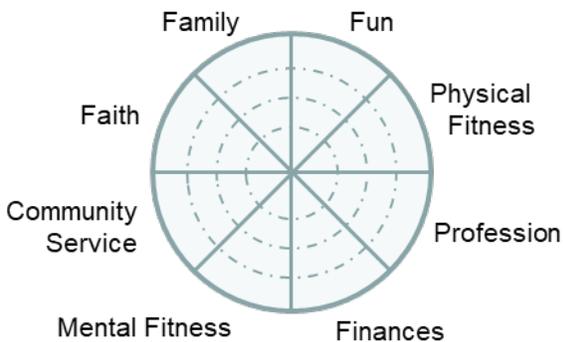


## Are You Checking Boxes that Matter?

by Mike Hawkins

[mike@alpinelink.com](mailto:mike@alpinelink.com)



When you think about what you've accomplished in recent memory, what do you think about? Do you think about small accomplishments or large ones? Getting through the daily grind or those less frequent but perhaps more life changing achievements? Personal successes or professional ones?

Unless you are comfortably retired, you probably work really hard every day which keeps you so busy that just getting through the day is a big accomplishment. But is it really? Is getting through the day, regardless of what you do, truly satisfying and meaningful? Is it really the best use of your time and energy?

For people who are constantly running on the *treadmill of busyness as usual*, getting through the day and then taking a well-deserved break is a worthy accomplishment. But it may also be a red-flag that not only are you too busy, you are not really making progress. You may be *doing* but not really *achieving*. You may be checking boxes but not making progress toward something meaningful. You may be victim to what actor Bill Murray said, "The automatic things you do are basically those things that keep you from doing the better things you need to do."

The definition of achievement, as well as progress, is different for everyone. For some, it is related to family or friends. For others it is related to finances or profession. Or fitness, faith, or community service. In whatever area of life, what you do reflects what is important to you and those you care about. But equally important is the extent to which you make real progress in those areas.

Achievements come through habits, goal directed behaviors, and sometimes a little luck. Pushing aside what you don't control, you make intentional progress through either repeated habits or the pursuit of goals. Neither approach is better, just different. The advantage of habits is that as long as they take you in the direction you want to go, they facilitate progress. The problem with habits is when they keep you doing that which you've always been doing without making any real progress. The advantage of goals is that they often drive you to pursue out-of-the-ordinary achievements you wouldn't otherwise pursue. The problem with goals is when they add more to your already full schedule which means you keep thinking about what to do instead of actually doing it.

If you look back over recent months or years and feel you've not made much progress, perhaps you've been stuck on the *treadmill of busyness as usual*. You've been doing but not necessarily achieving. To be fair, everyone has basic responsibilities to maintain, but if all you do is maintain what you've been doing, you may be stagnant. You may be complacent.

If you regularly think about higher aspirations but don't make progress toward them, the treadmill isn't helping you. Your daily routine is preventing you from improving yourself, your family, your work, or your community.



## Are You Checking Boxes that Matter?

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If you're interested in checking boxes that are more meaningful, get off the treadmill of life for an hour and reflect on the following questions. Reflect on each one for five minutes and see where they lead you:

- If you had all the money you needed, what would you do?
- If you could be highly skilled in one area, what would it be?
- If you had the perseverance, willpower, and self-control needed to do whatever you wanted, what would you do?
- If you had the courage to overcome your fears, what would you do?
- In what area are you especially gifted that you would like to more fully apply?
- When you are at the end of your time on this planet, what might you wish you would have done?
- What goal or improvement have you been thinking about for many months or years but not yet achieved?
- In what meaningful way could you help others?
- In what area has “good enough” been the enemy of “getting better” that deserves more of your attention?
- If you had one wish, what would it be?
- What topic, issue, or opportunity is most important to you?
- If you could make progress in one area of life, in what area would it be?

If there is a goal you've identified or been thinking about for years, especially if it only takes a year or so to complete, realize that in a matter of months you could be making real progress. You could implement habits or an action plan that would move you from thinking about what to do to actually doing it. You could finally put a check in that box and benefit from it for the rest of your life.

Know this—you have a goal or aspiration for a reason. Listen to yourself and take the next step. Implement a daily habit or create a plan that takes you forward and enables real progress. You may have settled into acceptable circumstances, but be wary of complacency. Being comfortable may be preventing you from investing in new areas that will make your world even more awesome than it already is. Now may be your time to pursue something new. As the inspirational speaker Tony Robbins said, “Most people have no idea of the giant capacity we can immediately command when we focus all of our resources on mastering a single area of our lives.”

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Article written by Mike Hawkins, award-winning author of *Activating Your Ambition: A Guide to Coaching the Best Out of Yourself and Others* ([www.ActivatingYourAmbition.com](http://www.ActivatingYourAmbition.com)), author of the *SCOPE of Leadership* six-book series on coaching leaders to lead as coaches ([www.ScopeOfLeadership.com](http://www.ScopeOfLeadership.com)), and president of Alpine Link Corp ([www.AlpineLink.com](http://www.AlpineLink.com)), a boutique consulting firm specializing in leadership development and sales performance improvement.

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