companion to the The Hour of Opportunity ebook, based on
The Hour of Opportunity (1900) by Orison Swett Marden

REVISED 2026

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 *The Hour of Opportunity* (1900). 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 *The Hour of Opportunity* 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

The Hour of Opportunity: Are You Ready for It?

"To take Time by the forelock" - meaning to take hold of Opportunity just as you would grab a robber by the hair on top of his head, is considered one of the first metaphors known to Greek art.."

— Orison Swett Marden

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Opportunity – Lysippus believed that one must seek out and take advantage of the right time to do something. He believed that our affairs are indeed, on the razor's edge, meaning, "Now is the time for decision, and time will not wait."
- If we are not been ready for our opportunity when it comes, we will never live up to our full potential.
- The seizing of an opportunity is of the utmost importance, even though the immediate compensation may seem small and inadequate at the time: "It is not the value of their services to which men should look, but to the opportunity offered.
- It always pays to be prepared.
- The boy or girl, man or woman, who is accurate, is always the favored one.
- Seek to acquire knowledge in every branch of your business.
- The successful man or woman will never be silenced, his will to press on is never dead, and because he knows it he possesses a great enlightenment that will secure him power and wealth.
- The great hunger of the time is for good and strong men and women, people capable of assuming responsibility; and there is great opportunity for those who are willing to prepare themselves.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

As you read or listened to this chapter, what were the 1-3 most important points that you feel you connected with the most? Why were these points so meaningful?

1. _____
2. _____

3. _____

Identify the one thing that you believe you need to prepare yourself for in order to take full advantage of an opportunity whenever it arises?

_____

_____

_____

CHAPTER II

What the Employers Say

"Opportunity, in connection with a man's line of business; will be wasted if the worker fails to properly prepare himself for it."

— Orison Swett Marden

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- The secret of success in life is for a man to be ready for his opportunity when it comes.
- Every man has within himself the capacity needed for all that he may ever wish to accomplish.
- If he is a person of small capacity and of low ambition, who never seeks to prepare himself for a higher career, he will never reach any extraordinary level.
- Do not wait for your opportunity, make it. Make it, as every man or woman must who would accomplish anything worth the effort.
- Golden opportunities are wasted by laziness. The greatest advantage highlights the fool who is not prepared for it.
- When a man 'gets lucky' and acquires a good position, it is because he has been prepared for that work for years. Fortune always visits those who are prepared to welcome it
- Once each day of youth is past, it can never again be utilized. Each day is a gift, another opportunity, that every man and woman should firmly grasp and squeeze as much from it as possible.
- Nothing can work against me or damage me except myself; the harm I sustain, I am responsible for, as I am my own person and I alone decide what I will allow to affect me in any way.
- To be successful, one only needs to qualify himself thoroughly for the position he seeks.
- Each person will either be self-made or will go through life a victim of his circumstance.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

How would your employer describe you? What would he or she say about your work ethic; commitment to quality; delivery of customer service; teamwork; leadership abilities, etc?

What extra duties are you performing? What extra duties could you volunteer to learn in order to demonstrate initiative and improve your base of knowledge?

What creative ideas have you brought to the team to improve a product or process in the past 6 months?

What groups or associations could you join that would help you to prepare for the opportunities you desire?

Taking complete ownership of your life, the good and the bad, is one of the most self-empowering decisions you can make. Have you made this decision yet? Explain how you feel about this concept.

TRY THIS FREE TOOL

Role Clarity Template

Sit down with your manager and agree on what your role is and what great work looks like in it. Then you will know how you are being measured.

CHAPTER III

Do You Know a Good Thing When You See It?

"Vigilance in watching opportunity; tact and daring in seizing upon opportunity; force and persistence in crowding opportunity to its utmost of possible achievement

— these are the martial virtues which must command success."

— Austin Phelps

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- There are moments upon which hangs the destiny of years. It is only for the moment that the favorable opportunity is presented. If we miss it, months, years, even decades are lost.
- The determining moment is often very brief, and if we are on the watch for all opportunity, and always ready to seize it, it will make all the difference to us between success and failure.
- The lack of opportunity is ever the excuse of the weak and hesitant mind.
- Is not every one's life full of opportunities? Is not every lesson in school an opportunity, every examination another chance in life to grow, to improve?
- Every responsibility thrust upon you, testing your strength and your honor is priceless.
- It is not only your responsibility to take your opportunities, but also to make opportunities, for yourself and others.
- It is the small, inexpensive invention, for which there is a great demand, which can be extremely profitable for the one with a watchful eye.
- It is useless for you to say, "I cannot do this." You can at least keep your eyes open and cultivate your powers of perception, and see what you might do.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

List the names of 3 people you know who are continually blaming others, circumstance and/or fate, for their misfortune?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Are any of the above named people truly happy? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Unless they begin to take personal ownership of their lives, their environment, their daily routine and their own growth, is their situation likely to improve? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Who have you recently created an opportunity for? What was the opportunity?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What must change in your life for you to better leverage the opportunities around you? What must you add to your daily experience, and what must you eliminate in order to better prepare for opportunity?

_____

_____

_____

CHAPTER IV

Seizing the Forelock

"What is opportunity to a man who cannot use it?"

— George Eliot

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- If there are only a few who have the gift of vision, who can see what is a good thing, where others see nothing, there are perhaps still fewer persons who know how to seize upon an opportunity when they see it, very few who have the instinct for taking the initiative, which makes the difference between success and failure in any enterprise.
- The most successful men and women have been those who actually improved what opportunities they saw.
- The difference between successful people and their neighbors is that they do what others merely think about doing. This is always so with successful people.
- It is the man who sees and the same man who carries out the idea he sees, — it is he who is the successful man.
- Possessing the executive (leadership) quality by which, if you have a good thing, you can make the most of it – provides a superior advantage.
- Perception and decisive action; a quick eye, and clear vision; a vigorous right arm, and a skillful hand—these are the masters of success in any, and in every pursuit.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

How many people do you know who are always talking about what they will do "someday". What do they have to show for all this "thinking"?

Why do you feel so many people wait so long, or simply never get around to pursuing their real dreams? What role does "fear of failure" play in this?

What top three decisive actions must you take to begin your preparation for your dream job?

1.
2.
3.

What is holding you back from beginning each action within 24 hours?

HINT

Be honest with yourself. You are the one who will make each action happen, or find reasons to put it off.

TRY THIS FREE TOOL

Master Action Plan (M.A.P.)

Put your three actions on one page with dates, and look at it every Monday.

CHAPTER V

Fit and Misfit Opportunities

"A round person sometimes gets into a square hole, and a square person is sometimes squeezed into a round hole. The fact is that triangular persons and oblong holes, and oblong persons and triangular holes simply do not go well together."

— Sidney Smith

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Parents must be very cautious in drawing children away from pursuits for which nature has designed them?
- Wonderful are the misfits of the world.
- It is not a necessarily wise thing for a man to follow the profession or the calling of his father and grandfather.
- Work toward your ambition, your one true aspiration. Your talent is your call.
- One of the first principles of success in life is to focus our career, all our physical and mental powers, and to use our natural abilities to do good in the area that we feel most at home.
- No man is born into the world whose work is not born with him.
- It shortens the road to success to early on make a wise choice of one's true purpose. However, anytime is a great time to start.
- This power to adapt, to be versatile to any situation in order to master it, can be illustrated at great length by citing the careers of many successful men and women.
- Whenever you see a new opportunity, write down your ideas and think on it until you could come up with a plan that will substantially improve the present condition.
- In settling the questions, What is my place in life? and How shall I find it?— in deciding upon Fit and Unfit occupations, — it is not only necessary to have a certain preparation by which one may succeed in any business, but it is of equal importance to have Perception, an Executive Quality and the Power of Adaptation.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Our creative minds decline quickly when they are not exercised regularly. Identify three things you would be happy doing every day if you were presented with the opportunity. What passions would you regularly fuel?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Over the coming week, take this creative challenge:

- Carry a small notebook, or use the notes app on your phone, so you can write down any idea that might improve your current condition.
- Resolve to write down 3 new ideas a day for the entire week.
- Each night, review your list and ask these questions:
  1. Is this product or service already available? If so, how can it be improved?
  2. Who is the target market for this new product or service?
  3. What would I need to know to make this idea a reality?
  4. Who can help me? What tools or resources can I use?
  5. Where can I learn more? (The library, online courses, books, podcasts, local clubs and state agencies are all good places to look.)

Day	Idea 1	Idea 2	Idea 3
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

Your Hour of Opportunity can only be fully used if you possess 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	○	○	○	○	○

READ NEXT

Find Your Strengths

Step 5 of the 10 Steps series compares three well-known strengths and personality tests that can point you toward work that fits you.

CHAPTER VI

All There

"Wherever you are, be there all the way. It is a great secret to do a thing but once; to concentrate your whole being upon the thing at hand, without anticipating it, and without worrying over it afterwards."

— Orison Swett Marden

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- One great cause failure is the lack of concentration.
- It is not a matter of doing many things indifferently, but of doing one thing supremely, which is the demand of the hour.
- He who scatters his efforts in this intensely competitive and concentrated age cannot hope to succeed
- The wandering aim, the running over here and then over there whenever pulled; a purposeless, thoughtless, and unintelligent management of life's work, — what is all this for but to invite failure?
- Nothing can take the place of an all-absorbing purpose. The life without a purpose is destined for failure.
- No man ever points steadily in any direction until he has been polarized, energized, by a choice, a passion for his ideal career. Working without a plan is as foolish as going to sea without a compass.
- Those who make the great failures in life are the purposeless, the indifferent, the shiftless, the half-hearted.
- It is true that whatever you are engaged in you are required, in the words of Goethe, to be "all there."
- There is no road to success, but through a resolute and definite purpose. A purpose underlies one’s character, culture and position.
- If you are "all there" in any business, you will make the most of it by paying the right price for it. This price is faithful, diligent, intelligent effort. What is life without a struggle?
- He who rises earlier than his competitors and who works more hours within the limits of healthful endurance, will carry off the prize.
- It is a prerequisite of success that you love your calling. The best work is done when you have a passion for it, and the satisfaction one gets from doing it well can never be accurately measured.

- Men are nothing," exclaimed Montaigne, "until they are excited." A man," says Emerson, "is whole, happy and fulfilled when he has put his heart into his work and done his level best.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

What tasks or activities could you eliminate or lessen in order to gain more focused time for pursuing your true passion?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What goal or purpose would be worth any struggle? What passion do you have, or could you have, that would provide you with continual excitement, energy and enthusiasm?

_____

_____

_____

In your current job, what could you do to liven up your workplace? What activities could you employ that others would enjoy as well?

_____

_____

_____

How could you be the difference-maker? How could you ignite a feeling in others that would brighten their world?

_____

_____

_____

What do you think you would gain by giving this “light” to others?

TRY THIS FREE TOOL

Team Building Activities at Work

Ready-to-run activities you can use to liven up your workplace and bring your team closer.

CHAPTER VII

He Missed It at Last

"Does not every man need inspiration, a purpose that is all his own, an interest that arouses his very soul, if he is to make the most of life's opportunity?"

— Orison Swett Marden

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- He just missed it" may be said of many a man as to the main outcome of his life.
- Choose a business that has expansiveness in it; an occupation which will develop you, elevate you, which will give you a chance for self-improvement, which will make you more of a man or more of a woman.
- Every human being is put here to offer something unique to the world around him. He is made for great things, and he is endowed with powers that provide a lofty potential. Each of us has a special skill, talent or interest that if fully developed could change the world, or at least a small part of it, for the better. As one of God's children we are here to grow, learn, expand and develop, to contribute. We should willingly offer up our special talents to teach others to become their best selves. To rise in the world is not merely to make money. In God's eyes, our best effort to be all we can be, as he meant for us to be, will always be good enough.
- Sightless and paralyzed is the man who can not see or act upon his Hour of Opportunity.
- Morally damaged is he who would waste the many opportunities of the world, who does not rise to the call, who does not accept the privilege offered to him by the Almighty to bear some worthy part in uplifting our common humanity.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

What is the greatest opportunity of life? Is not the highest opportunity of life the opportunity to serve others?

Do you not feel an inner exhilaration to expand yourself, to do more, to be more? Do you feel you have a purpose, a desire to grow, an ambition, an enthusiasm for life, as if an angel within you were struggling to come out of your body and take you to your rightful, more noble place in the world?

It is for each of us to seek out, welcome in, and enthusiastically embrace the opportunities that our Maker has sent; to do our utmost to be our best selves.

NOTES

PUT THIS VOLUME TO WORK

Keep Going

The answers you wrote in this workbook show where you want to be ready when the next opportunity comes. These free resources help you prepare for it.

- **Growth Roadmap Template** Plan the skills you'll build before the next opportunity opens up.
- **Personal Development Plan Templates** Step 1 of the 10 Steps series, on putting your goals into a written plan.
- **Life Balance Wheel** See where your time and attention go across the parts of your life.

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**.