



Achieve Your Targets Faster

John Brooker



Do you have tough targets to achieve? How can you plan to achieve them faster in a less conventional way? This article provides you with an eight-step approach to use as an individual and it will take you about 90 minutes.

While developing an individual plan is a good thinking tool and starting point, I urge you to involve your peers or your team to develop the final plan. Involving others will broaden your perspective and enrich your planning.

To provide examples I use a case study of a leader responsible for software testing in four countries, with teams brought together through mergers and takeovers. There were different tools and methods at each site and the leader had a target to integrate the country teams.

While this is written as an individual plan, in fact the leader involved the teams from all countries and we used the Team Impetus model on which this article is based.

Step 1: Identify Customers

First, identify who has an interest in your success, both internal and external. This may be customers,

end users, regulators etc. In our case study the customers were internal product managers and the end users of products. Create a short profile for each customer group.

Step 2: Sense the Future

Detail a preferred future by asking, "What will we be doing in future that will most benefit customers and key customers?" Instead of writing your description draw a picture. Drawing taps into different parts of the brain and broadens your perspective.

In our case study, the leader described a view of what the customers would see when testing was successful, e.g. "tested products delivered on time, to budget, with nil defects found by end users and good communication throughout testing."

It will help if you discuss your picture with your customers, to verify if your thinking is correct.

Step 3: Identify Key Enablers

Now, from your picture, identify five to eight Key Enablers, actions that you must focus on to achieve this preferred future. E.g., a high level enabler might be "Develop skill base."

Contact Us

Speak: +44 20 8869 9990

Write: hi@yesand.eu

Learn: www.yesand.eu

A potential issue here is that you identify too many enablers. An analysis of the enablers will usually reveal that some are not that key or some are sub enablers. Too many enablers reduce focus.

If you lean to the more scientific side, be aware that to identify the enablers is more an art than a science. As in the case study above, items like “on time”, “on budget”, “nil defects”, and “good communication” are high-level enablers. The art is to translate them in to enablers that drive action. Doing this, the case study output was:

- Develop a shared vision with customers (improve communication)
- Automate test scripts and frameworks (reduce defects)
- Use consistent tools and methods across all teams (reduce costs and defects)
- Create an effective test cycle (on time)
- Create and execute a testing improvement plan (various)

[In the case study the leader focused on enablers to satisfy the product managers and had an eye on what the end user needed.]

Record this step and the following steps on a sheet of paper, or use an Excel spreadsheet.

Step 4: Describe “10”

On a scale of 1 – 10, where 10 is best, for each enabler, describe how customers would know you are at “10”. E.g. Customers have participated in a workshop to develop the vision with us.

Step 5: Consider progress

Draw a chart with each enabler on the horizontal axis and 10 down to 1 on the vertical axis. [E.g. you would have five vertical lines for five

enablers.] Plot the scale for each enabler, from the customer perspective. Where would they rate your progress to date against the description of “10”?

Step 6: Identify strengths

Identify what has enabled your customer to reach this score for each enabler. E.g. In the case study, “have rich test experience across four countries” was a key strength. Record these on Post-it Notes under each enabler.

The natural tendency is to focus on what is stopping the customer’s rating move to “10”. In this strength based approach, it is much more effective to look for what works and the strengths you have. A focus on weaknesses is likely to depress you, which is not useful.

Step 7: Consider next steps

Consider what needs to happen to move your customer one step up the scale for each enabler. Record each enabler. We focus on one step in this model, because planning to achieve “10” when your customer rates your progress to date as “3” is daunting and rather pointless. Your context will no doubt change in the next twelve months, so it is best to focus on short term changes

In the case study, one example was: “Hold a workshop between all test leads on automation frameworks”. With this approach, you set a realistic set of actions to take.

Step 8: Verify your thinking

Discuss your work with your customers to check your thinking and adapt your plan based on their input.

So

The above steps are based on a Solution Focus approach to change. With it, you set a strategy focused on delivering value to the customer. It builds a realistic picture of what you want to achieve and your progress towards it. It concentrates on strengths and creates realistic actions, providing the impetus to take action.

I use an Excel spreadsheet to record the thinking; this provides you with something you can easily monitor.

To Close

The case study team took their strategy forward, involved the test teams in further planning and demonstrated their new approach to customers in workshops, eliciting a very positive response. Try it!

Learn to use the model with teams

If you would like to learn how to use this model with teams in a two day workshop, please visit our website to download our Lead Team Impetus brochure here.

About the author

John Brooker is a former Senior Vice President of Visa and has used Solution Focus to facilitate multi cultural teams since 2004, working internationally.

John has developed the Team Impetus Model, based on Solution Focus, to help teams develop strategy and the impetus to implement it. This article is based around this model.

He is a Board Member of the international Association for Solution

Contact Us

Speak: +44 20 8869 9990

Write: hi@yesand.eu

Learn: www.yesand.eu