

Life Behavior Map

An Exercise for Leaders

Prerequisite: A personal Purpose Statement or Vision Statement **OR** a list of personal values from the [Discovering Personal Values](#) exercise.

If you worked through the Discovering Personal Values exercise, you identified your important personal values. If you have a personal Purpose Statement or Vision Statement, you may choose key words or phrases that reflect ideas or concepts that you want to exemplify in your life. For this exercise, we'll call these your *personal values*.

Brainstorm Your Valued Behaviors

Step 1 is to identify your *valued behaviors* — the things you *do* because of your personal values. Here are some guidelines to help you come up with a list of your valued behaviors:

- Ask how someone who holds your values would behave.
- Think about how other people might see that you hold your personal values.
- Use *first-person, present-tense* sentences that start with *I* and describe what you do.
- Include aspirational behaviors; it's OK if you're not consistently demonstrating them yet.
- Don't worry about making them measurable or time-bound. They're *behaviors*, not *goals* or *habits*.
- Most behaviors will model more than one of your values. It's unlikely that any will model all of your values.

For example, consider a fictional friend Finley, whose personal values include Family, Friends, Faith, Fun, Freedom, Fairness, and Future. (*Each of your values will probably be an aggregate of several words that don't start with the same letter, but this simple alliteration makes for a fun example.*) With those personal values, Finley's valued behaviors might include statements such as these:

- "I leave work at a reasonable time."
- "I earn more money than I spend."
- "I take vacations."
- "I stay healthy."
- "I do work that helps others."



Take a look at Finley's *Valued Behavior Chart* below. Notice the concepts listed across the top and the brainstorm of valued behaviors down the left column.

	Family	Friends	Faith	Fun	Freedom	Fairness	Future
I spend time with my kids	X			X			
I pray and meditate on Scripture			X				X
I bring my family to corporate worship	X	X	X				
I leave work at a reasonable time	X				X	X	
I earn more money than I spend					X		X
I tell jokes		X		X			
I take vacations	X			X	X		
I stay healthy	X				X		X
I serve my community		X	X			X	X
I do work that helps others		X	X			X	X

Finley's Valued Behavior Chart

You may choose to limit your thinking for now to leadership or health or some other narrow area of your life if there's one that's most pressing for you right now. If you do restrict your thinking, consider coming back and completing the exercise later for the other areas of your life.

There's an empty grid on the next page for you to perform a similar exercise with your own values or key words or phrases from your own personal Purpose Statement or Vision Statement.

Use a pencil with an eraser. You'll probably refine your behavior list several times as you brainstorm.

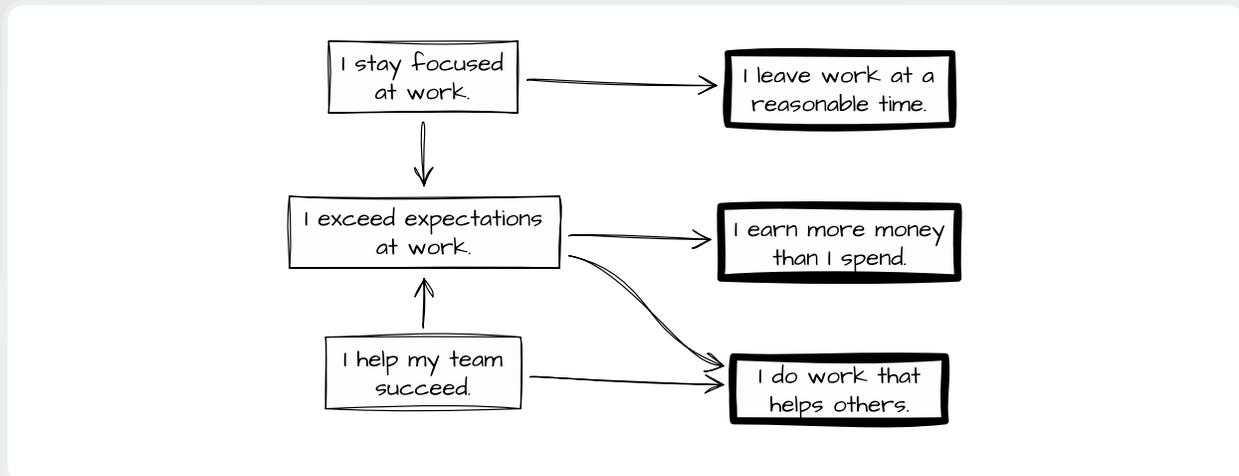
Next to each valued behavior, put an X in the column for each value that behavior demonstrates. Don't worry about getting this perfect. There are no right or wrong answers, and nobody will be grading it. Keep iterating until all of your values are represented by at least one valued behavior.



Map Your Supporting Behaviors

With your list of valued behaviors, it's time to start thinking about how your day-to-day life supports those behaviors.

Here's an excerpt from Finley's *Life Behavior Map*, focused on leadership at work:



Finley's Initial Life Behavior Map - Focusing on Work Leadership

On a separate piece of paper, use your pencil to sketch out a similar initial Life Behavior Map. Again, you may choose to focus on only one area of your life for now, or you may find it more helpful to start more broadly. You may also change your mind part way through. There's no right or wrong way to start this exercise.

Use a bold outline to draw boxes for each of the *valued behaviors* you want to represent in your map. Draw a thinner outline on the boxes for the other behaviors that *support* your valued behaviors. Your supporting behaviors may be any of the following:

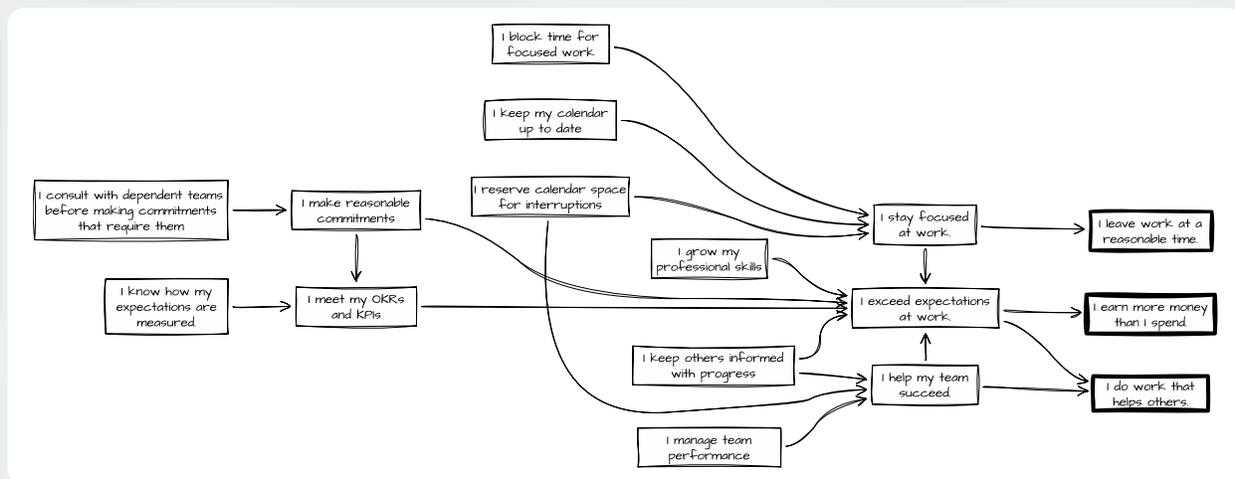
- **Examples** of a valued behavior (*Example: Helping one's team succeed may be seen as an example of work that helps others.*)
- **Prerequisites** for a valued behavior (*Example: Staying focused at work may be considered a prerequisite to being able to leave work at a reasonable time.*)
- **Contributors** to a valued behavior (*Example: Staying focused at work may contribute to one's ability to exceed expectations.*)

Again, use *first-person, present tense* sentences for your supporting behaviors, and write down what's important even if you're not yet consistently living them out.

Next, use your pencil to draw *flow of influence* arrows showing which behaviors support other behaviors. Don't get stuck thinking that arrows must go from supporting behaviors to valued behaviors. Any kind of behavior can support any other kind of behavior. The goal of this diagram is to help you visualize how everything you do collectively supports your valued behaviors.

Expand Your Behavior Map

You may have noticed in Finley’s example that those initial supporting behaviors were still too broad to be helpful. Here’s how a work-related Life Behavior Map might turn out after Finley spends time brainstorming more detailed supporting behaviors:



Finley’s Expanded Life Behavior Map - Focusing on Work Leadership

In this expanded version, Finley is beginning to notice other things that must be done in order to live up to the behaviors recorded in the earlier version of the Life Behavior Map. You can see more detailed supporting behaviors and their flow of influence arrows.

The behaviors are becoming more specific and more detailed, but there still aren’t any measures of success associated with them — at least not yet. Those will come later.

For now, take the time to review your own Life Behavior Map. Keep asking yourself, “In order to live up to this behavior, what else do I need to do consistently?” Add those supporting behaviors to your Life Behavior Map along with their respective flow of influence arrows.

Include External Expectations

This is where this exercise becomes most valuable for many people. One reason people seek out professional coaching is to help them find motivation for their work or other responsibilities that other people expect of them. Take the time now to consider what responsibilities you have as a result of your duty to others. Think about the observable behaviors that demonstrate those responsibilities. Add those behaviors to your map and draw the arrows to show how they influence other supporting or valued behaviors.

For example, Finley has identified “I meet my OKRs and KPIs” as a supporting behavior. Meeting those Objectives and Key Results and those Key Performance Indicators are prerequisites for Finley to “exceed expectations at work.” Exceeding expectations supports “earning more money than I spend” which, in turn, fuels Finley’s personal values of Freedom and Future.

By following the flow of influence to connect supporting behaviors all the way to valued behaviors and personal values, Finley can compose a reminder that says something like, “I meet my OKRs and KPIs at work so that I can have Freedom today and a positive Future.”

Identify any supporting behaviors you struggle with. For each one, write yourself a similar reminder that connects it to your own stated personal values. Set up a habit or routine to recite that reminder regularly to help you stay motivated to stick with those difficult behaviors.

Add Measurable Habit and Outcome Goals

So far, nothing in this Life Behavior Map has been measurable. There’s been no standard set up to evaluate how well you’re living up to your stated behaviors.

Let’s add that standard now.

There are two different types of measurable goals you’ll be attaching to the behaviors on your Life Behavior Map:

1. **Habit Goals** (or *Action Goals*) are *leading indicator* goals you can achieve simply by choosing to take specific actions. It should be easy for you to know whether you did the action or performed the habit. For example, “Exercise 20 minutes 4 times per week” is a habit goal. Failing to meet a habit goal happens when you simply don’t *choose* to do it.
2. **Outcome Goals** (or *Achievement Goals*) are *lagging indicator* goals that are a *byproduct* of your consistency over time. Measuring yourself against your outcome goals lets you know how well, or to what degree, you have been true to the related behavior. For example, “My BMI stays between 24–26” is a possible outcome goal. You don’t directly choose your BMI; it’s a result of lifestyle choices and other factors.

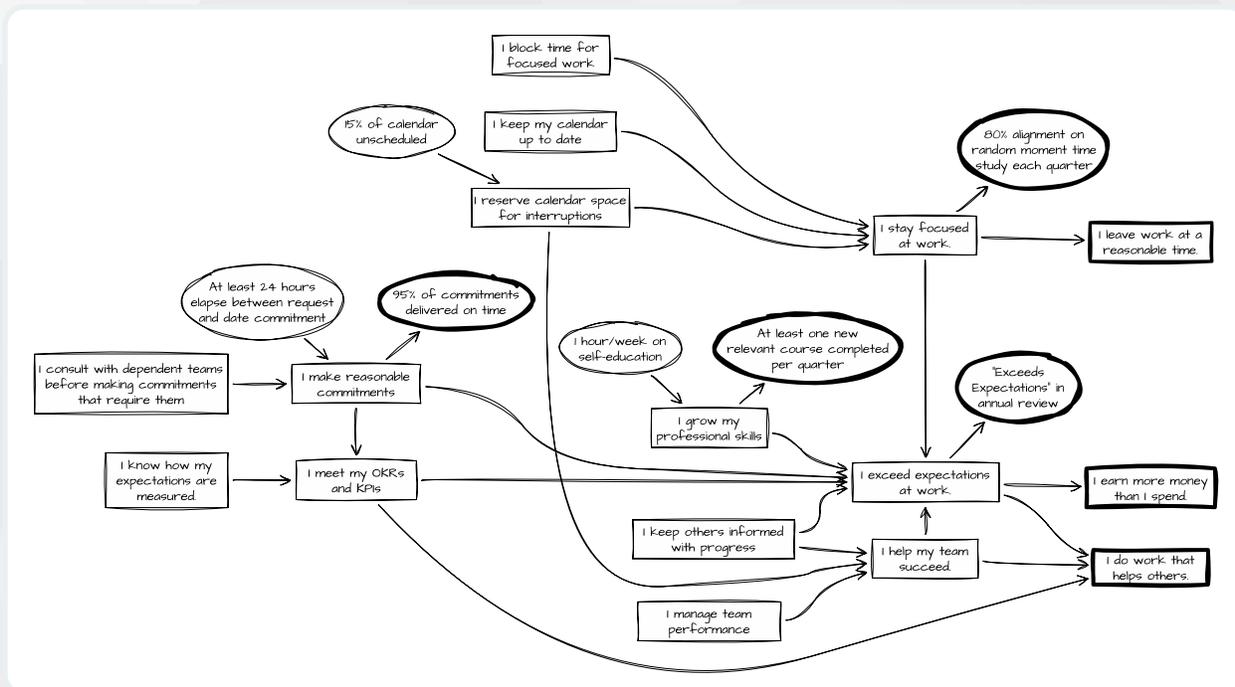
Be strategic with these goals. If you create too many, they can become overwhelming. Identify a few key behaviors that are both meaningful and relatively straightforward to measure. Define habit and/or outcome goals for those behaviors.

You may find multiple habit goals supporting a single behavior. You may also define only outcome goals without any supporting habits, or vice versa. That’s OK. Make this exercise work for you.

Add your *outcome goals* to your Life Behavior Map in ovals with bold outlines. Draw an arrow **to** each outcome goal **from** the behavior that makes that outcome possible. Then add your *habit goals* in ovals with thinner outlines. Draw arrows from the habit goals to the behaviors they support.

On the next page, you’ll see Finley’s final Life Behavior Map with habit and outcome goals added.





Finley's Completed Life Behavior Map with Goals - Focusing on Work Leadership

Started is Better Than Perfect

The point isn't to make this map perfect or complete; it's to get started. Getting *something* on paper will help you start to visualize how your goals are related to your personal values. Seeing the relationships to your valued behaviors can help you stay motivated to meet your goals. Plan to revisit your map from time to time and consider how your life behaviors change:

- You may find that you're not meeting outcome goals despite being faithful with the habits and behaviors that influence them. Consider what change you might make to the supporting behaviors and habits to increase your chance of success with your desired outcomes.
- You may discover other behaviors that are needed to support your valued behaviors. Add those to your map.
- You may discover that some habit goals are taking your energy and attention away from other more important behaviors. Remove, restate, or refine your goals as needed.

Finally, make this exercise your own. Nobody is going to evaluate your work or criticize you for your decisions. Connect your behaviors to the values you personally find most important, and you'll find motivation to stick with the habits that make those behaviors possible.

About Steve Dwire

The Technology Leader's Professional Coach

Before shifting my focus full-time on my own company, I spent over twenty years in corporate America. There I navigated the choppy waters of five separate mergers and acquisitions. Starting in a three-person software development team working out of a closet (yes, literally) in a local hospital, I've found my way in everything from a tiny startup to a Fortune 500 company.



I've been an **individual contributor**, and I've been a **leader of leaders**. I've grown from one skill to another, filling whatever leadership role opened up for me with frequent corporate reorganizations. Along the way, I became a **trusted voice for CEOs** as they navigated their own challenging decisions.

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Or visit <https://www.northwayinsights.com/apply> to find out if my coaching is right for you.

