

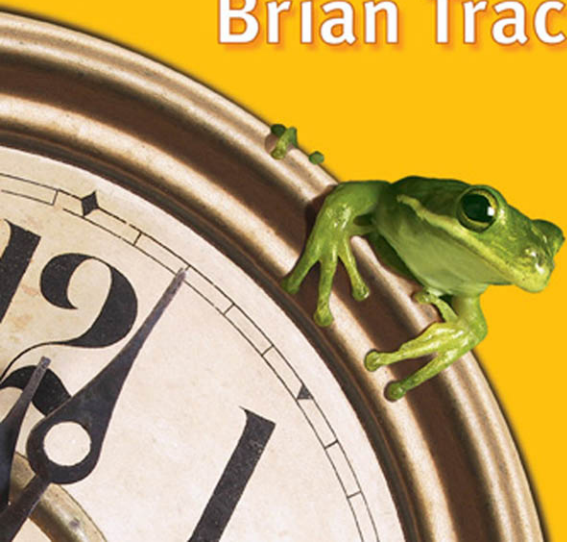
Second Edition, Revised and Updated with Two New Chapters

# Eat That Frog!

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21 Great Ways to Stop Procrastinating  
and Get More Done in Less Time

Brian Tracy





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21 Great Ways to  
Stop Procrastinating  
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Brian Tracy



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# Eat That Frog!

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**BK**

Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

235 Montgomery Street, Suite 650

San Francisco, California 94104-2916

Tel: (415) 288-0260, Fax: (415) 362-2512

[www.bkconnection.com](http://www.bkconnection.com)

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Cataloging-in-Publication Data are available from the Library of Congress.

Second Edition

Paperback print edition ISBN 978-1-57675-422-1

PDF e-book ISBN 978-1-57675-504-4

2007-1

Copyediting and proofreading by PeopleSpeak. Book design and composition by Beverly Butterfield, Girl of the West Productions. Indexing by Rachel Rice.

To my remarkable daughter Catherine,  
an amazing girl with a wonderful mind  
and an incredible future lying before her

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## Preface

Thank you for picking up this book. I hope these ideas help you as much as they have helped me and thousands of others. In fact, I hope that this book changes your life forever.

There is never enough time to do everything you have to do. You are literally swamped with work and personal responsibilities, projects, stacks of magazines to read, and piles of books you intend to get to one of these days—as soon as you get caught up.

But the fact is that you are *never* going to get caught up. You will never get on top of your tasks. You will never get far enough ahead to be able to get to all those books, magazines, and leisure time activities that you dream of.

And forget about solving your time management problems by becoming more productive. No matter how many personal productivity techniques you master, there will always be more to do than you can ever accomplish in the time you have available to you, no matter how much it is.

You can get control of your time and your life only by changing the way you think, work, and deal with the never-ending river of responsibilities that flows over you each day. You can get control of your tasks and activities only to the degree that you stop doing some things and start spending more time on the few activities that can really make a difference in your life.



I have studied time management for more than thirty years. I have immersed myself in the works of Peter Drucker, Alec Mackenzie, Alan Lakein, Stephen Covey, and many, many others. I have read hundreds of books and thousands of articles on personal efficiency and effectiveness. This book is the result.

Each time I came across a good idea, I tried it out in my own work and personal life. If it worked, I incorporated it into my talks and seminars and taught it to others.

Galileo once wrote, "You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself."

Depending upon your level of knowledge and experience, these ideas may sound familiar. This book will bring them to a higher level of awareness. When you learn and apply these methods and techniques over and over until they become habits, you will alter the course of your life in a very positive way.

## **The Power of Written Goals**

Let me tell you something about myself and the origins of this little book. I started off in life with few advantages, aside from a curious mind. I did poorly in school and left without graduating. I worked at laboring jobs for several years. My future did not appear promising.

As a young man, I got a job on a tramp freighter and went off to see the world. For eight years, I traveled and worked and then traveled some more, eventually visiting more than eighty countries on five continents.

When I could no longer find a laboring job, I got into sales, knocking on doors, working on straight commission. I struggled from sale to sale until I began looking around me and asking, “Why is it that other people are doing better than I am?”

Then I did something that changed my life. I began to ask successful people what they were doing that enabled them to be more productive and earn more money than me. And they told me. I did what they advised me to do, and my sales went up. Eventually, I became so successful that I was made a sales manager. As a sales manager, I used the same strategy. I asked successful managers what they did to achieve such great results, and when they told me, I did it myself. In no time at all, I began to get the same results they did.

This process of learning and applying what I had learned changed my life. I am still amazed at how simple and obvious it is. Just find out what other successful people do and do the same things until you get the same results. Learn from the experts. Wow! What an idea.

## **Success Is Predictable**

Simply put, some people are doing better than others because they do things differently and they do the right things right. Especially, successful, happy, prosperous people use their time far, far better than the average person.

Coming from an unsuccessful background, I had developed deep feelings of inferiority and inadequacy. I

had fallen into the mental trap of assuming that people who were doing better than me were actually better than me. What I learned was that this was not necessarily true. They were just doing things *differently*, and what they had learned to do, within reason, I could learn as well.

This was a revelation to me. I was both amazed and excited with this discovery. I still am. I realized that I could change my life and achieve almost any goal I could set if I just found out what others were doing in that area and then did it myself until I got the same results they were getting.

Within one year of starting in sales, I was a top salesman. A year later I was made a manager. Within three years, I became a vice president in charge of a ninety-five-person sales force in six countries. I was twenty-five years old.

Over the years, I have worked in twenty-two different jobs; started and built several companies; earned a business degree from a major university; learned to speak French, German, and Spanish; and been a speaker, trainer, or consultant for more than 1,000 companies. I currently give talks and seminars to more than 250,000 people each year, with audiences as large as 20,000 people.

## **A Simple Truth**

Throughout my career, I have discovered and rediscovered a simple truth. The ability to concentrate single-

mindedly on your most important task, to do it well and to finish it completely, is the key to great success, achievement, respect, status, and happiness in life. This key insight is the heart and soul of this book.

This book is written to show you how to get ahead more rapidly in your career and to simultaneously enrich your personal life. These pages contain the twenty-one most powerful principles on personal effectiveness I have ever discovered.

These methods, techniques, and strategies are practical, proven, and fast acting. In the interest of time, I do not dwell on the various psychological or emotional explanations for procrastination or poor time management. There are no lengthy departures into theory or research. What you will learn are specific actions you can take immediately to get better, faster results in your work and to increase your happiness.

Every idea in this book is focused on increasing your overall levels of productivity, performance, and output and on making you more valuable in whatever you do. You can apply many of these ideas to your personal life as well.

Each of these twenty-one methods and techniques is complete in itself. All are necessary. One strategy might be effective in one situation and another might apply to another task. All together, these twenty-one ideas represent a smorgasbord of personal effectiveness techniques that you can use at any time, in any order or sequence that makes sense to you at the moment.

The key to success is action. These principles work to bring about fast, predictable improvements in performance and results. The faster you learn and apply them, the faster you will move ahead in your career—guaranteed!

There will be no limit to what you can accomplish when you learn how to *Eat That Frog!*

*Brian Tracy*  
Solana Beach, California  
October 2006

# **Introduction: Eat That Frog**

This is a wonderful time to be alive. There have never been more possibilities and opportunities for you to achieve more of your goals than exist today. As perhaps never before in human history, you are actually drowning in options. In fact, there are so many good things that you can do that your ability to decide among them may be the critical determinant of what you accomplish in life.

If you are like most people today, you are overwhelmed with too much to do and too little time. As you struggle to get caught up, new tasks and responsibilities just keep rolling in, like the waves of the ocean. Because of this, you will never be able to do everything you have to do. You will never be caught up. You will always be behind in some of your tasks and responsibilities, and probably in many of them.

## **The Need to Be Selective**

For this reason, and perhaps more than ever before, your ability to select your most important task at each moment, and then to get started on that task and to get it done both quickly and well, will probably have more of an impact on your success than any other quality or skill you can develop.

An average person who develops the habit of setting clear priorities and getting important tasks completed

quickly will run circles around a genius who talks a lot and makes wonderful plans but who gets very little done.

## **The Truth about Frogs**

Mark Twain once said that if the first thing you do each morning is to eat a live frog, you can go through the day with the satisfaction of knowing that that is probably the *worst* thing that is going to happen to you all day long.

Your “frog” is your biggest, most important task, the one you are most likely to procrastinate on if you don't do something about it. It is also the one task that can have the greatest positive impact on your life and results at the moment.

The first rule of frog eating is this:

If you have to eat two frogs, eat the ugliest one first.

This is another way of saying that if you have two important tasks before you, start with the biggest, hardest, and most important task first. Discipline yourself to begin immediately and then to persist until the task is complete before you go on to something else.

Think of this as a test. Treat it like a personal challenge. Resist the temptation to start with the easier task. Continually remind yourself that one of the most important decisions you make each day is what you will do immediately and what you will do later, if you do it at all.

The second rule of frog eating is this:  
If you have to eat a live frog at all, it doesn't pay  
to sit and look at it for very long.

The key to reaching high levels of performance and productivity is to develop the lifelong habit of tackling your major task first thing each morning. You must develop the routine of “eating your frog” before you do anything else and without taking too much time to think about it.

### **Take Action Immediately**

In study after study of men and women who get paid more and promoted faster, the quality of “action orientation” stands out as the most observable and consistent behavior they demonstrate in everything they do. Successful, effective people are those who launch directly into their major tasks and then discipline themselves to work steadily and single-mindedly until those tasks are complete.

In our world, and especially in our business world, you are paid and promoted for getting specific, measurable results. You are paid for making a valuable contribution and especially for making the most important contribution that is expected of you.

“Failure to execute” is one of the biggest problems in organizations today. Many people confuse activity with accomplishment. They talk continually, hold endless



meetings, and make wonderful plans, but in the final analysis, no one does the job and gets the results required.

## Develop the Habits of Success

Your success in life and work will be determined by the kinds of habits that you develop over time. The habit of setting priorities, overcoming procrastination, and getting on with your most important task is a mental and physical skill. As such, this habit is learnable through practice and repetition, over and over again, until it locks into your subconscious mind and becomes a permanent part of your behavior. Once it becomes a habit, it becomes both automatic and easy to do.

This habit of starting and completing important tasks has an immediate and continuous payoff. You are designed mentally and emotionally in such a way that task completion gives you a positive feeling. It makes you happy. It makes you feel like a winner.

Whenever you complete a task of any size or importance, you feel a surge of energy, enthusiasm, and self-esteem. The more important the completed task, the happier, more confident, and more powerful you feel about yourself and your world.

The completion of an important task triggers the release of *endorphins* in your brain. These endorphins give you a natural “high.” The endorphin rush that follows successful completion of any task makes you feel more positive, personable, creative, and confident.

## **Develop a Positive Addiction**

Here is one of the most important of the so-called secrets of success. You can actually develop a “positive addiction” to endorphins and to the feeling of enhanced clarity, confidence, and competence that they trigger. When you develop this addiction, you will, at an unconscious level, begin to organize your life in such a way that you are continually starting and completing ever more important tasks and projects. You will actually become addicted, in a very positive sense, to success and contribution.

One of the keys to your living a wonderful life, having a successful career, and feeling terrific about yourself is to develop the habit of starting and finishing important jobs. When you do, this behavior will take on a power of its own and you'll find it easier to complete important tasks than not to complete them.

## **No Shortcuts**

You remember the story of the man who stops a musician on a street in New York and asks how he can get to Carnegie Hall. The musician replies, “Practice, man, practice.”

Practice is the key to mastering any skill. Fortunately, your mind is like a muscle. It grows stronger and more capable with use. With practice, you can learn any behavior or develop any habit that you consider either desirable or necessary.

## The Three Ds of New Habit Formation

You need three key qualities to develop the habits of focus and concentration, which are all learnable. They are decision, discipline, and determination.

First, make a *decision* to develop the habit of task completion. Second, *discipline* yourself to practice the principles you are about to learn over and over until they become automatic. And third, back everything you do with *determination* until the habit is locked in and becomes a permanent part of your personality.

## Visualize Yourself as You Want to Be

There is a special way that you can accelerate your progress toward becoming the highly productive, effective, efficient person that you want to be. It consists of your thinking continually about the rewards and benefits of being an action-oriented, fast-moving, and focused person. See yourself as the kind of person who gets important jobs done quickly and well on a consistent basis.

Your mental picture of yourself has a powerful effect on your behavior. Visualize yourself as the person you intend to be in the future. Your self-image, the way you see yourself on the inside, largely determines your performance on the outside. All improvements in your *outer* life begin with improvements on the *inside*, in your mental pictures.

You have a virtually unlimited ability to learn and develop new skills, habits, and abilities. When you train

yourself, through repetition and practice, to overcome procrastination and get your most important tasks completed quickly, you will move yourself onto the fast track in your life and career and step on the accelerator.

*Eat That Frog!*

# 1

## Set the Table

There is one quality that one must possess to win, and that is definiteness of purpose, the knowledge of what one wants and a burning desire to achieve it.

NAPOLEON HILL

Before you can determine your “frog” and get on with the job of eating it, you have to decide exactly what you want to achieve in each area of your life. *Clarity* is perhaps the most important concept in personal productivity. The number one reason why some people get more work done faster is because they are absolutely clear about their goals and objectives, and they don’t deviate from them. The greater clarity you have regarding what you want and the steps you will have to take to achieve it, the easier it will be for you to overcome procrastination, eat your frog, and complete the task before you.

A major reason for procrastination and lack of motivation is vagueness, confusion, and fuzzy-mindedness about what you are trying to do and in what order and for what reason. You must avoid this common condition with all your strength by striving for ever greater clarity in your major goals and tasks.

Here is a great rule for success:  
Think on paper.

Only about 3 percent of adults have clear, written goals. These people accomplish five and ten times as much as people of equal or better education and ability but who, for whatever reason, have never taken the time to write out exactly what they want.

There is a powerful formula for setting and achieving goals that you can use for the rest of your life. It consists of seven simple steps. Any one of these steps can double and triple your productivity if you are not currently using it. Many of my graduates have increased their incomes dramatically in a matter of a few years, or even a few months, with this simple, seven-part method.

Step one: *Decide exactly what you want.* Either decide for yourself or sit down with your boss and discuss your goals and objectives until you are crystal clear about what is expected of you and in what order of priority. It is amazing how many people are working away, day after day, on low-value tasks because they have not had this critical discussion with their managers.

One of the very worst uses of time is to do something very well that need not be done at all.

Stephen Covey says, "Before you begin scrambling up the ladder of success, make sure that it is leaning against the right building."

Step two: *Write it down.* Think on paper. When you write down a goal, you crystallize it and give it tangible form. You create something that you can touch and see. On the other hand, a goal or objective that is not in writing is merely a wish or a fantasy. It has no energy behind it. Unwritten goals lead to confusion, vagueness, misdirection, and numerous mistakes.

Step three: *Set a deadline on your goal; set subdeadlines if necessary.* A goal or decision without a deadline has no urgency. It has no real beginning or end. Without a definite deadline accompanied by the assignment or acceptance of specific responsibilities for completion, you will naturally procrastinate and get very little done.

Step four: *Make a list of everything that you can think of that you are going to have to do to achieve your goal.* As you think of new activities, add them to your list. Keep building your list until it is complete. A list gives you a visual picture of the larger task or objective. It gives you a track to run on. It dramatically increases the likelihood that you will achieve your goal as you have defined it and on schedule.

Step five: *Organize the list into a plan.* Organize your list by priority and sequence. Take a few minutes to decide what you need to do first and what you can do later. Decide what has to be done before something else and what needs to be done afterward. Even better, lay out your plan visually in the form of a series of boxes and circles on a sheet of paper, with lines and arrows showing the relationship of each task to each other task.

You'll be amazed at how much easier it is to achieve your goal when you break it down into individual tasks.

With a written goal and an organized plan of action, you will be far more productive and efficient than people who are carrying their goals around in their minds.

Step six: *Take action on your plan immediately.* Do something. Do anything. An average plan vigorously executed is far better than a brilliant plan on which nothing is done. For you to achieve any kind of success, execution is everything.

Step seven: *Resolve to do something every single day that moves you toward your major goal.* Build this activity into your daily schedule. You may decide to read a specific number of pages on a key subject. You may call on a specific number of prospects or customers. You may engage in a specific period of physical exercise. You may learn a certain number of new words in a foreign language. Whatever it is, you must never miss a day.

Keep pushing forward. Once you start moving, keep moving. Don't stop. This decision, this discipline alone, can dramatically increase your speed of goal accomplishment and boost your personal productivity.

## **The Power of Written Goals**

Clear written goals have a wonderful effect on your thinking. They motivate you and galvanize you into action. They stimulate your creativity, release your energy, and help you to overcome procrastination as much as any other factor.



Goals are the fuel in the furnace of achievement. The bigger your goals and the clearer they are, the more excited you become about achieving them. The more you think about your goals, the greater become your inner drive and desire to accomplish them.

Think about your goals and review them daily. Every morning when you begin, take action on the most important task you can accomplish to achieve your most important goal at the moment.



## EAT THAT FROG!

1. Take a clean sheet of paper right now and make a list of ten goals you want to accomplish in the next year. Write your goals as though a year has already passed and they are now a reality.

Use the present tense, positive voice, and first person so that they are immediately accepted by your subconscious mind. For example, you could write, "I earn x number of dollars per year" or "I weigh x number of pounds" or "I drive such and such a car."

2. Review your list of ten goals and select the one goal that, if you achieved it, would have the greatest positive impact on your life. Whatever that goal is, write it on a separate sheet of paper, set a deadline, make a plan, take action on your plan, and then do something every single day that moves you toward that goal. This exercise alone could change your life!

# 2

## Plan Every Day in Advance

Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now.

ALAN LAKEIN

You have heard the old question, “How do you eat an elephant?” The answer is “One bite at a time!”

How do you eat your biggest, ugliest frog? The same way; you break it down into specific step-by-step activities and then you start on the first one.

Your mind, your ability to think, plan, and decide, is your most powerful tool for overcoming procrastination and increasing your productivity. Your ability to set goals, make plans, and take action on them determines the course of your life. The very act of thinking and planning unlocks your mental powers, triggers your creativity, and increases your mental and physical energies.

Conversely, as Alec Mackenzie wrote, *“Taking action without thinking things through is a prime source of problems.”*

Your ability to make good plans before you act is a measure of your overall competence. The better the

plan you have, the easier it is for you to overcome procrastination, to get started, to eat your frog, and then to keep going.

## **Increase Your Return on Energy**

One of your top goals at work should be for you to get the highest possible return on your investment of mental, emotional, and physical energy. The good news is that every minute spent in planning saves as many as ten minutes in execution. It takes only about 10 to 12 minutes for you to plan out your day, but this small investment of time will save you up to two hours (100 to 120 minutes) in wasted time and diffused effort throughout the day.

You may have heard of the Six-P Formula. It says, “Proper Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance.”

When you consider how helpful planning can be in increasing your productivity and performance, it is amazing how few people practice it every single day. And planning is really quite simple to do. All you need is a piece of paper and a pen. The most sophisticated Palm Pilot, computer program, or time planner is based on the same principle. It is based on your sitting down and making a list of everything you have to do before you begin.

## **Two Extra Hours per Day**

Always work from a list. When something new comes up, add it to the list before you do it. You can increase your productivity and output by 25 percent or more—about

two hours a day—from the first day that you begin working consistently from a list.

Make your list the night before for the workday ahead. Move everything that you have not yet accomplished onto your list for the coming day, and then add everything that you have to do the next day. When you make your list the night before, your subconscious mind will work on your list all night long while you sleep. Often you will wake up with great ideas and insights that you can use to get your job done faster and better than you had initially thought.

The more time you take to make written lists of everything you have to do, in advance, the more effective and efficient you will be.

## Different Lists for Different Purposes

You need different lists for different purposes. First, you should create a *master list* on which you write down everything you can think of that you want to do sometime in the future. This is the place where you capture every idea and every new task or responsibility that comes up. You can sort out the items later.

Second, you should have a *monthly list* that you make at the end of the month for the month ahead. This may contain items transferred from your master list.

Third, you should have a *weekly list* where you plan your entire week in advance. This is a list that is under construction as you go through the current week.

This discipline of systematic time planning can be very helpful to you. Many people have told me that the habit of taking a couple of hours at the end of each week to plan the coming week has increased their productivity dramatically and changed their lives completely. This technique will work for you as well.

Finally, you should transfer items from your monthly and weekly lists onto your *daily list*. These are the specific activities that you are going to accomplish the following day.

As you work through the day, tick off the items on your list as you complete them. This activity gives you a visual picture of accomplishment. It generates a feeling of success and forward motion. Seeing yourself working progressively through your list motivates and energizes you. It raises your self-esteem and self-respect. Steady, visible progress propels you forward and helps you to overcome procrastination.

## **Planning a Project**

When you have a project of any kind, begin by making a list of every step that you will have to complete to finish the project from beginning to end. Organize the steps by priority and sequence. Lay out the project in front of you on paper or on a computer so that you can see every step and task. Then go to work on one task at a time. You will be amazed at how much you get done in this way.

As you work through your lists, you will feel more and more effective and powerful. You will feel more in control of your life. You will be naturally motivated to do even more. You will think better and more creatively, and you will get more and better insights that enable you to do your work even faster.

As you work steadily through your lists, you will develop a sense of positive forward momentum that enables you to overcome procrastination. This feeling of progress gives you more energy and keeps you going throughout the day.

One of the most important rules of personal effectiveness is the *10/90 Rule*. This rule says that the first 10 percent of time that you spend planning and organizing your work before you begin will save you as much as 90 percent of the time in getting the job done once you get started. You only have to try this rule once to prove it to yourself.

When you plan each day in advance, you will find it much easier to get going and to keep going. The work will go faster and smoother than ever before. You will feel more powerful and competent. You will get more done faster than you thought possible. Eventually, you will become *unstoppable*.



## EAT THAT FROG!

1. Begin today to plan every day, week, and month in advance. Take a notepad or sheet of paper (or use your PDA or BlackBerry) and make a list of everything you have to do in the next twenty-four hours. Add to your list as new items come up. Make a list of all your projects, the big multitask jobs that are important to your future.
2. Lay out each of your major goals, projects, or tasks by *priority*, what is most important, and by *sequence*, what has to be done first, what comes second, and so forth. Start with the end in mind and work backward.

Think on paper! Always work from a list. You'll be amazed at how much more productive you become and how much easier it is to eat your frog.

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## About the Author

Brian Tracy is a professional speaker, trainer, and consultant and is the chairman of Brian Tracy International, a training and consulting company based in Solana Beach, California. He is also a self-made millionaire.

Brian learned his lessons the hard way. He left high school without graduating and worked as a laborer for several years. He washed dishes, stacked lumber, dug wells, worked in factories, and stacked hay bales on farms and ranches.

In his mid-twenties, he became a salesman and began climbing up through the business world. Year by year, studying and applying every idea, method, and technique he could find, he worked his way up to become chief operating officer of a \$265-million development company.

In his thirties, he enrolled at the University of Alberta and earned a bachelor of commerce degree; then he earned a masters in business administration from Andrew Jackson University. Over the years, he has worked in twenty-two different companies and industries. In 1981, he began teaching his success principles in talks and seminars around the country. Today, his books, audio programs, and video seminars have been translated into thirty-five languages and are used in fifty-two countries.

Brian has shared his ideas with more than 4 million people in forty-five countries since he began speaking professionally. He has served as a consultant and trainer for more than 1,000 corporations. He has lived and practiced every principle in this book. He has taken himself and countless thousands of other people from frustration and underachievement to prosperity and success.



Brian Tracy calls himself an “eclectic reader.” He considers himself not an academic researcher but a synthesizer of information. Each year he spends hundreds of hours reading a wide variety of newspapers, magazines, books, and other materials. In addition, he listens to many hours of audio programs, attends countless seminars, and watches numerous videotapes on subjects of interest to him. Information gleaned from radio, television, and other media also adds to his knowledge base.

Brian assimilates ideas and information based on his own experience and that of others and incorporates them into his own experience. He is the bestselling author of more than forty books, including *Maximum Achievement*, *Advanced Selling Strategies*, *Focal Point*, and *The 100 Absolutely Unbreakable Laws of Business Success*. He has written and produced more than 300 audio and video learning programs that are used worldwide.

Brian is happily married and has four children. He lives on a golf course in San Diego. He travels and speaks more than 100 times each year and has business operations in seventeen countries. He is considered to be one of the foremost authorities on success and achievement in the world.

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