

ACTION-ORIENTED

What is Action-Oriented?

Action-oriented refers to the consistent demonstration of the ability to talk less and act more, to be the change you want to see in the world.

Why is it important to be action-oriented?

Ever heard the phrase, “You don’t just talk the talk, you also need to walk the walk.”? That, in a nutshell, is action orientation.

We all have experienced times when we hear someone saying all the right words, or potentially saying that they’re going to do something but not actually following through, or for whatever reason you get the sense that the person is all talk and no action.

Imagine the impact on the person on the receiving end of such communication. They are likely to feel anything from scepticism to a sense that their time is being wasted.

Another example could be when someone is very passionate about a particular cause but they seem to devote a lot of time to complaining about the current state of things, but don’t seem to be taking any real positive action to turn things around.

Although it can be a valuable exercise to have a “recreational whinge”^{*} about something, or in other words granting yourself or others time to emotionally vent about something, there needs to be a conclusion to that activity; then either let it go or decide to take positive action to address the issue behind the complaint.

Also, when someone has developed a routine of saying things like, “I’m going to do...” but then doesn’t, this “I’m gonna” habit doesn’t serve that person’s reputation well and eventually others may stop trusting their word.

The benefits of being action-oriented include:

- Implementing positive change to situations which are unsatisfactory in their current state
- Developing a reputation for “walking the walk”
- Inspiring others to take positive action
- With action orientation, progress and performance are generally more sustainable and happen at levels which drive momentum.
- People are more likely to engage with an action-oriented person because the conversations and activities shared get greater results than just talking about the desire for change
- Not everyone is a “doer” so it takes action-oriented people to get things done sometimes

^{*}“recreational whinge” is a registered trademark of Incredible Awareness Pty Ltd and used here with permission.

Why is it so easy to slip up in the area of being action-oriented?

There are a number of variables which could “get in the way” of someone being action-oriented:

- Feeling like they’re not empowered to take action
- Feeling like they don’t have the knowledge, skills or capacity to take action
- Afraid of being “caught out” for not being able to do the things they talk about
- Afraid of not being “good enough” in their performance so they don’t perform at all to avoid the risk
- Feeling like they’re efforts won’t make any difference
- Feeling like their employer, colleagues, clients or the cultural environment won’t allow them to be successful
- Feeling that they get so much emotional value from complaining and criticising that they aren’t even considering the increased value they may get if they were part of changing the situation. (Note: For some people, complaining gives them a personal sense of significance, which is a core human need; for others, complaining is a way to justify inaction and stay in their safe zone).
- They are waiting for someone else to take action, and when no one else takes action, it justifies the complaint/issue even more

Tips for being action-oriented

- Be solution focused. This may require being mindful of the statements and claims you make which are not followed up by ideas on how the situation could be positively addressed.
- Listen for when others make statements and claims without offering solutions. When you can spot it more easily in others you may be more attentive to it in your own thinking and behaviours. Challenge others to offer solutions after you’ve given them time to “vent” if that’s what they need to do.
- Challenge your irrational and/or unhelpful thought patterns, which could include any of the bullet points in the previous section. Consider alternate ways of looking at the same thought pattern and determine which is “wiser”.
- Know your stuff. This may require that you research, explore and get curious about situations you would like to be different, so that you can be more knowledgeable when you talk about it, and therefore are also more likely to have solutions for discussion.
- Develop or enhance your value system on following through on the things you say you will do. Don’t say you’ll do something if you doubt in any way that you will. When you do commit, honour the commitment.

Characteristics and/or Behaviours of a person who is action-oriented?

- Accountable
- Follows-through on commitments
- Solution-focused
- “Walks the walk”
- Backs up statements with knowledge and experience
- Takes action
- Inspires others to act

Evaluate your own perspective on being action-oriented

- What does “action-oriented” mean to you? How do you recognise the attitude AND behaviours when you see them in yourself and/or others?
- What are your strengths in terms of being action-oriented? How do you leverage these and for what purpose?
- What are your opportunities for improvement in terms of being action-oriented? What specifically could change and who would benefit from the change and how?
- What reputation do you have in terms of being action-oriented? How did you earn this reputation, regardless of whether it’s positive or negative? How do you feel about this reputation?
- What feedback have you received from others about whether you are action-oriented or not? What have you done with that feedback?
- What’s the greatest lesson, personally and/or professionally, you’ve learnt regarding being action-oriented? What did do with, or how to you apply that lesson?

Improve your degree of being action-oriented

After you have completed your evaluation, if you have noticed some room for improvement, you might like to try some of the following strategies:

- Seek out a person (or persons) who you believe consistently demonstrates being “action-oriented”. Interview them and ask them questions about their own development process to get to where they are now. Consider that this is a mentoring session where it may be expected that you will make a commitment to this person at the end of the interview and that it’ll be necessary for you to follow through.
- Ask for feedback from your colleagues, staff, vendors, partners and customers about how they see your professional attitudes and behaviours regarding being action-oriented. Give them permission to be honest, acknowledge and thank them for their feedback and make

commitments to them about what you will do with the feedback. You may need to prepare yourself for the possibility that you'll be asked to make agreements with various stakeholders so that they can be more involved, be listened to and that their needs will be met more consistently in the future.

- Consider getting coached or mentored on this area (or any other area you'd like to develop) and work with the coach to determine the actual habits which are effective and those which are negatively impacting your performance at being action-oriented. If you're not sure where to start to look for a coach or mentor, the High Ideals member directory includes members who offer these services, which may be a good place to begin your search as you'll know that those practitioners have also achieved the High Ideals credentials.
- Practise capturing the next actions to be taken e.g. at the end of a meeting recap, out loud, what actions you are committing to taking – then create a check list for yourself with an appropriate time line and tick items off as you complete them.

Further resources

If you would like to develop further in the area of being action-oriented, the following resources may be worth considering.

Please note that High Ideals does not endorse or receive any direct benefit from recommending the following resources. The list is simply a suggestive collection of materials that members of the High Ideals management team have found useful in their own development.

- <http://www.goodcharacter.com/ISOC/Integrity.html> - This is a resource site for tools to teach young people about developing good character, including being proactive. Although this may seem like a programme for children, there is value as an adult to look at such topics from a very basic foundation and then expand from there. The site includes questions, discussion points and activities for further self-exploration.
- **Walk the Talk** – by Eric Harvey and Steve Ventura -This book is about translating beliefs into behaviours and discusses how walking the talk is the very essence of character and integrity for both individuals and organisations. The book reminds us that people hear what we say, but see what we do...and seeing is believing; We judge ourselves by our intentions, but others judge us by our actions; and words are just words, unless you live by them. You have to Walk the Talk.
- <http://www.mindtools.com/> is a site High Ideals often refers people to as it is an incredible resource to assist people in developing their own professional skills regardless of whether they run their own business or work for someone else.
- <http://www.selfgrowth.com/> is a site High Ideals often refers people to as it offers both personal and professional self-development information and resources. You can type in any search word you want, such as “personal accountability” and you’ll get a list of articles, blogs, resources and links to other sites which could assist you in your own development.
- <http://www.high-ideals.com> – Check out the Member Directory section for High Ideals members who offer services which could support you, such as coaching, mentoring or consulting on High Ideals criteria/values.

Author and editor acknowledgement

High Ideals would like to acknowledge and thank Noel Posus for his work on this document. Noel Posus is the Director of Training, Research and Development for High Ideals as well as a professional coach, educator and author. To find out more about Noel, please visit his profile on the High Ideals directory by clicking [here](#) and search by name.

This document is part of the **High Ideals** Criteria Information Series, edited by Claire Stretch. For more information on Claire please visit her profile on the High Ideals directory by clicking [here](#) and search by name.

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