

Module 3. Overcome Obstacles

Clear Your Path to Success

KEY CONCEPTS

In Module 3, you take a look around. As an extension of building your freelance business, you are designing your life. Everything in it, every minute of your day, and everyone you encounter can either support your efforts or sabotage them. You might not even notice their effects. Module 3 is where you start to notice. From there, you can correct, eliminate, or enhance *your* best practices for your business and your life.

In this module, you will:

- Design your ideal physical environment to maximize comfort and efficiency.
- Analyze the ideas that surround you and that you actively consume to identify changes that will enhance your focus, your mindset, and your work.
- Uncover and address patterns in your relationships that bolster your resolve, divert your attention, and sap your energy.
- Implement proven strategies to make quicker and better decisions and turn good decisions into great ones.

ACTION STEPS

- ☐ Review the Module 3 video and your exercises about your **idea environment**, your **physical environment**, and your **relationship environment**.
- ☐ **Implement Power Sessions™**. Forget productivity. Forget time management. Forget carving out the afternoon. You want to go with the ebb and flow of your energy, sure, but sometimes you have to focus. Push through. Work on stuff you'd rather not spend your time on. You can't always wait till you *feel* it.

Power Sessions structure our natural abilities to focus. Most of us cannot focus—that is engage in deep, unwavering focus—for more than 30 minutes without getting distracted or shifting mental gears. Set up your daily Power Sessions **3 times** per day, **20 minutes** at a time. Max. Create tasks in your calendar. Set a timer to stay focused on the task at hand and not get distracted by clock-watching. Check off each upon completion.

If you're on a roll, you can run them consecutively, but I'm a fan of taking a **break between each Power Session**, if for no other reason than to congratulate yourself for the deep focus—and the work—you just finished. Hit the head. Grab some water. Stretch. Then you can either start your next Power Session or work at a more natural pace without a timer or as intense focus.

- ❑ **Look at what's out.** Review your list from the training and take another look at your desk and around your workspace. Every pile, every piece of paper, anything strewn across your desk or lying on the floor represents an unmade decision.
 - Dedicate a Power Session to make these decisions. Set a timer for 10 to 20 minutes. For anything out of place, decide first whether to **Save** or **Pitch**. Pitch as much as you can.
 - If you need or want to save something, make the next level of decision: **File**, **Note**, or **Pay**. Then immediately file it, make a note where you make your computer, phone, or document notes, and pay the bill.²
- ❑ Take the decision out of **making decisions**. You have a million things you could work on. More than one project, each at various stages in development. That marketing stuff you have left over from Module 2. Clearing out your In Box, which involves responding to folks you have kept on hold. The dreaded bookkeeping. Your tasks span the gamut. What do you do when you can't decide what to do?
 - **Boss Craps.** Get a pair of dice. Throw them. Interpret them according to the chart below. The left die represents the activity, the right die represents what you should do next about that activity. Interpret³ the left die meaning as you like (eg, Sell = Work; Golf = Go for a Drive [if you don't golf]) and understand the dots as follows:

Left Die (Activity)



Sell



Buy



Coffee



Relax



Golf



Dare

Right Die (What You Should Do Next)



Yes



No



Maybe



Later



Never



Now

² If you're old school, this might include stamping and addressing an envelope and walking out to the mailbox. File any paperwork upon payment, including the circular file. Do all this right away, during that Power Session. If that's all you get to during the allotted time, consider that excellent progress. Bill paying cannot be underestimated.

³ These labels are based on an Executive Decision-Making Kit that I bought at a novelty store years ago. I've searched online for this kit for years, but had no luck finding anything like it. It even came with a metal BOSS pin, which I attach to conference name badges for a little flair.

- **Idea Box.** Get some kind of craft box, plastic container, hat, baggie, velvet sack, or pillowcase that you can keep near your desk. On index cards or strips of paper, brain dump what you have on your to-do list. Include writing projects, organizational work, that dreaded bookkeeping—anything that you know you need to work on at some point, whether it's urgent or not. Put these index cards or strips of paper into your *Idea Box*.
 - When you feel overwhelmed or if you don't quite know where to start, pick one. If it's a stack of index cards, shuffle them so you don't pick the top one or simply cut the deck. Spend your next Power Session working on what you picked.
 - If you have a lot of imminent overlapping deadlines, list those projects. This can be its own *Idea Box*. The same process applies.
- **Biggest Check.** This might be the easiest thing to decide, but no promises. Evaluate all of the things you have to do. Figure out which activity will yield the quickest route to the most money in your bank account. If it's a paying client on deadline, that project selects itself. Get on it. But if you're deciding between paying work with a flexible deadline and that marketing campaign you've been putting off, only you can decide which will yield the biggest check. Trust your intuition. If you can't, use the suggestions above to work your intuition muscles.

RECOMMENDED ADDITIONAL TRAINING/SUPPORT

- Read Cynthia Froggatt's *Work Naked: Eight Essential Principles for Peak Performance in the Virtual Workplace*.
- Consider **your learning style**. As a reminder, the 3 base learning styles are **visual**, **auditory**, and **kinesthetic**. Incorporate elements that support the way you learn and develop new skills. Many resources about learning styles exist online, so I encourage you to spend a Power Session doing a little research about how to set up your office and accomplish tasks if you are a [your primary base style] learner.

My recommendation focuses on how you rejuvenate, debrief, or occupy the space right *after* your Power Session. This transition space gives you some freedom to be yourself for a few minutes before it's back to work. Stay present and aware while you shift focus. Set a timer for 2 minutes if you like.

- If you're a **visual learner**, sit back and look around your space, refocus your field of vision, look at your favorite picture, work of art, or your animal companion. Read a little something unrelated to work. Experiment with visual stimulation that is not device related—say, books, magazines, nature, the beverage in your hand, faces.

- If you're an **auditory learner**, put on some music—or turn up the volume. Hum a tune or randomly explore your vocal resonators (nasal, palate, throat, chest) and listen for the differences. Mutter to yourself or speak aloud to someone else (like that animal companion).
- If you're a **kinesthetic learner**, get up. Move away from your work area and move your body. Wash a dish. Make a bed. Curl your biceps. Shovel the walk. Tend your plants. Touch your toes. Shadow box. Juggle.

□ **Feng Shui your office.** This is a whole practice in an of itself. The practice of sacred geometry and flow of qi might be a little woo-woo for your taste. I find great comfort in organizing my home and my office according to feng shui principles. I'll offer simple starter concepts to arrange your office.

- Have your **desk face the door**. The concept here is to see everything that's coming toward you and never allowing anything to sneak up on you. You face your work head on. This probably places your desk in the center of the room and you might lose that spectacular view out the window. See how this shifts your energy and the energy of the room. Facing the door is considered a power position (even if your desk is not in the middle of the room). If you can still get the window view while you're facing the door, all the better.
- **Eliminate clutter**. This is Feng Shui 101. This reflects a cluttered mind and muddled decision-making. See the second Action Step for guidance.
- Have **nothing hanging over your head**. The metaphor speaks for itself.
 - If you have bookshelves drilled into the wall that do not touch the ground, that's what I'm talking about. Choose bookcases over hanging bookshelves.
 - Avoid bulletin boards—aka, vertical garbage cans. White boards, though, work great. Anything that's not erased after 2 months, though, goes into your *Idea Box*.
 - Ceiling fans are tough on qi. If you can avoid them, you won't be slicing the energy over your head. If not, do not position your desk directly under the fan.
 - Wall art, though, is great. Choose motivational or pretty images. Nothing ironic or angry.⁴ Pro tip: if you put a picture of a waterfall by or on the door of your office, that's super feng shui stuff.

□ Read *Anger: Wisdom for Cooling the Flames* by Thich Nhat Hanh.

⁴ This comes from a former punk, so I've had to consciously shift much of my go-to aesthetic. I still have plenty of fun signature artwork to surround me.