

ACTIVATING YOUR AMBITION

A GUIDE TO COACHING THE BEST OUT OF YOURSELF AND OTHERS

For Immediate Release

Book's Straightforward Principles Reveal New Approach to Personal and Professional Success

Executive coach Mike Hawkins has discovered the main ingredient that has eluded the masses in their search for self-improvement. Simply put: a reliable approach. In *Activating Your Ambition: A Guide to Coaching the Best Out of Yourself and Others* (Brown Books), Mike outlines eight principles that consistently lead to sustainable behavior change. It is a must read for anyone seeking to improve their skills at work, enhance their relationships at home, stop self-limiting behavior, or be a coach to others.

Presented in two sections, *Activating Your Ambition* shows readers how to get more out of themselves in order to reach their highest potential. The first section lays the foundation to building an ongoing self-improvement mind-set and defining the specific improvements that will best enable one's lifetime goals and dreams. The second section covers the approach to achieving ambitions through the application of eight proven principles. There is also an appendix that provides specific tools anyone can use to successfully activate their ambition.

By overcoming numerous behavioral challenges in his own life, including an addictive personality, Mike Hawkins has learned to control his emotions and adhere to new values. He has also realized that before activating his own ambition, he was over using his strengths and misunderstanding his weaknesses. Turning his attention to helping others, Mike learned a great deal about the relevancy of contemporary issues that affect the way people grow personally and professionally. He then went on a journey spanning more than a decade to understand what causes people to behave the way they do and how self-limiting behavior can be overcome.

Through it all, Mike has become a savvy coach and seasoned consultant with a deep understanding of not just what it takes to be successful, but how to make success a reality. His principles take people easily out of their comfort zones and into a place where they can overcome fears, change routines, stop addictions, and modify behaviors. With this practical approach, individuals and organizations can reliably achieve higher levels of sustained success.

Mike Hawkins is an executive coach and expert in helping people reach their goals. He is president of Alpine Link Corporation, a company that focuses on leadership, self-improvement, and business improvement. *Activating Your Ambition* is available online and at bookstores everywhere. For more information visit www.alpinelink.com.



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About the Author

Mike Hawkins



Mike Hawkins is a seasoned executive coach and expert in helping people reach their goals. He is president of Alpine Link Corporation, where he has become a respected practitioner, speaker, and thought-leader on self-improvement, business improvement, and leadership. He has a reputation for consistently leading organizations and individuals to higher levels of achievement.

Prior to founding Alpine Link Corp., he developed his practical perspectives on behavioral change through his own personal victories in self-improvement together with his unique combination of experience in engineering, sales, and senior management. He has worked in many industries, including management consulting, information technology, financial services, manufacturing, construction, energy, telecommunications, utilities, and nonprofits.

Throughout Mike's career, he has accepted the toughest assignments and excelled in overcoming challenging issues. He truly understands not just what to do and why to do it, but how to do it. In his executive coaching experience and in turning around underperforming businesses, he has uncovered recurring root cause issues that limit performance. As a result, Mike has refined several frameworks including Activating Your Ambition™, The SCOPE of Leadership™, and Peak Potential Selling™ to help organizations and individuals break through their limitations and achieve new levels of success.

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Excerpt from Chapter 1

Excerpted with permission from *Activating Your Ambition*

Virtually anyone who has been successful started with a dream and pursued it despite initial self-doubt, physical limitations, and other adversities.

Acceptance Versus Improvement

If you want to become a better public speaker, musician, painter, athlete, parent, spouse, or leader, you can. You have the potential. It is well within your grasp. You don't have to be content with "I'm good enough." Be careful not to misinterpret the pop-psychology mantra, "Accept yourself for what you are." You can accept what you are and still aspire to be better. You don't have to follow mediocre norms; instead, you can pursue excellence. You have a unique combination of talents, capabilities, and ambitions, so why not take advantage of them?

If this sounds like positive thinking, it is. It isn't, however, foolish thinking. If you want to learn, grow, and change, you can. Of course it takes some work. You have to invest time and energy in the near term for something from which you won't see benefit for the longer term. But that is how you succeed. You are not born great at anything. As American poet Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "All great speakers were bad public speakers first." The same can be said for any skill, behavior, or attitude. All are developed. Great musicians start out as bad musicians. Great leaders start out as poor leaders. Great salespeople start out as inferior salespeople.

You may deal with special circumstances that give you more than the average challenge. You may have more than your fair share of adversity. You may be surrounded by unsupportive people or a victim of abuse. You may be bankrupt or unemployed. Whatever it is, you can overcome it. People even overcome serious physical and mental limitations to achieve their ambitions.

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Q&A with Mike Hawkins



Why did you decide to write *Activating Your Ambition*?

In the course of conducting leadership programs, I found that my participants' retention and application of the material was less dependent on the knowledge they gained and more dependent on their mind-set. As my programs evolved, I spent increasingly more time with participants in developing their attitude toward change, overcoming their fears, and building their excitement about the future. This significantly increased their knowledge retention and application. I first conceived the book to be a prerequisite for my program participants to help them prepare for change and apply what they learned.

You talk about eight basic principles that consistently lead people to sustainable behavior change—is change truly this simple?

Change can be hard, no question—especially when engrained habits have to be replaced with new habits. However, people can change and the principles in *Activating Your Ambition* make it much easier to do so. These principles deal with the root cause issues behind most self-improvement failures. For example, many people attempt to add self-improvement to their already overloaded schedules. It makes exercise, reading a book, or whatever they aspire to do all but impossible. By following the “time and energy” principle, people free up the time and energy they need before embarking on their aspiration. When all eight principles are followed, changing behavior is very straightforward and for many it will be simple.

What makes *Activating Your Ambition* different from other self-help or business books?

It is practical. It is based on experience, not theory or academic research. I follow behavioral science and have great respect for the experts in the field, but this book is from a practitioner's perspective. It doesn't get bogged down in the differences between cognitive, interpersonal, and behavioral therapy. It simply describes what works in terms everyone can understand.



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While the principles discussed in *Activating Your Ambition* are certainly applicable in a work environment, what about at a personal level?

The eight principles apply whether in a personal or professional context. The principles are “change neutral”—they deal with the core enablers to change, not the content of the change itself. The issues that prevent people from being more organized at work are the same as those preventing people from being more organized at home. The enablers that help people improve their relationship with their spouse are the same enablers that help people improve their relationship with their coworkers.

Why is *Activating Your Ambition* important to you?

I believe most people live and work at a level significantly below their potential. People get stuck in their comfort zones and stagnate. Even those who attend seminars, read books, and seek counsel in an attempt to improve themselves often forget what they learned and fall back on bad habits. Change is not easy and the axiom, “You can do anything you put your mind to,” is an oversimplification. My hope is that people will apply the eight principles in the book and find that change is not only feasible and beneficial but can be a great experience. I have greatly benefited from self-development and my goal is for others to benefit too.

What is the biggest obstacle you’ve seen to people improving?

Success. People who have been successful are the hardest to change. They adopt a mind-set that they must be doing everything right because they have been successful. Unfortunately for them, success isn’t guaranteed to last forever. And worse, many times people incorrectly correlate their success to their behaviors when in reality, their success resulted more from other factors.

In your book, you mention your faith. How does faith help people improve themselves?

When I’m tempted to give up or go back to an old habit, I consider that God gives strength to those who take refuge in Him. I have faith that God knows best and is watching over me. In Him, I find courage and peace. Faith can be a significant enabler in starting and sustaining your belief in yourself and in your self-development.



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Is it really worth trying to help someone change their behavior when they are older and toward the end of their career?

I presented the eight principles of *Activating Your Ambition* to a group of mostly retired men at my church. I remember thinking as I prepared that they would be a tough audience and probably not very interested in my topic. After all, they were retired—what kind of ambition would they still have? I was very wrong. They were completely engaged and to my surprise, they all had a list of improvements and goals they wanted to pursue. It is never too late to pursue your ambitions.

What do you say to those who claim that people really can't change?

You're wrong. How then can you explain the fact that people do quit smoking, spouses improve their marriages, and bad leaders become good leaders? Look no further than me—I'm a poster child for change. I think what people mean is that change is hard. And I agree, it can be hard, particularly when you don't know how to go about it. But most behaviors are learned and can be unlearned.

In your book, you talk about awareness being the foundation to all self-improvement. Don't most people already know themselves?

Early in my executive coaching career, I would naively ask my clients how well they knew themselves. Their answer was usually a variation of, "Very well, after all, I've lived with myself for a long time." The reality, however, is that there is little correlation between self-assessments and people's actual behavior. We tend to confuse our intentions with our actions. That is why people need to truly understand themselves and get feedback from others before embarking on a course of change. Otherwise, the odds are about eight in ten that the person will focus on the wrong development.

Many people can quit smoking or go on a diet for awhile, but the problem is sustaining their change. How does your approach help people sustain their change?

The final principle of the eight principles in the book is normalcy—reaching that point where the new, desired behavior is normal. The change has to become a habit just like brushing your teeth with your dominant hand. Our habits are nothing more than a mesh of synaptic connections in our brain. The challenge for people who have developed bad habits is that they have to let their existing mesh wither away while creating a new one. People declare victory too early—before their habit is truly a part of them. The key is making your new habit routine long enough that it becomes your dominant mesh of synaptic connections.



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As you point out in your book, you've overcome quite a bit of adversity in your life in order to grow personally and professionally. What can you tell us about your journey?

My parents divorced when I was eleven. I left home when I was sixteen. I hung out with the wrong people and lived for fun. Then through several experiences that dramatically increased my awareness of my irresponsibility, I became motivated to change my behavior. In the following six years I overhauled my attitude, created new friendships, put myself through college, found my values, started a family, and started working as an engineer. It was those years that taught me the power of change. I've since continued to focus on my development including learning new skills, changing my career, overcoming a fear of public speaking, and controlling my addictive personality, which includes tendencies like overeating and overspending. I've learned to control my anger and be more sensitive toward others. I could go on and on.

What is the most important advice you give in this book?

Deal with the mind-set of change before developing the ability. If you aspire to be a better public speaker, dig into your mind-set before learning the art and science of public speaking. Uncover the root of your fears, biases, or other self-limiting behavior. Get motivated, secure a can-do attitude, and then learn the fine points of how to give a high-impact presentation. Or if you are coaching someone else, avoid the temptation to jump right in to telling them what or how to do something. Explore their self-awareness, motivations, and beliefs first—then get into the “how-to.”

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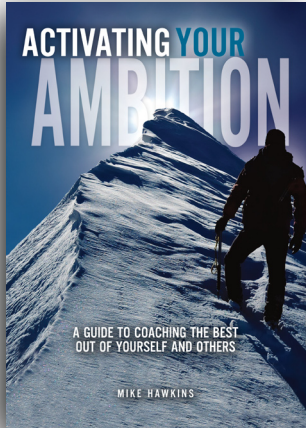


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What People Are Saying



“With laser-like focus and a matter-of-fact style, Mike Hawkins outlines what it takes for people and organizations to succeed. Read *Activating Your Ambition* and prepare yourself for new heights of success!”

Marshall Goldsmith

NYT and WSJ #1 best-selling author of *What Got You Here Won't Get You There* and the recently published WSJ best seller *Succession: Are You Ready?*

“This is a life-changing book! It shows you how to get more out of yourself and fulfill more of your potential than you may have thought possible.”

Brian Tracy

author of *How Leaders Lead*

“Mike Hawkins’ book on ambition is based on sound principles of behavior change and is written in a clear and lucid style.”

Ian H. Robertson, PhD MRIA

Professor of Psychology, School of Psychology and Institute of Neuroscience, Trinity College Dublin and author of *Mind Sculpture: Unlocking Your Brain's Untapped Potential*

“A comprehensive distillation of sound advice and practical research that will benefit a wide range of readers.”

Jack Zenger

CEO of Zenger Folkman and co-author of the best-selling *The Extraordinary Leader* and *The Inspiring Leader*

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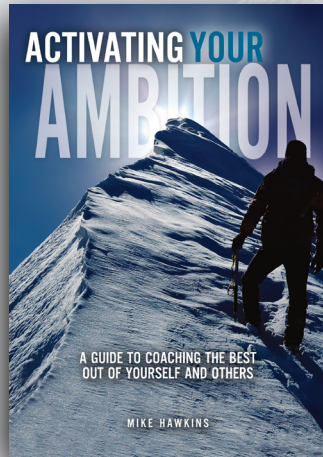
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