

# The 9 Disciplines of Successful Entrepreneurs

Critical techniques to starting and running  
a thriving business



By Brian Tracy

# The 9 Disciplines of Successful Entrepreneurs

## Critical techniques to starting and running a thriving business

To start and build your own successful business you need special disciplines; disciplines that are practiced by all successful entrepreneurs and self-made business millionaires. You can either learn and practice these disciplines early in your entrepreneurial career or you can learn and practice them later. Sooner or later you must become knowledgeable and skilled in each of these nine areas if you are going to build a successful enterprise. And the longer it takes you to master these nine areas, the longer it will take and the more it will cost, before you eventually achieve your financial and business goals.



### 1. Discipline of Market Analysis

The first discipline is the discipline of market analysis. This is where most entrepreneurs fail. They start off with a great idea, and often don't want to tell anybody about it; for fear that someone will steal their idea. So they go off half-cocked into the marketplace with a product or service that has not been thought through properly and they are amazed when it fails.

The fact is that people are far too busy to steal your idea. Ninety-nine out of 100 new business ideas fail anyway. People who are operating their own businesses are far, far too busy to have even a minute of time to steal your idea, whatever it is.

In fact, if you have an idea for a product or service in a particular industry, you should go to someone who is already in that industry and ask for their opinion. If you are really smart, you will get in touch with as many people in that industry as possible and lay out your idea to them in full and ask for their candid comments.

What you are looking for is “negative thinking.” A negative thinker is someone who will point out the holes and flaws in your plan. If you cannot patch the holes or fix the flaws in your plan for a new business, that is probably a pretty good indicator that your business is not going to succeed.

The most dangerous people you can talk to are “positive thinkers.” These are people who will tell you that your business idea is wonderful and that you should “go for it!” They will tell you that this is a great time to start a business and that you will be a great success. Often these are your friends and relatives. But don’t get carried away. The only advice that is of any value to you is advice from people who are thoroughly knowledgeable and experienced in the area that you wish to start a business. Anyone else may be well-meaning but their advice is not worth much.

If you had a sore stomach, you wouldn’t ask your coworker if you should have surgery or whether or not he thinks that you have cancer. This is not the right person to talk to. For something as important as this, you need a specialist.

The discipline of market analysis requires that you thoroughly examine every detail of your market segment before you commit your time and money to offering your product or service there.



## 2. Discipline of Planning

The second discipline that you must become very good at is the discipline of planning. What this means, at the bare minimum, is that you must take the time to prepare a complete business plan before you start operations. Most entrepreneurs fail to do this, for a variety of reasons. And this is the reason that most entrepreneurs go broke.

The purpose of a business plan is not to act as a road map or as a precise guide to the future. The purpose of creating a business plan is that the preparation of the plan forces you to think through every single critical issue that you will deal with in the future.

The very best and smartest business people are those who have already given a lot of thought to the various things that could happen and to the various things they might have to do, should those things happen. The least successful business people are those who have given no thought at all.

When you prepare a business plan, you are forced to sit down and carefully analyze and justify every single penny in it, first of all to yourself and then second of all to anyone from whom you are trying to raise money.



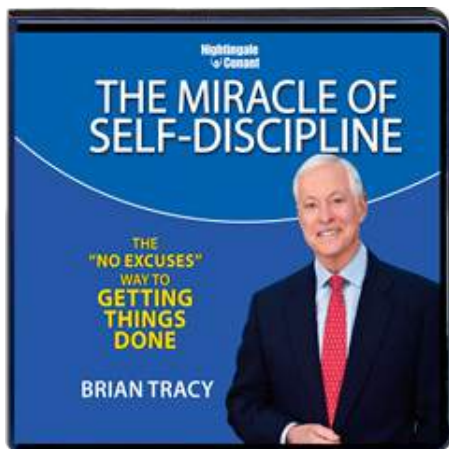
### 3. The Discipline of Money

The third discipline you need for starting your own business is that of money. You need six full months of operating costs in the bank before you go into business.

If you need money to start your own business, be aware that banks simply do not lend money to new business start-ups. The failure rate is too high. Banks are not in the business of taking risks. Banks are in the business of making good, solid loans that they know will be paid back on a timely basis. Banks then make the margin between what they can borrow the money for and what they can lend it to you at.

Banks typically require three times, four times or five times collateralization to lend you any money at all. This means that no matter who you are or what your background, a bank will want proof that you have five dollars in liquid assets that they can seize and sell for every dollar you want to borrow from them. They will look at your business plan and listen attentively to your business ideas. But they won't lend you any money.

The other option is where 99% of all start-up money comes from: "love money." This is money that people give you because they love you, or money that you provide yourself by taking out a second mortgage on your home, selling everything that you have that you don't need, and even borrowing cash against your credit cards. Whatever the scenario, just be sure you have calculated six full months of operating costs and then actually have this amount.



Learn how to accomplish more in a month than most people accomplish in a year when you develop the habit of self-discipline. Learn more about this 8 CD set: **The Miracle of Self-Discipline.**

[Learn More Here](#)



## 4. Discipline of Selling

The fourth discipline you require is the discipline of selling. You must be an absolutely outstanding salesperson for your product or service before you open your doors or you should not bother opening your doors at all.

The fact is that all successful businesses are started and built by someone who has a remarkable capacity to sell the product in a competitive market. The biggest mistake you can ever make is to think that someone else is going to do your selling for you.

The second biggest mistake you can make is to think that advertising or direct mail alone is going to sell your product or service for you. The best way that you are going to sell your product or service is by going out and getting face-to-face with critical, skeptical, cautious customers who can buy it if you can convince them of its value. Don't waste a cent on advertising when you start up. That is one of the fastest ways to go broke sooner rather than later.

Listen to every audio program on selling that you can get a hold of. Read the books on selling written by people in your same industry. Attend sales training seminars and courses and then see as many customers as you can, all day, every day until you begin to bring in sales in excess of your costs of operation. Banks are not in the business of taking risks.

The discipline of selling is the heartbeat of your business and the way you deal with this discipline will determine your success or failure.



## 5. Discipline of Negotiating

The fifth discipline is the discipline of negotiating. There is perhaps no better program to teach you negotiating than Roger Dawson's *The Secrets of Power Negotiating*.

You learn how to negotiate by first of all studying the process of negotiating, and then second, practicing negotiating at every opportunity. You negotiate for better prices for your products and services when you are buying. You negotiate for higher prices and earlier payments for your products and services when you are selling. You negotiate for extended payment terms from your suppliers. You negotiate for better loan terms and interest rates from your bankers.

With regard to money and negotiating, the rule is that you preserve cash at all costs. You never buy when you can lease and never lease when you can rent. You never rent when you can borrow and you never get anything new if you can get it second hand.

Negotiating for and protecting your sources of cash flow is the most important thing that you can do for a small business. If you run out of cash, you're dead. Cash is to a small business as blood and oxygen is to the brain. You must fight, scramble, negotiate and do everything possible to assure that you always have cash reserves.

It has been said that every new business start-up is a race against time. It is a race to find a way to generate cash in excess of your costs before your cash runs out altogether. You stay in business to the degree to which you bring in enough money to pay for your mistakes until you are finally generating excess cash.



## 6. Discipline of Work

When it comes to work productivity as it relates to entrepreneurial success, two qualities are particularly critical:

1. The ability to set priorities and work on high-value tasks; and
2. The discipline to get the job done quickly and well.

The challenge is that all day you are surrounded by people and events that draw you away from doing the things that are most important. According to Robert Half International, the average employee wastes about 50 percent of his or her time on non-work-related activities:

- Thirty-seven percent of work time is wasted on idle conversation on personal subjects with colleagues, conversations that have nothing whatsoever to do with the job at hand.
- The other 13 percent of wasted time is consumed by coming in late or leaving early, by long lunches and coffee breaks, by surfing the Internet, or conducting personal business during the day.

Even worse, when people actually settle down and get to work, they often spend too much time on low-value tasks and activities. As a result, they get very little done, which causes continual pressure to get caught up. Stress mounts up until they finally force themselves to do the job, usually at the last minute, causing expensive mistakes.

Nothing short of purposeful, focused work will enable you to consistently and predictably get more done, make more money, and reach your goals faster than the average person. But how do you separate the relevant from the irrelevant?

The Pareto Principle—the 80/20 rule—explains that fully 80 percent of the value of what you accomplish will come from 20 percent of the things you do. Your job, then, is to identify those top 20 percent of your tasks and then concentrate single-mindedly on doing them quickly and well.

Another way of looking at prioritizing and productivity is the Law of Three, which states that there are three primary things you do that contribute 90 percent or more of your value to your business' success. Your job is to identify those three critical tasks and then discipline yourself to do them all day long.

To discover what these three things are, make a list of all the things that you do in a week or a month. Write everything down, both small and large, including checking your e-mail and returning phone calls. Then, review this list and ask this key question: "If I could do only three things on this list, all day long, which activities—in order of importance—contribute the most value to my success?"

All of the other minor tasks are the things that you have gotten into the habit of doing as a way of unconsciously avoiding the big, difficult, important tasks that can make a tremendous difference in your work and career. Many people struggle to launch businesses without realizing what a profound impact could be made by simply ensuring they are focusing on higher-value tasks.



## 7. Discipline of Leadership

When it comes to building a business, whether you have employees or not, leadership is a quality that surfaces in every personal interaction. The overarching characteristic of a leader is that they are in complete control of themselves. They have the self-discipline, willpower, self-control and self-mastery needed to step forward to take command of any situation.

To be an effective leader, there are seven principles you must incorporate into your leadership behavior and activities.

- **Clarity:** You must be absolutely clear about who you are and what you stand for. You must have a crystal clear vision of where you want to lead your people. You must be absolutely clear about the goals and objectives of your business and to reach them.

You must be absolutely clear about the values, mission, and purpose of the organization and what it stands for. Everyone around you must know exactly why they are doing what they do and what their company has been formed to accomplish.

- **Competence:** As the leader, you must set a standard of excellent performance for your business as well as for every person and function in the company. Your goal must be for your company to be as good as, or better than, your very best competitor. You must be continually seeking ways to improve the quality of your products and services to your customers.

- **Commitment:** You must be absolutely committed to the success of your business and believe completely that it is the best in the business or will be the best in the future. This passionate commitment to your business—and to success and achievement—motivates and inspires people to do their best work and put their whole hearts into their jobs.
- **Constraints:** Your job as a leader is to identify the constraints or limiting factors that set the speed at which the company achieves its most important goals of revenue and profitability. You then allocate people and resources to alleviate those constraints and remove the obstacles so the business can perform as one of the best in the industry.
- **Creativity:** A great leader is open to new ideas of all kinds and from all sources. They are continually encouraging people to find faster, better, cheaper, and easier ways to produce excellent products and services and to take better care of customers.
- **Continuous Learning:** You should be personally committed to reading, listening, and upgrading your personal knowledge and skills. At the same time, you should encourage everyone in your business to learn and grow as a normal and natural part of business life. The best companies have the best-trained people.
- **Consistency:** You need the self-discipline to be consistent, dependable, reliable, calm, and predictable in all situations—especially under pressure. One of the great comforts of business life is for an employee to know that the leader is completely consistent and reliable.



## 8. Discipline of Problem Solving

Top entrepreneurs in every industry are intensively solution-oriented. They think about solutions most of the time. Instead of getting bogged down in who did or didn't do something or other, the most successful people concentrate on the solutions and what can be done to solve the problem. Your ability to practice self-discipline, self-mastery, and self-control when faced with the never-ending flow of problems, difficulties, setbacks, and temporary failures you will experience is essential to your business' success.

When something goes wrong, the natural tendency of most people is to become angry and look around for someone to blame. But this is a waste of energy. It solves nothing. Instead, you must discipline yourself to remain calm, objective, and unemotional. When you face an unexpected problem or crisis, discipline yourself to stay calm, to focus on the solution rather than the problem.



The moment you become angry and upset, your neocortex—or your “thinking brain”—shuts down. All you have left then is your paleocortex, your emotional brain, which thinks in terms of “fight or flight.” When your emotional brain is in charge, you think in terms of black and white, yes or no, or doing something or doing nothing. You lose the ability to think in shades of gray and to look at all the different possible ways to deal with this particular situation.

Top people realize that every problem is an opportunity to grow in self-control and personal confidence. In fact, you will rise in life to the height of the problems that you are capable of solving.



## 9. The Discipline of Resilience

The final discipline is the discipline of resilience. It is the ability to bounce back from the inevitable setbacks and disappointments that you will experience virtually every single day in starting and building your own business.

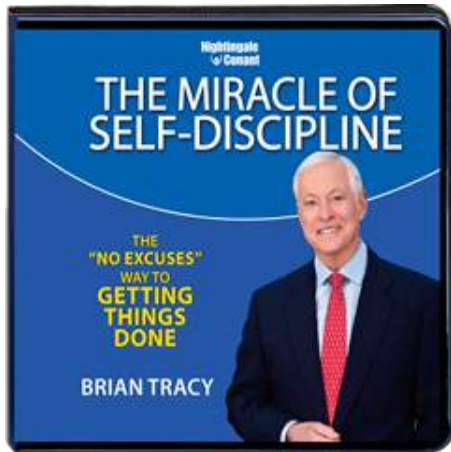
One of the marks of the superior entrepreneur is that he or she is always looking into the future and considering the worst possible thing that could happen in every area of the business. This is the mark of the superior leader as well.

I call this “crisis anticipation.” There are many books and articles on it. What it means is that you are constantly scanning the horizon and asking yourself, “What is the worst possible thing that could happen?” In your sales; with your staff; with your cash; and with your business? And then you think through and decide what you would do if that were to occur.

Sometimes, a small setback can seem almost overwhelming if you’ve allowed yourself to get tired and run down. You become resilient to the degree to which you get lots of rest when you are starting and building your own business. As Vince Lombardi once said, “Fatigue doth make cowards of us all.”

You develop resilience by resolving to persist in the face of any difficulties, no matter what happens. Be clear about your goals but be flexible about the means of attaining those goals. If one thing doesn’t work, try something else. Be willing to be flexible and adaptable in the face of a changing market.

You have within you, right now, the ability to start and build a successful business. Millions of people have done it in the past, and millions more people will do it in the future. These people are not smarter or better than you are. They have simply learned what they needed to learn and then practiced it, over and over until it became second nature. And so can you. And when you learn how to start and build a successful business within our economic system, your future will be unlimited.



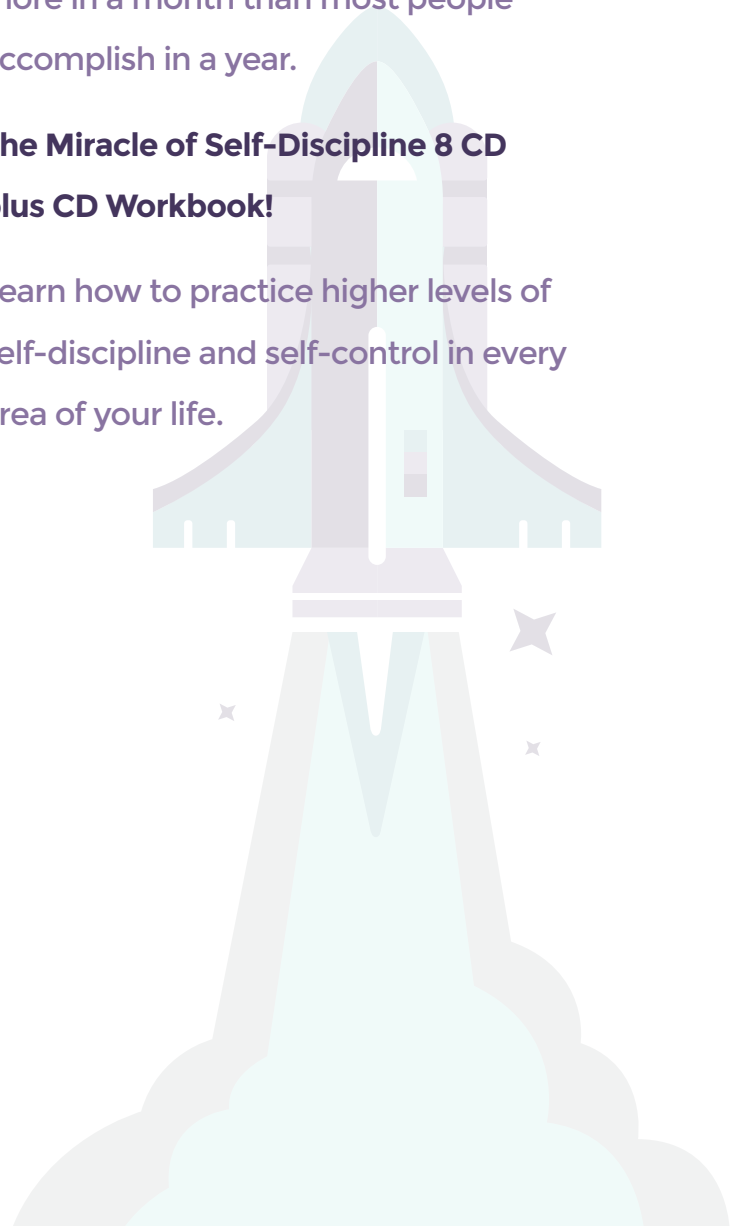
[Learn More Here](#)

## Accomplish More in a Month Than Most People Accomplish in a Year!

Your ability to discipline yourself “to do what you should, when you should do it, whether you feel like it or not,” is the key to becoming a great person and living a great life. When you develop the habits of self-discipline, you will accomplish more in a month than most people accomplish in a year.

### **The Miracle of Self-Discipline 8 CD plus CD Workbook!**

Learn how to practice higher levels of self-discipline and self-control in every area of your life.



## About the Author



Brian Tracy is Chairman and CEO of Brian Tracy International, a company specializing in the training and development of individuals and organizations. Brian's goal is to help you achieve your personal and business goals faster and easier than you ever imagined.

Brian Tracy has consulted for more than 1,000 companies and addressed more than 5,000,000 people in 5,000 talks and seminars throughout the U.S., Canada and 70 other countries worldwide. As a Keynote speaker and seminar leader, he addresses more than 250,000 people each year.

He has studied, researched, written and spoken for 30 years in the fields of economics, history, business, philosophy and psychology. He is the top selling author of over 70 books that have been translated into dozens of languages.

He has written and produced more than 500 audio and video learning programs, including the worldwide, best-selling Psychology of Achievement, which has been translated into more than 28 languages.

He speaks to corporate and public audiences on the subjects of Personal and Professional Development, including the executives and staff of many of America's largest corporations. His exciting talks and seminars on Leadership, Selling, Self-Esteem, Goals, Strategy, Creativity and Success Psychology bring about immediate changes and long-term results.

Prior to founding his company, Brian Tracy International, Brian was the Chief Operating Officer of Patriotic Land Corporation, a \$265 million-dollar development company from 1980 to 1981. He has had successful careers in sales and marketing, investments, real estate development and syndication, importation, distribution and management consulting. He has conducted high level consulting assignments with several billion-dollar plus corporations in strategic planning and organizational development.

He has traveled and worked in 107 countries on six continents, and speaks four languages. Brian is happily married and has four children.

Brian is the president of Brian Tracy International, a company that helps individuals and businesses of all sizes achieve personal and professional goals.

To learn more about Brian Tracy, please visit [www.briantracy.com/AboutBrian](http://www.briantracy.com/AboutBrian).

If you have any questions about Brian Tracy learning programs and services, please email [Support@BrianTracy.com](mailto:Support@BrianTracy.com) or call 1-858-436-7300