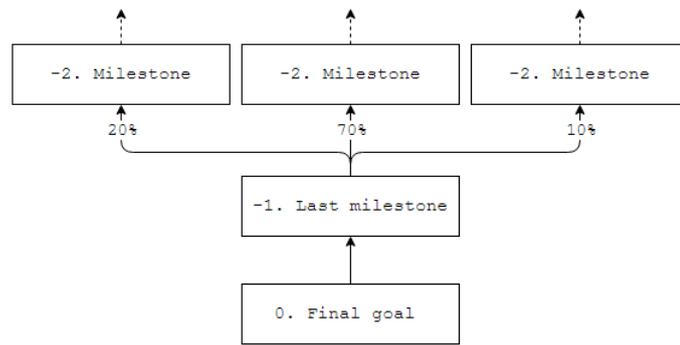


- He saw three possibilities to reach this last milestone. He listed them and to each roughly ascribed a probability that they would actually precede the next milestone.



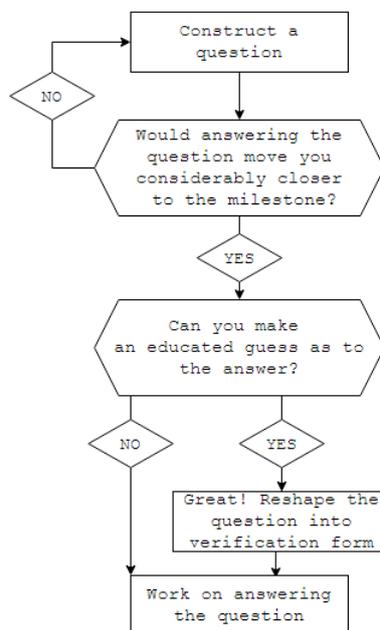
- He expanded this chart until he connected the goal to the present moment. In total there were 7 milestones with 3 division points.

Look at the chart to note the arrows' direction. This style of planning followed from the final goal to the present moment and not the other way around. This made a great difference to Matt as it eliminated all the blind alleys he would go into.

It also constructed an expectation of what milestone versions were most probable, but crucially showed him that he shouldn't stop. If one didn't go as he planned, perhaps was too slow to reach, he would switch to testing another milestone version and its attainability.

2. Socratic mode of thinking

Matt's problem was that his plan, although it had milestones, was hard to view as a list of tasks. It wasn't really about things to do, but rather about questions to answer. The subsequent questions would get him closer and closer to a milestone.



This slight shift of changing tasks into questions to answer proved to work very well. It relieved some pressure and made him aware that nothing bad happens if there is a question left unanswered as it would happen often. The goal wasn't to answer every single question but to sustain momentum. If he couldn't answer a question, he would think about a better one, perhaps even simpler.

3. Hypnagogic naps

The first two points pushed Matt to the levels of efficiency he hadn't seen before in his life. But unfortunately, that still wasn't enough. Now he had 10 days less, so just slightly over a month and a half till the deadline. Now he had much fewer pitfalls, and he was able to eliminate everything that wasn't very helpful to get to the goal. Even so, sometimes he would get stuck. He would try to answer five, even ten questions with no results. No answers, no move forward, no ideas on what to try next.

And this is where the hypnagogic state came in. Anytime he hit a roadblock, he would write down a loose description of the block on a sheet of paper. Then he would sit down in an ultra-comfortable chair and calm down until he was close to sleep. Matt would use this time to think about his problem. Often a solution came to him. In Matt's opinion, often it wasn't even like something completely new struck him, but rather like he was able to hear what his subconsciousness suggests better.

Hypnagogic naps include a way to wake up when one falls asleep. For example, a spoon one holds in hand. The spoon is there to wake up when one starts to dream, and it hits the ground. Matt disregarded this part. He liked naps, he didn't want the struggle with the spoon. He simply was thinking about the problem until he fell asleep.

4. Day workload, hyperfocus sessions and deep work

Now he was moving fast, really fast. There were some cosmetic changes he wanted to make. He would sometimes find himself working eight hours non-stop on these extremely intellectual things, and the last hours wouldn't be as effective as the first ones. His focus would narrow with every hour, his creativity would lessen. The quality of his work's output would go down. Sometimes the next day he couldn't get himself to work, as he was drained and out of energy.

He noted that the first three hours of his work would almost always be very productive. Because of that, a new structure was introduced. He would get creative inputs before his naps, in the hypnagogic state.

He would then explore them in a deep work session that evening. Two hours of complete isolation. Just him and the fun of pursuing a cool goal. This way, he could explore the possibilities. He would construct many questions, try to answer some of them, but most importantly he would decide on which ones are doable and would have a great impact. He'd leave them for the morning.

In the morning, he would have very intense periods of work. Each 20-30 minutes in length. These hyperfocus sessions would move him the most during the day, but for them to work on that level of effectiveness, they had to be preceded by idea gathering in the hypnagogic state and the deep-work sessions. Splitting his work this way enabled him to sustain about 4-4.5 hours of high-quality work during the day. The results were better than when he previously had worked for even eight hours in a day.

This way, he was on a fast track towards his goal of completing the publication research and then writing it. In fact, he completed it two days before the deadline.

Employed strategies:

A practical guide on generating hellishly good ideas: ²⁷ LABIRINTH-LIKE PLANNING, ¹³ HYPNAGOGIA, ³⁵ DAY WORKLOAD, ²⁸ HYPERFOCUS SEGMENTATION, ²⁹ DEEP WORK

3.2 The 12 weeks to evolve into an idea-generating beast

Victor studies marketing. He wants to work in an advertising company that he likes. The only problem is, the threshold to entry is very high. Unfortunately, he was never a very creative person. What is more, he says that he is a truly lazy person. However, he was motivated and ready to do something about it.

1. Planning for weaknesses and doodling

We threw a few strategies at Victor. Nothing worked. Or rather they might have worked if Victor were to actually do them. So we went for habit building. As small of an effort as possible, but still, something to build a regular creativity-focused habit.