

MASTER YOUR MIND



**COUNTERINTUITIVE STRATEGIES
TO REFOCUS AND RE-ENERGIZE
YOUR RUNAWAY BRAIN**

ROGER SEIP | ROBB ZBIERSKI

WILEY

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*This book is dedicated to everyone who kept asking me,
“When is your book coming out?”*

—Robb Zbierski

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Introduction

Need speed? Slow down.

—David Allen, *Getting Things Done*

Roger's Story of "Slowing Down to Speed Up"

Life and business lessons come to us at the weirdest times. The idea for this book hit me when I was passed by a 78-year-old grandma on the running trail.

I'd been trying unsuccessfully to train for a marathon for a couple of years. I'd actually run a couple and was trying to get back into shape to run a personal best, and I hadn't been making any real progress. The trouble was that I kept getting injured—first a foot, then a knee, then a hip—and each injury would sideline me from running for a couple months. And then I'd have to start training all over again. It was this constant process of one step forward, two steps back.

In trying to figure out how to be a faster runner with more endurance, I read a number of books that espoused the idea of training at an incredibly slow pace to ultimately get faster. When I first stumbled onto this teaching, it made no sense at all. I'd always been taught that if you want to *go* faster, you *train* faster. Going *slow* to go *fast* sounds totally counterintuitive and backward, right?

Well, the thing is, it actually works. Since this isn't really a running book, I won't get into all the nerdball science of why it works, but here's the short version:

For running anything longer than about a mile, you must rely on your body's aerobic system. That's the energy production system in your body that allows you to burn fat for fuel and use oxygen most efficiently, and is best developed by making yourself train at a pace that does raise your heart rate, but only to a level where you're not even breathing very hard. For me, that was a pace that was painfully, agonizingly, embarrassingly s-l-o-o-o-w. The idea is that running while keeping your heart rate in this Target Zone allows your aerobic system to develop. As your aerobic system gets stronger and more turned on, your body starts using oxygen more efficiently and your speed naturally increases. Like I said, it seemed a little backwards, but here I was not really getting anywhere with what I was doing, so I thought, "Okay, what have I got to lose?"

For me that process ultimately transformed (and is actually still transforming) me into a faster runner, but it's a very incremental process, especially at first. It's also a humbling process – it ain't sexy. After just a few weeks of consistent but v-e-r-r-r-y slow running, my commitment was put to the test by a cute little old lady.

Keep in mind, I've been an athlete since I was 15 years old. Not a great athlete by any stretch, but an athlete nonetheless. I'm intentional about my physical fitness and I'm competitive. So as I'm leisurely jogging along one morning (training slow, keeping the heart rate down, right?), you can imagine that I'm getting passed by people on the trail. When the 20-something 6-foot-4 dude with the beautiful gazelle-like stride and the "University of Wisconsin Track Team" T-shirt whipped by, I was not embarrassed. Shortly thereafter, when the 30-something grad student passed me up, I remained unconcerned. But when the 4-and-a-half-foot-tall granny caught me from behind, I started having a little problem with my ego. Don't get me wrong, she was super nice and gave me a lovely smile as she ran by – but she promptly left me in the dust.

I couldn't believe it. I had just been smoked by a runner twice my age!

(Side note: Can we please set aside the idea that my outrage was totally ridiculous? I'm aware of how silly I was being. I

mean, we weren't actually even in a race, but still, a guy's gotta have standards.)

The best thing that this small incident brought about was that it made me look at what I was doing. Unnecessary as it was, I got worked up enough to ask "Is this training slow thing even *working*?!" And, miracle of miracles, I learned that it really was. My mile time at my target heart rate had improved by well over a minute per mile, after just a few weeks. I had felt embarrassed for a moment, but the actual results told me the truth.

Slowing down my running had made me a faster runner. Unbelievable.

Then lightbulbs started going off in my brain, and I began to see all the connections to how the principle – slow down in order to get faster – was actually a full-fledged Law of Life. It became very clear that this was in fact a bedrock practice that had consistently paid massive dividends in my business, with my family, in my income, and literally in every area of my life.

In that moment I even had some flashbacks. I remembered when my great mentor, Dan Moore, in my first sales career, taught me the "Rocket/Snail" philosophy, in which you move like a rocket in between conversations with prospects but slow down to a snail's pace when you're actually in those conversations. I remembered another mentor, Janet Attwood, who taught me "Intention, Attention, No Tension," which involves a combination of working intently while simultaneously relaxing your way to success. The whole concept of a Flow State – the optimal performance mindset that many call being "In the Zone" – became much clearer to me. I noticed how every major breakthrough I'd ever experienced – periods where money and business results were materializing so fast I could barely keep up – had been brought about by *slowing down*. It was totally counterintuitive . . . it didn't make logical sense and it seemed backward, but the evidence was irrefutable.

Slowing down my Runaway Brain (and thereby slowing down the game) had made me a faster results-getter; in every single area of my life. When I slowed down and used the methods and understandings in this book, business and life just worked so much better:

much more productive, much more elegant and effortless, much less frustrated/stressed. And isn't that what we're all looking for?

Roger's Note

The whole concept of "slowing down to speed up" will be a strong recurring theme of this book. In fact, the original title of *Master Your Mind* was going to be *The Snail and the Rocket*, because it was going to be all about this premise. In the writing and editing of the book, the title, and the cover, we found that overt references to "slowing down to speed up" morphed into other things, but please don't miss this critical lesson. Both neuroscience and the experiences of our coaching clients teach us that getting the results you want, as fast as you want, almost always requires that you slow things down.

Robb's Story

"HEY-Y-Y!"

The sound of 200 high schoolers screaming in unison echoed through the gym. My mind raced as I knew what was coming next and I was not excited about it. I sat back just a smidge, enough to see the backs of the ears of the kids on either side of me. Enough to where they couldn't see that I wasn't going to participate. It was our side's turn.

This is stupid, I thought. Why are we screaming at each other using nonsense words? How is this going to help me? Why did the school bring this guy in to make us look like idiots in front of each other? My rambling thoughts were interrupted by a loud "BOOM-BAH!!"

Classmates all around me screamed at the top of their lungs, as if trying to knock the other kids out of the bleachers.

"HEY-Y-Y!" came the other side's response.

Everyone laughed, I even laughed, and then it hit me.

I'm missing out.

So I waited. And slowed down. And listened. The speaker started making sense. If you spent less time worrying about

looking like an idiot and more time actually enjoying the moment, life is going to get a *lot* easier. After all, we were 400 kids all looking like idiots together and having a blast doing it. Well, at least 399 were enjoying it. I missed out.

And that was my first lesson on slowing down in order to accelerate my results. This idea is presented in a lot of ways in a lot of situations and with a lot of people. But when you slow down your thoughts, slow down your perceptions, slow down your beliefs, slow down the stories in your head, and in a lot of cases slow down your actions, that is the first step in stepping out of your own way and living the life you want to lead.

Over the years, the idea got buried under the load of a ton of random jobs and experiences. Grocery-store stockboy, landscaper, bike shop employee, facility services coordinator (read: help run the custodial staff at a Big-10 school), computer lab manager, PR intern, event coordinator, advocacy coordinator, project manager, sales manager, global marketing manager, and probably a bunch more I've forgotten, either on purpose or accidentally.

In every single one of these jobs, I often found myself jammed somewhere between "We're going *way* too fast" and "Hurry up, we need to get this done!" In either one of those extremes, it's a tiny reminder that the most rapid pace isn't what's needed. And I'm reminded of this almost daily in the conversations I have with folks from all different types of backgrounds, professions and educational levels. It's a common theme in life. Folks are either going too fast or they can't keep up and it always feels like they are out of control. It's not sustainable, and it's time to take control.

I've been asked to write a book for years. Friends, family, and clients have all asked, "So, when is your book coming out?" For years I never had an answer. I never felt like I had anything original or interesting to share. Or I was too busy to write one. After all, no one wants to read the same rehashed stuff they have heard before. And then a funny thing occurred to me.

I'm missing out. And maybe someone else is, as well.

So here it is. My hope is that this book helps you become more *acceptional* in your life. I coined this term by combining

accepting and *exceptional*. I do believe that when you simply slow down, take a step back, think about and accept more in your life, then your life can become exceptional.

So slow down and enjoy the read. Hopefully you will find a few nuggets for yourself. Because you never know when you might have the opportunity to scream at the top of your lungs with those around you. Imagine doing that with zero inhibitions and creating a memory that lasts forever! Or you might hold back. And I promise you'll get a memory out of that experience, as well.

Getting Results Faster . . . What Does That Mean?

If you're reading this book, it's a certainty that achieving results is really important to you . . . indeed, you're probably kind of obsessed. See, we've built a company and a ton of content specifically for businesspeople and professionals who absolutely must get results. Likely you fall into one of these categories:

- You're a sales professional of some kind – financial advisor, realtor, insurance agent, pharmaceutical rep, or some other position where your role is building a book of business. You may or may not get paid on commission, but there's a strong element of your professional life that involves the concept of “you eat what you kill.” There's a very direct connection between how well you perform at work and how well you and your family live.
- You own a business or you're a credentialed professional of some kind. We work with a lot of traditional and nontraditional business owners, a lot of executives, a lot of doctors, attorneys, dentists, accountants, and the like. You may not consider yourself a salesperson, in fact you may shy away from anything that smells like selling, but nonetheless ... your career requires that you get results with and for your customers, clients or patients.

Either way, the deal is that you need to make things – tangible things – happen daily, right? You’ve got:

- Quotas to hit
- Goals to achieve
- Teams to build
- Clients/patients to serve
- Money to make
- Projects to finish
- Deadlines to hit
- Races to win

And on and on ... and you probably don’t want to burn out while doing it. You’re looking to get positive results in a way that feels fantastic, right? You’re not afraid of working hard to accomplish your goals, but you’re also not super interested in killing yourself in the process. You’re looking for some version of harmony in your life, not simply working, working, working on the hamster wheel. Absolutely you want to be wealthy, you want to “make it,” but you know there’s much more to life than just money. As you look forward a year or two (or more), you want to see a life of real prosperity, real enthusiasm, real peace of mind . . . real *winning* in all aspects of your life.

Less Really Can Be More

So if that’s what you’re looking for, let’s be clear that the answer is not just *more activity*. You kind of sensed that, right? Don’t get us wrong, you will need to put forth a significant, in fact sometimes *massive* effort to achieve significant things. If you came here looking for magic formulas that require no effort, you’ve come to the wrong place. Work is necessary, work is foundational, work is good.

What we’re saying is that the solution to the problem of getting where you really want to go *isn’t solely about quantity of effort* . . . it can’t be. The math only works up to a certain point. Example:

If you're currently working 50 hours a week (many of you are) and you want to double your income, one way to accomplish that would be to double the number of hours you work. Mathematically that could work, but there are two glaring problems with this strategy.

1. Working 100 hours a week is brutally exhausting. And considering there are only 168 hours in a week, you can't really do anything except work and sleep.
2. What happens when you want to double your income again? It's impossible to work 200 hours a week, s-o-o-o . . . whatcha gonna do now?

Of course this is a grossly oversimplified example, but you get the idea.

Look at your endeavors as having a "threshold of effort." If you're below that threshold, improvement is in fact about elevating the *quantity* of your effort. If you're a financial advisor in the first few years of your practice, you will need to work a lot of hours and generate a lot of activity or you will fail. If you're an athlete, you will require a huge volume of practice and training effort. In any quest for results, you have to reach that Effort Threshold first. So if you're currently below that threshold, focus on getting over that line. *Master Your Mind* can still help you – just make sure you're meeting that threshold as a foundation.

Because once you get over that threshold, improvement ceases to be about quantity – it then immediately becomes all about improving the *quality* of your effort. It becomes about your focus, your skill, your presence, your intentionality, and your mastery of dropping into that mythical state known as The Zone.

And when you start upgrading these things – the focus, the skill, the presence, and so on – results can expand both exponentially and infinitely. You remove the ceiling, because there is no ceiling on mastery. When our hard-working clients start focusing this way, their quantifiable results improve so quickly that it's often quite startling. They see business revenue shoot through

the roof. They see incomes double, triple, and even quadruple within a year. Customer service ratings skyrocket, recruiting becomes exponentially more effective, and bottom line results simply *spike*. And the key is that we see this all take place *with little or no extra effort*.

More important, the upgrades you'll learn here will make you feel amazing! Our clients often experience the unusual sensation of having more energy at the *end* of the day than they did at the *beginning* (wait ... what?). They're keenly aware that what they're doing is fully streamlined, because it is:

- Aligned with what's most deeply important to them
- Being done in a way that actually works for their brain

So it legitimately feels like some kind of magic, but it's not. Learning how to combine the right amount of effort with a high degree of presence, focus, intentionality, and "Zone-itude" means that you end up making it look easy ... which makes sense when you understand how your Runaway Brain likes to be harnessed.

And the key to all of these performance optimizers – presence, focus, intentionality, being in The Zone – you know the common theme to getting more of them?

They all require slowing down.

They require slowing down "the game" and literally slowing down your own Runaway Brain. If you want to get results exponentially faster, *you're gonna need to slow down*.

Slow down to speed up . . . that sounds counterintuitive, but it works.

How to Get the Most from This Book

If you've read our first bestselling book *Train Your Brain for Success*, you noticed that it was a lot like a workbook in many places. (By the way, if you've *not* read *Train Your Brain for Success*, it would be a great idea to buy it and read it soon – just sayin'.) This book is a little different, and should actually be even easier to digest. Here's how to get the most from this learning experience.

Tip #1: Just Read the Book

Really – just read it at your own pace. Some folks take great books and devour them all in one sitting ... If that's you, fantastic. Others will take a few chapters at a time and savor this book over a few weeks or a few months. This is also a fine way to digest this material. There's really no "wrong" way to read this, unless you just let it sit on your shelf. If you want to maximize the value of your reading, it would be a good idea to have a highlighter and a pen handy to jot down some notes (actually those are great ways to slow down), but fundamentally, simply make sure you're actually reading this book.

Tip for Even More Speed

Master Your Mind is broken up into two parts after this introduction:

Part I: Slow Down Your Brain, which gives you a much better understanding of what's really going on in your head that gets results . . . and what hold you back.

Part II: Slow Down the Game, which is the specific methods and tactics we teach our clients in workshops and coaching relationships.

Part I, to provide the foundation for tactics (the "Why this stuff works") has some science in it- we're not scientists per se, but most of our clients find it helpful to know at least some basic brain science. Simultaneously, we're all about application and putting these methods to work. You don't need to understand the workings of an internal combustion engine in order to drive your car. So, we'd highly recommend reading Part I- gaining the understanding of your root causes is pretty important. But if you're just bored to tears with science, or if you're just like "Dudes, I need action steps NOW!!!" . . . feel free to go directly to Part II, get things working and then develop the science-y understanding later.

Tip #2: As You're Reading, Be Actively Looking for a Small Number of Things to Implement Right Away

There's a lot that'll get served up in these pages. You'll gain new understandings of how the deep part of your brain works, you'll receive some real wisdom from some of our clients' examples, and you'll learn some hyper-effective techniques that have proven to produce far better results both immediately and in the long term.

In our live workshops and keynotes, we often see our clients fall into the trap of getting all fired up and then trying to do too much. The thought process would sound like this:

Oh man, this is awesome. I'm gonna do *everything* different! Wake up different, go to bed different, talk different, think different, act different, all day long ... I'm just gonna do *everything* different!"

No, you're not. Really, you're just not going to do everything different, and that's okay. You probably don't *need* to do everything different, and you definitely don't need to do a half-assed job of doing "everything" different. Most likely you need to get really serious about doing a small number of things differently.

What's a small number? One or two. If this book helps you upgrade one or two practices or thought patterns, that's likely all you need in order to start seeing massively upgraded results. So, we'll say it again: *One* or *two* things to either think about or do differently is what you're looking for here. Deal?

Tip #3: Get Going, and Embrace the Ugly

When you identify something to work on here, you'll get maximum benefit if you take some action on it immediately. As a result of reading this book, it's likely that you'll want to change something. As an example, we often see our coaching clients upgrade:

- How you wake up
- How you go to sleep

- How you structure your weekly plan
- How you talk to yourself or about yourself
- How you connect your activities with your purpose
- How you do a “to-do” list or a “to-not-do” list
- What you say “yes” to and “no” to

Or it could be any number of things, too numerous to list here. There are dozens (if not hundreds) of possibilities laid out in these pages that you could use to make a shift. The point is, when one of these possibilities resonates with you, *do* something about it as soon as possible. If you want to change how you wake up, do it the very next time you wake up. If you decide you want to operate with a Two-Hour Solution plan for your week, make that plan right away. It’s a great idea to start with a small step, but most important, *take the step*.

Two additional things about taking action:

1. Whatever action step you choose, do it consistently for at least 30 days; 60 to 90 days would be even better. One of the things that our coaching allows clients to do is to physically rewire their brains, and thereby recalibrate their internal “set point” to a higher level of performance that sticks. The key to accomplishing this kind of rewiring is that it can not happen all at once. Rewiring your brain (a.k.a. establishing a new habit) requires at minimum around 30 days of consistent action, and 90 days is a safer bet.
2. When you start acting on the principles you learn here, be prepared for to feel fairly uncomfortable at first. The methods we use are deceptively simple, and definitely counterintuitive. Truthfully, some of them just aren’t that sexy, and so they might feel awkward at first. You might even get some resistance, either from that “little voice in your head” (more on that later) or even from the people in your world. You may or may not have people tell you that you’re a little nuts, but if you do, please understand that this is normal and is actually a sign of your growth.

So let’s dive in!

PART I

Slow Down Your
Brain: Let an Elephant
Do Your Work for You

In Part I of *Master Your Mind*, we'll lay the foundation for *why* you and your brain need to slow down. This foundation will be both scientific and anecdotal in nature – we'll draw from the latest research in neuroscience and quantum physics, plus the practical experiences of our clients and ourselves.

Our aim with Part I is to help you understand *you* a little better.

You're going to learn about how your brain operates on its deepest levels (hint: It's not just a little different, it's often the exact opposite of what we see on the surface). You'll learn about what happens when your brain physically slows down the frequency at which it vibrates. You'll also identify some of the "default settings" we're all preprogrammed with, and gain some understanding into how to stop sabotaging yourself.

We believe you'll find Part I to be not just interesting on an academic level, but enlightening on a personal level, and extremely practical in your day-to-day activities. Enjoy!