

What Do You REALLY Want?

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<http://www.pickthebrain.com/blog/you-arent-getting-anywhere-because-you-dont-know-where-you-want-to-go/>

The statement, “You can do anything you put your mind to,” leads us to believe that all you must do is imagine what you’d like to accomplish, set your mind to the task, and wait for success.

To a certain degree this is true. Focused intention combined with action is a powerful force. But the statement is misleading because it fails to mention the difficulty and necessity of focusing your mind on a specific goal.

Most of us don’t know what we want. We think we do, but we really don’t. We only know what we don’t want. We don’t want a boring job. We don’t want to be poor. We don’t want to disappoint our loved ones.

Knowing specifically what you want is much different than knowing what you don’t want. When you only know what you don’t want, your intentions aren’t focused. Consider this example.

Pete doesn’t want to be poor. He’s sick of earning less than his friends, and he’s determined to raise his status. To accomplish this goal, Pete could take many different paths. He could train for a high paying profession, such as doctor or lawyer. He could start his own company, go into real estate, or do many other things that would lead to acquiring wealth.

But Pete isn’t sure what he wants to do. He doesn’t know which path best fits his skills and personality, so he doesn’t resolve to follow any particular path.

Hoping to answer this question, he investigates a dozen possibilities, but as soon as he runs into adversity he decides that path isn’t for him and moves on to a new solution.

Pete’s actions aren’t focused. Although he works very hard, his efforts don’t build on each other. Rather than building one giant impenetrable sand castle, Pete has built twenty smalls ones that are easily toppled. He ends up confused and discouraged. Ultimately Pete’s lack of focus leads to failure.

Now, what if Pete had chosen a specific path? Suppose he decided on the law profession. His actions would have been clearly defined:

- Get a high score on the LSAT
- Attain letters of recommendation
- Get accepted to a good law school
- Decide on a field of law
- Earn a law degree
- Find a high paying job with a good law firm

A set of specific goals is much easier to achieve than a vague end goal like becoming wealthy. Being focused on a path gives Pete a logical set of actions to follow. Each accomplishment is one step closer to the final goal.

I think we can all agree that committing to a clearly defined path, regardless of which one, gives Pete the best chance of becoming wealthy.

But how can he choose a path if he doesn't know what he wants? Maybe money isn't his only goal. Maybe he wants to do something he loves at the same time. Maybe he can't afford to go back to school. Reality is complicated, and Pete doesn't want to commit too soon.

And that's why he fails.

But I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing. Most people don't fit neatly into a predefined path. Forcing yourself into one may lead to success, but it probably won't make you happy.

This is the point. If you want to be conventionally successful, to attain wealth and status, you need to choose a specific path (preferably something mainstream) and follow it to the letter.

On the other hand, if you aren't particularly concerned with wealth or success, you can take your time searching for that perfect niche.

Just don't wait too long to decide. Each moment you deliberate, your already committed competitors sprint further ahead.

But, then again, maybe life isn't a race, and maybe the most interesting people follow a path all their own.