



REACHING  
**OUR PERSONAL  
GOALS**

THE 6 ANGLES OF VIEW APPROACH

## REACHING OUR PERSONAL GOALS

CAN THE ACTION PLAN LEAD TO FAILURE? THE 6 ANGLES OF VIEW APPROACH

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Whether right before the New Year countdown or toward the end of a leadership program, there are times in life when we make challenging resolutions or decide to achieve our dreams. But that is the easy part. The harder part is successfully executing the related action plan.

Project implementation is not a straightforward exercise. At corporate level, we have all seen projects miserably missing their target, and research confirms failure rates of around 70%. Although recent studies show that this percentage may fall with the use of new, more agile forms of project management, it's clear that we still haven't found the key to repeated success.

If business doesn't always succeed in "making things happen" despite significant investments and incentives, leading-edge processes and complicated tools, this raises legitimate concerns for individuals launching their personal projects to fulfill their dreams, whether professional or private. If complexity doesn't seem to help, then the temptation is to just draw a rough plan and implement. However, this might not be a good idea.

### Using the various angles of our vision

What follows is a proposed middle path between unnecessary complexity and over-simplicity. It takes the form of a six-point checklist to be applied on top of the action plan, and it draws inspiration from the various aspects of vision.

1. **Define the goal distinctly.** Our eyes can focus on a faraway point and, even if not in full detail, see it clearly. Do we always have a sharp representation of our aspiration, or do we just accept approximation?
2. **Focus the mind's eye.** The concept of the mind's eye in leadership has been extensively illustrated in IMD Professor George Kohlrieser's books "Hostage at the Table" and "Care To Dare"\*. This description comes from the latter: "Your Mind's Eye is like a flashlight that shines where you direct its focus. You choose whether to focus your flashlight on the disappointment, pain, loss or other negative aspects of life or on the benefit, gain or other positive aspects of life." The mind's eye establishes our emotional state and relates to something bigger than the goal itself. If the objective is to climb a summit, the mind's eye is "why" and how it will feel to get there. The "why" brings passion and passion brings the energy to overcome obstacles.
3. **Zoom in and out.** Our eyes can also focus on very close objects and then get back to the faraway point. Do we really force ourselves into a constant back-and-forth between the end goal and the different milestones of the plan, or are we so focused on the execution that we don't look up anymore?
4. **Use peripheral vision.** Our eyes can perceive what happens outside the line of sight, which is very useful to apprehend danger, for example. Do we allow ourselves to connect with our environment and our own intuition, or do we limit ourselves to what happens right in front of us?
5. **See things fresh.** Our eyes see instantaneously, and there is no "cache memory" effect. Do we really see our path forward with "new eyes" each time we look at it, or are we stuck with an inflexible initial plan as if our brain were a computer loading the same internet page over and over again?
6. **Four eyes are better than two.** We all know the expression. Asking others' views on a course of action or a problem brings the cumulative experience of several people to try to project what could happen and basically "see into the future".

However, there is an issue with all the above: when we are deeply focused on what we want to achieve, don't we tend to forget about these six points? Might we even consider them to be a waste of precious time? Let's take an example.

### Tunnel syndrome

Jay is planning a mid-career move to join the marketing department. It makes sense; his final goal is to get the CEO seat within the next ten years, and although he is already senior in the company, marketing is the one weak point in his CV. So Jay closely monitors what is going on in that area; in parallel he registers for specific strategic marketing training, so as soon as the job opening appears, he is ready. Jay's outstanding track record helps tremendously in the hiring process and everything is well set for a smooth transition into the new job. Although there are rumors of an imminent restructuring in the marketing department under its new head, he sticks to the plan and gets the position; the opportunity is too rare to be missed. "Done and delivered!"

Unfortunately not. Actually the new marketing boss was known to be a successful but difficult person to work with, very much self-interested. Following his previous internal move, he didn't hesitate to apply the "last in, first out" rule, and he did so again on this occasion.

This fictitious example could apply by analogy to many situations. In fact, Jay missed angles 4, 5 and 6 in the checklist. He was disconnected from his environment, was stuck with his initial plan and did not get his friends' views on the situation. Somehow Jay had "tunnel syndrome", a type of sight dysfunction that is often triggered by high levels of stress and reduces awareness of one's surroundings.

More importantly, he did not prepare. When it comes to stakeholder management, even peripheral vision is not enough; we also need to do the pre-work to shape an optimal environment in which we have access to invaluable stakeholder insights. If Jay had cared about building relationships with colleagues, allowing time for those coffees, lunches and extra exchanges that lead to genuine bonding and trust, then his catastrophe could probably have been avoided because someone would have warned him in time.

### **Can the action plan lead to failure?**

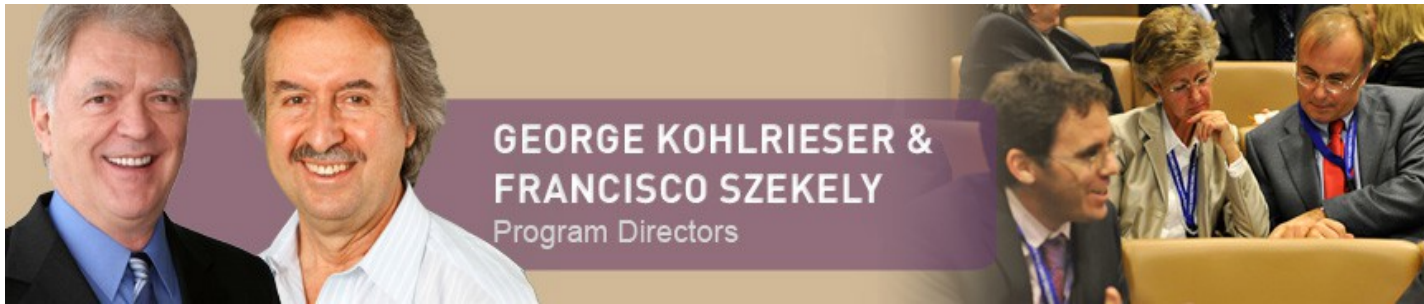
Thomas Edison said "a strategy without a plan is hallucination". True, and we also need to make sure that our plan is not blind, otherwise it might well lead to failure.

This blindness can be overcome by putting our plan in a fully interpreted context. So let's always remember how our eyes see things: far away and close, fresh each time and outside the line of sight. Let's also allow ourselves the time to look beyond the goal and ensure that we can get additional eyes to help us when needed.

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\* Care to Dare: 2012 John Wiley & Sons - George Kohlrieser, Susan Goldsworthy and Duncan Coombe

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