

**THE**  
**12**  
**WEEK**  
**YEAR**

GET MORE DONE IN **12** WEEKS  
THAN OTHERS DO IN **12** MONTHS

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WILEY

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## Additional Praise for *The 12 Week Year*

“Time is the single biggest roadblock that restricts human progress. *The 12 Week Year* provides a roadmap to drive velocity, output, and results. Speed of execution is the driving force to success, and Brian Moran and Mike Lennington help you win this race. A must-read for those seeking to reach their full potential.”

—Josh Linkner, New York Times bestselling author of *Disciplined Dreaming*

“Moran and Lennington’s view of accountability is a game changer. If we all wake up to the fact that freedom of choice is the foundation of accountability, the word will take on a whole new meaning.”

—Cali Ressler and Jody Thompson, coauthors of *Why Managing Sucks and How to Fix It*

“Using the 12 Week Year has been the single best thing I have done personally and professionally!”

—Wicho Hernandez, President, LINQ Financial

“What I like about *The 12 Week Year* is that it helps you produce results! Ideas are great—and this book has plenty of them—but they aren’t worth a hill of beans until you act on them. I’ve been endorsing Moran and Lennington’s work to my clients for years. Why? The system works!”

—Bill Cates, author of *Beyond Referrals; How to Use the Perpetual Revenue System™ to Turn Referrals into High-Value Clients*

“*The 12 Week Year* is by far the most practical book on what it takes to execute well that I have ever encountered. If you really read this book, if you study it, if you commit yourself to apply it—it will transform your results in business and in life.”

—James Shoemaker, CEO, Shoemaker Financial

“Over two decades running businesses, teaching others to do it, writing and speaking about it, day-to-day execution remains the toughest part of the code to get right. In one book Brian and Mike have put everything before it

to shame.”

—Dick Cross, author of *Just Run It!*

“*The 12 Week Year* is one of the best ‘how-to’ books I’ve ever read. It will work for you!”

—Jack Krasula, Host of “Anything is Possible,” NewsTalk 760 WJR  
“*The 12 Week Year* is a must-read for anyone who is seeking a more balanced and successful personal and professional life. Not only does it introduce many great and practical ideas for improving your performance in business, it also includes step-by-step action items to actually implement those ideas.”

—Robert Fakhimi, CEO and President, Mass Mutual San Francisco  
“In my career I have only experienced two different things that I consider to be game changers, and *The 12 Week Year* process is one. It has transformed our agency from top to bottom.”

—Gregory A. McRoberts, Managing Partner, WestPoint Financial Group  
“*The 12 Week Year* is genius! The only way I can stay on schedule, as an author, speaker, business-owner, husband, and father of four is by subscribing to this simple, yet brilliant strategy. Don’t let another year go by without discovering the power of this fantastic program. It will revolutionize your life, turning dreams into reality!”

—Patrick Kelly, author of national bestseller, *Tax-Free Retirement*  
“The principals and disciplines of high performance outlined in this book will change your personal and business life and will create a sense of urgency.”

—Harris S. Fishman, President, First Financial Group  
“Brian and Mike are onto something truly empowering, sometimes life does get in the way, but if you think about the long-term benefits of your actions, you will never disappoint yourself or others around you. The exercises and life plans that are in this book make it a must-read for everyone, professionally and personally.”

—Michael Vesuvio, President, Emerald Financial

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# Chapter 1

## The Challenge

How is it that some people seem to accomplish so much while the vast majority of people never accomplish what they are capable of? If you could fully tap your potential, what might be different for you? How would your life change if each and every day you performed up to your full potential? What would be different six months, three years, and five years down the road if each day you were at your best?

That set of questions, that core concept, is what the past dozen years or so have been about for Mike and me. For years, we have been helping our clients to execute more effectively. We work with individuals, teams, and corporations to make plans to help them achieve their goals. Our quest has been to unlock the secret to helping individuals and organizations perform at their best and live the life they are truly capable of.

“If we did the things we are capable of doing, we would literally astound ourselves.”

—Thomas Edison

I agree with Steven Pressfield, author of *The War of Art*, that most of us have two lives: the lives we live and the lives we are capable of living. It's the latter that intrigues me. It's the life, I believe, that we all deeply desire. It's the life that we know exists somewhere deep inside us that we wish we could actualize. This life isn't driven by the you who settles or gives in to procrastination and doubt, but by the optimal you, the best you, the confident you, the healthy you. The you who shows up with your best stuff, making things happen, making a difference, living a life of significance.

Being your optimal self sounds great doesn't it? But *how* do you become that other you? What does it take to be your best? That's an interesting question, and as I've had the opportunity to travel and meet thousands of

people, I often ask them, “What does it take to be your best, to be great?” As you might imagine, I get a lot of different answers.

In this book we will show you how to increase your current results by four times or more, in a very short period of time. You will learn exactly what it takes to perform at your best every day. We will unwrap the secrets of top performers in a way that allows you to align your thinking and your actions to produce staggering results. You are about to learn that creating greatness in your life or in your organization isn’t complicated. In fact, it’s quite uncomplicated, but that doesn’t mean that it’s easy.

The number-one factor holding people back from achieving what they are truly capable of is not a lack of knowledge, intellect, or information. It’s not a new strategy or idea. It’s not a larger network of connected people. It’s not hard work, natural talent, or luck. Of course all these things help, they all play a factor, but they are not the factors that make the difference.

You’ve no doubt heard the saying *knowledge is power*. I disagree. Knowledge is only powerful if you use it, if you act on it. People spend lifetimes acquiring knowledge, but to what purpose? Knowledge alone benefits no one unless the person acquiring it does something with it. And great ideas are worthless unless they are implemented. The marketplace only rewards those ideas that get implemented. You can be smart and have access to lots of information and great ideas; you can be well connected, work hard, and have lots of natural talent, but in the end, you have to execute. Execution is the single greatest market differentiator. Great companies and successful individuals execute better than their competition. The barrier standing between you and the life you are capable of living is a lack of consistent execution. Effective execution will set you free. It is *the* path to accomplish the things you desire.

Think about the areas in your life where you’ve fallen short, accomplished less than you desire, or less than you feel you’re capable of. In each of those scenarios, if you look critically, the breakdown is most often in the execution. Take for instance a new idea that someone else has used to create success. How often does that idea fail when a different person tries it?

One of our clients is a large insurance company with more than 2,000 agents. Within the company there is one agent who is a perennial top producer year-in and year-out. As you might expect, over the years, other

agents have asked him if he would share his approach with them. Without hesitation the top producer would take time out from his busy schedule to walk them through exactly what he did to create his success. Do you know how many people replicated his success? You guessed it, zero. He now refuses to share his secret because no one follows through with what he teaches them.

Sixty-five percent of Americans are overweight or obese. Do you think there is some secret to losing weight and getting fit? The diet and fitness industry is a \$60 billion industry. Each year new books are published on diet and exercise. When I searched “diet books” on the Internet my search came back with 45,915 results. Almost 46,000 books; some with familiar titles like *The Atkins Diet*, or *South Beach Diet*, some with less familiar titles like *Run Fat B!tch Run*. Yet Americans continue to be overweight and out of shape. Most people know how to get back in shape—eat better, exercise more—they just don’t do it. It’s not a *knowledge* problem; it’s an *execution* problem.

Our experience has shown that most people have the capacity to double or triple their income just by consistently applying what they already know. Despite this, people continue to chase new ideas thinking that the next idea is the one that will magically make it all better.

Ann Laufman is a great example of the benefits of executing the right idea. Ann is a financial advisor with Mass Mutual in Houston. Ann had always done well and by any measure was successful, yet she felt like she was capable of more but was not quite sure how to get there. When her managing partner introduced The 12 Week Year to the agency, Ann got involved. In the end, Ann experienced a 400 percent increase in production and became the first female associate of the year in the 103-year history of Mass Mutual Houston.

What is interesting about this is that Ann didn’t start to work with more affluent clients, write bigger cases, or expand her target market—all things that most advisors would pursue to increase their production. Instead, Ann focused on improving her execution by doing what she had already been doing, just doing it more steadily. By consistently executing the critical few tasks and strategies that most supported her success, she was able to create a huge increase—and all of this without working longer hours.

Ann’s situation is not unique. We have thousands of examples where

individuals and entire organizations have experienced amazing results by simply learning to execute.

“It’s not what you know; it’s not even who you know; it’s what you implement that counts.”

In *The 12 Week Year*, we will show you how to perform at your best and achieve the things in life that matter most to you through effective execution. Most of the stuff that we’ll discuss, you already know, but as I mentioned earlier, there is a big difference between knowing and doing. We will teach you how to consistently take action on the things that will shape your success.

The concepts in this book have been developed and proven in the field through our ongoing execution work with clients. We’ve included only what works, and have eliminated the rest. The final product is a concise but powerful book that delivers. While we do hope the book is thought-provoking, it’s more important to us that it inspires you to action.

We have written *The 12 Week Year* to close the execution gap. It is written in a way that allows you to understand the fundamental concepts of execution and actually apply them right away.

The book is split into two parts. Part I helps you understand the process to achieve your most valuable goals in only weeks. Part II is all about making your goals happen. It gives you the specific tools and tips needed to support the ideas in Part I of the book.

Our 12 week execution system is both flexible and scalable. The concepts apply equally well for individuals as well as groups, both personally and professionally. We have had entire organizations as well as individuals apply the 12 Week Year with great success.

While the book is concise, the concepts it contains are powerful. It is possible for you to dramatically improve your results by applying them. We know this to be true because of the thousands of responses from the readers of our first edition.

In this book, we will show you how to substantially increase your current results, lower your stress, build your confidence, and feel better about yourself. Not by working harder, but by focusing on the activities that matter most, maintaining a sense of urgency to get those things done, and shedding

the low-value activity that keeps you stuck.

Get ready: You are about to experience the 12 Week Year!

—Brian P. Moran and Michael Lennington

# Part I

## Things You Think You Know

Part I will provide fresh insights regarding what it takes to be great and challenge what you think you know about what it takes to perform at your best and achieve your potential.

“It’s what you learn after you know it all that counts.”

—John Wooden

# Chapter 2

## Redefining the Year

Most people, and most organizations for that matter, don't lack ideas. Whether they're effective marketing techniques, sales ideas, cost-cutting measures, or customer service enhancements, there are always more ideas than you can effectively implement. The breakdown is not in knowing, but in applying.

“You can't build a reputation on what you're going to do.”

—Henry Ford

One of the things that gets in the way of individuals and organizations achieving their best is the annual planning process. As strange as this is going to sound, annual goals and plans are often a barrier to high performance. I'm not saying that annual goals and plans don't have a positive impact; they do. There is no question you will do better with annual goals and plans than without any goals or plans; however, we have found that this annual process inherently limits performance.

As we worked with clients over the years, we noticed an interesting pattern emerging. Most of them believed, either consciously or unconsciously, that their success and failure was determined by what they had achieved over the course of a year. They set annual goals, created annual plans, and in many cases broke the goals down into quarterly, monthly, and sometimes even weekly plans. But in the end, they evaluated their success annually. The trap is what we call *annualized thinking*.

## Discard Annualized Thinking

At the heart of annualized thinking is an unspoken belief that there is plenty

of time in the year to make things happen. In January, December looks a long way off.

Think about it; we begin the year with big goals but by the end of January we usually find ourselves slightly behind where we need to be. While we're certainly not pleased, we're not too worried, either, because we think to ourselves: "I've got plenty of time. I've got 11 more months to catch up." At the end of March we're still a bit behind, but again we're not too worried. Why? Because we still think we've got plenty of time to catch up. And this thought pattern prevails late into the year.

We mistakenly believe that there is a lot of time left in the year, and we act accordingly. We lack a sense of urgency, not realizing that every week is important, every day is important, every moment is important. Ultimately, effective execution happens daily and weekly!

Another flawed premise with annualized thinking is the notion that, sometime later in the year, we will experience a significant improvement in results. It's as if something magical will happen in late September or October that will result in a substantial increase. If we can't produce a substantial increase this week, why do we think we can do it for the entire year?

The fact is every week counts! Every day counts! Every moment counts! We need to be conscious of the reality that execution happens daily and weekly, not monthly or quarterly.

Annualized thinking and planning more often than not leads to less than optimal performance. In order to perform at your best you will need to get out of the annual mode and scrub your annualized thinking. Stop thinking in terms of a year; instead focus on shorter time frames.

The annual execution cycle blinds people to the reality that life is lived in the moment and that ultimately success is created in the moment. It lulls people into believing that they can put things off—critical activity—and still accomplish what they desire, still achieve their goals.

At this point, you might argue that almost every organization operates this way and many of them hit their goals and make plan. I would argue back that making plan does not mean that they are accomplishing what they are capable of.

We've had successful organizations increase their results by 50 percent in just 12 short weeks. In one example, we helped a billion dollar brokerage

operation double its sales productivity in six months. That is just not possible operating in an annual execution cycle. However organizations or individuals are performing, they will perform better in a nonannualized environment.

Discard annualized thinking and watch what happens.

## Great Things Happen at Year-End

You've probably seen advertisements or heard the pitches proclaiming "unbeatable deals" as the end of the year approaches. The fact is, these end-of-year pushes get results and are standard practice in many industries.

If you've ever been part of a year-end push, you know that everyone is focused on getting business in and completing important tasks. The difference between success and failure for the whole year can hang in the balance during the last 60 days. More often than not, results spike upward as the days left in the year dwindle toward zero.

"There's nothing like a deadline to get you motivated."

It happens all the time in the insurance and financial services industries. For many agents and firms December is traditionally the best month of the year, and the fourth quarter often represents 30 to 40 percent of the annual sales. It is amazing what happens when people have a goal and a deadline.

Year-end is certainly a rousing time in most industries. Activity is up and people are focused. With little time to waste and with clear objectives to meet, workers focus on the critical projects and opportunities. Tasks that are not directly related to driving results are pushed aside for what really matters in the short-term.

At this time of year there also seems to be an increase in performance-related conversations. Management, focused on achieving their own performance goals, spends more time with associates reviewing results and encouraging them more than at any other time of the year.

What is it about year-end? Why do people behave differently in November and December than they do in July and August? Inevitably, it is because there is a deadline, which for most people is December 31.

The end of the year represents a line in the sand, a point at which we