

The VESPA Mindset Workbook

40 activities for
FE students
that transform
commitment,
motivation and
productivity

Steve Oakes and Martin Griffin

Name:

**To the thousands of students we have had the honour of teaching
and, more importantly, learning from.**

To Phoebe, Max, George and Agatha; you have all of this to come.

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Contents

Introduction | 5

Chapter 1. Vision | 7

1. Twenty Questions | 8
2. Getting Dreams Done | 12
3. Your 21st Birthday | 14
4. Fix Your Dashboard | 16
5. The Perfect Day | 19
6. SMART Goals | 21
7. Mental Contrasting | 23
8. Fake It | 25
A Vision Journal | 28

Chapter 2. Effort | 29

9. The 1–10 Scale | 30
10. Working Weeks | 32
11. The Three R's of Habit | 36
12. Recognising Your Blockers | 38
13. Frogs and Banisters | 41
14. The Ten Minute Rule | 42
15. Inner Storytelling | 44
16. The Power of If ... Then Thinking | 44
An Effort Journal | 46

Chapter 3. Systems | 47

17. The Energy Line | 48
18. The Breakfast Club | 50
19. Snack, Don't Binge (or the Weekly Review) | 52
20. The 2–4–8 Rule | 54

21. STQR | 56
22. Project Progress Chart | 58
23. The Eisenhower Matrix | 60
24. The Lead Domino | 62
A Systems Journal | 64

Chapter 4. Practice | 65

25. The Revision Questionnaire | 66
26. Know the Skills | 69
27. Graphic Organisers | 70
28. The Leitner Box | 72
29. Two Slow, One Fast | 74
30. Right, Wrong, Right | 75
31. Learning from Mistakes | 76
32. Mechanical vs. Flexible | 78
A Practice Journal | 80

Chapter 5. Attitude | 81

33. Force Field Analysis | 82
34. Stopping Negative Thoughts | 84
35. Kill Your Critic | 86
36. There and Back | 88
37. Failing Forwards | 90
38. The Change Curve | 92
39. The Vampire Test | 95
40. Stand Tall | 97
An Attitude Journal | 98

Further Reading | 99

When you enter a mindset, you enter a new world. In one world – the world of fixed traits – success is about proving you're smart or talented.

Validating yourself. In the other – the world of changing qualities – it's about stretching yourself to learn something new. Developing yourself.

Dweck (2007), p. 14

Introduction

There isn't a direct link between success at the end of Year 11 and success at college.

You might think that those students who succeed at the end of Year 11 continue this pathway and succeed again at the end of their college course. But instead something else happens: some students make giant strides between 16 and 18, leaping up from pretty modest results in Year 11 to outstanding results in college. Others go from great performance at 16 to modest grades at the end of their college courses. Some students hit ceilings, others make sudden breakthroughs.

We've spent years studying what it is about 'ceiling students' that stops them progressing, and what it is about 'breakthrough students' that makes them suddenly improve. Here's the outcome: there isn't a link between GCSE performance and being a breakthrough student or, indeed, a ceiling student. *Past performance doesn't guarantee future performance.* Whatever happened to you in your GCSEs doesn't define what you'll achieve now.

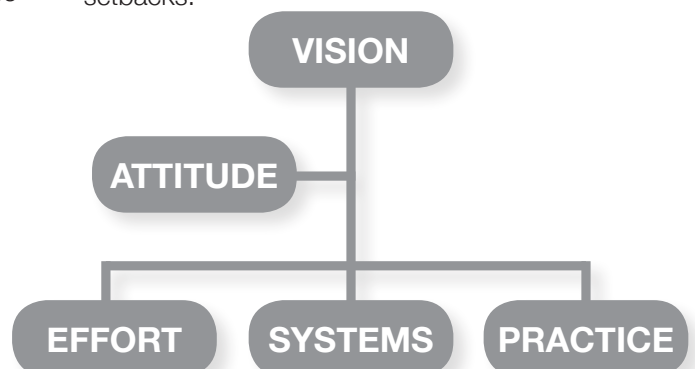
Instead, the factors which determine students' further education success are their habits, routines, attitudes and approaches to study. Paul Tough summarises it pretty neatly in the following observation. It is your behaviours, not your intelligence, that will determine your results:

'Economists refer to these as non-cognitive skills, psychologists call them personality traits, and the rest of us sometimes think of them as character' (Tough, 2013, p. 5).

VESPA

Our work suggests that students who are successful score highly in the following characteristics or qualities:

- » **VISION** – they know what they want to achieve.
- » **EFFORT** – they put in many hours of proactive independent study.
- » **SYSTEMS** – they organise their learning resources and their time.
- » **PRACTICE** – they practise and develop their skills.
- » **ATTITUDE** – they respond constructively to setbacks.



Introduction

These characteristics beat cognition hands down. We've found that ceiling students have significant gaps in one or more of these characteristics. And regardless of their academic success at 16, our studies show that these learners will hit the ceiling at college if they don't address and strengthen those weaknesses. Conversely, students who score highly for the qualities above can and do make significant breakthroughs at college, unlocking performance that far outstrips their target grades.

Students who are success seekers are not bluffed by setback, poor performance, failure or academic adversity. They take the lesson to be learnt and move on. Martin (2010), p. 22

The VESPA Activities

The activities in this booklet are designed to:

- » Raise awareness about the impact a quality/ characteristic can have on your potential success.
- » Encourage you to reflect on the strength of that quality on a personal level.
- » Engage you in a task that develops you as a learner – a reflection, discussion, coaching conversation or experiment.

Each session is designed to take fifteen to twenty minutes to complete. We've included eight tasks under each heading, giving you a total of forty to start experimenting with.

Good luck!

When your list is complete, answer the following questions:

1 What percentage of your daydreams or pipe dreams have you acted on? What is the chance of these hopes becoming reality?

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2 How much action have you taken to turn daydreams into reality? Has it been repeated, determined action? Or has it been action taken some time ago?

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3 Which daydreams are the most important to you? What further actions could you take? What could you do to turn pure fantasy and pipe dreams into goals?

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Final Thoughts

Most people have pipe dreams or daydreams they never act on. That's OK, as long as you aren't frustrated or unhappy by not pursuing your dreams. Look over your three lists again, and try to answer this question honestly:

If you could turn one of these dreams into reality, which one would it be, and what would you have to do?

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