



Use the 6-A Formula to Create Memories of the Future

By:

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“Believe Big. The size of your success is determined by the size of your belief. Think little goals and expect little achievements. Think big goals and win big success. Remember this, too! Big ideas and big plans are often easier – certainly no more difficult – than small ideas and small plans.”

David J. Schwartz, PhD: *The Magic of Thinking BIG: Acquire the Secrets of Success... Achieve Everything You've Always Wanted*

One of the exercises we do at my annual *Spark at Dream at the Grand Canyon Workshop* is have everyone draw a picture of their dream on the front of a t-shirt. For this exercise, no artistic talent is required – just a picture clear enough to remind you of that dream on those days when it feels so out-of-reach. I've heard some amazingly wonderful stories back from people who have told me that the simple exercise of drawing their dream, and then wearing it next to their heart underneath whatever costume they happened to wear to work, helped them stay focused on what they had to do in order to transform the dream into reality.

It's a great metaphor for creating what I call a *Memory of the Future*. If you were about to drive to Tuscaloosa for your sister's wedding and had never been there before, the first thing you would do is consult a map and plan the journey. You are much more likely to arrive at the church on time than if you simply hopped in the car and started driving in the general direction of Alabama. Studying the map is a form of mental rehearsal that greatly increases the odds you'll be there for the big event.

In the same way, transforming your dreams into a Memory of the Future is a mental rehearsal that greatly increases the odds you'll show up on time for your own celebration party. There are six sequential steps to creating a memory of the Future, which I call “The 6-A's:” Aspiration, Articulation, Affirmation, Asking, Action, and Adaptation.

Let's say that your big dream is having that dream home. Here's how you can transform that dormant dream into a vibrant Memory of the Future:

Aspiration: This is the fuel for transforming wishful thinking into positive thinking. Aspiration is the desire to make things better. Without the aspirations of those who came before us there would be no cities, no schools, no corporations, no churches – no societies. We would all still be hunting and gathering in small tribes.

Articulation: The second step is being able to articulate the dream, in multiple ways and as specifically as possible. Instead of just “a big house” can you describe the ideal location (country or city); do you have a mental picture of the ideal floor plan; in your mind, can you feel the brass fixtures with your fingertips, smell the new carpet on the floor, and hear the wood crackling in the fireplace? The more vivid your mental image, and the more different senses and emotions involved, the higher the likelihood of achievement.

Affirmation: This step is vital, because we dream in pictures but we worry in words. You've got the picture of the dream house painted in your mind, but the negative little inner voice is saying, “You can't afford the mortgage you have now, how are you going to pay for that monstrosity?” It's essential to counteract this negative self-talk with affirmations that are positive and nurturing. Of course, the next “A” will make the affirmations more believable...

Action: Without action, a dream is just a fantasy. Action is the acid test that determines the difference between a daydream and a memory of the future. But you don't have to do it all at once: small actions consistently applied can yield great results. Every time you do something, *anything*, in pursuit of your dream, even something as simple as setting up a savings account for the down payment on that dream house of yours, you are reinforcing a future reality, *a memory of the future*, in your own mind, which is ultimately where the battle is won or lost. The secret is to do something every single day.

Asking: Any dream of significance will require help from others, and the way you get that help is by asking for it. In the case of the dream house, for example, you will probably have to ask the bank for a mortgage. The best approach is to, very early in the process, go to the bank and share your dream, then ask: “What do I have to do in order for you to give me the loan I need to make this happen?” The bank is in the business of lending money, and your banker would love nothing better than to be in a position to approve your loan request. Let them help you make sure that they can say “yes” when the time comes.

Adaptation: Finally, you must be willing to adapt to changing circumstances. In many cases, that will mean adapting *upward*. When that greatest of dreamers Walt Disney

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astonished the world with Disneyland, no one - not even him - could have imagined the empire that the Disney company was to become. One of the participants in my Grand Canyon workshop came with a dream of writing a book; once that was successfully accomplished, the book spawned a new business that had not been part of the original dream.

What's Your Memory of the Future? I challenge you to draw a picture of a dream that's important to you. You're not creating fine art, you're crafting a memory of a future reality: you living in that new house, going to work in the ideal job, sending the book manuscript off to the publisher. Then write down at least one thing you can do for each of the 6-As of creating a memory of the future. If you make a commitment to do those things, you will have moved dramatically closer to transforming that dream of today into your reality of tomorrow.

Here's what's on the back of those t-shirts upon which we draw our Grand Canyon dreams: