

THE FINISH LINE

momentum to reach your goals



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reach your FINISH LINE

IF YOU'RE

- Changing careers or starting a business
- Running a big event or initiative
- Building or creating something important

AND YOU WANT

- The **drive** to get started
- The **skill** to avoid getting stuck
- The **momentum** to finish

THIS GUIDE WILL HELP

Starting and finishing big things requires momentum to get through obstacles like making difficult choices, getting the resources you need, or dealing with unexpected changes.

This guide transforms methods big businesses have used for decades to drive progress into practical tools anyone can use to gain and sustain momentum.

USING THE **UNSTUCK GUIDE** FROM PMEZ?

The FINISH LINE tools are similar to the UNSTUCK ones because they are both based on the same business methods. But The FINISH LINE is oriented to reaching a goal while UNSTUCK is oriented to moving past everyday obstacles.



how it works

The **FINISH LINE** divides the journey towards a goal into three stages. Each stage has tools to handle challenges that often thwart progress.

THINKING → **figuring out your goal**

- **OUTCOME** debating what you want to achieve
- **STAKEHOLDERS** juggling too much input

PREPARING → **setting up to work towards the goal**

- **SCOPE** wavering on what your outcome includes and excludes
- **CHUNKS** delaying over uncertainty on the work to be done
- **RESOURCES** doubting you will have who or what you need
- **SEQUENCE** leaving things unfinished

DOING → **getting the work done to reach the goal**

- **RISKS** facing uncontrollable situations
- **PROGRESS** questioning you will actually finish
- **CHANGES** fighting potential shifts in course



how to use this guide

KEEP IT SIMPLE

STEP 1: Understand where you are

THINKING

You have an idea, and you're trying to get started

PREPARING

You know what you want to achieve, and you're getting ready for the work

DOING

You're hard at work, and you need to sustain momentum and handle what comes up.

STEP 2: Find the tool that can help you make progress

TIPS

- You could be in multiple stages at once (e.g., Preparing and Doing). That's normal.
- Pick only the tools that resonate with your situation.
- You may want to try tools in earlier stages because they can shed light on your current situation.



THINKING

*Momentum builds when you know where you want to go
and who needs to be involved.*

TOOLS

OUTCOME know what you want to achieve

Define what your finish line looks like

STAKEHOLDERS understand who must be involved and how

Identify the "players" that will be engaged with

Start here if you are just beginning



OUTCOME

know what you want to achieve

A clear finish line, or outcome, provides confidence that efforts lead to a real result. It keeps work focused, and it keeps you motivated by "seeing" the goal you are pursuing.

EXAMPLE OUTCOMES

- **Online business:** A website where people can buy unusual art posters
- **Career change:** Strong leads for a new role in communications
- **Fundraiser:** A gala for a local nonprofit to collect at least \$50,000

HOW TO DEFINE AN OUTCOME

1. Picture your end result

What does it look like when you're done? What will exist that doesn't exist now? Write this down in one sentence as your outcome and be specific.

2. Check it against two tests

- ✓ Can you point to it? Is it some type of result or output and not just an activity.
- ✓ Is it realistic? It's something you can achieve with your time, money, and skills.

3. Write down what could constrain your path towards your finish line:

- Budget limits
- Time limits
- Things you're worried about
- Important assumptions you're making

ONE MORE THING

Some outcomes may be too far beyond your control, like landing the perfect job offer or getting an acceptance letter from the best school. For these outcomes, orient your finish line around something you have more control of, like number of applications submitted or quality of the applications provided.



STAKEHOLDERS

understand who must be involved and how

People involved in your work can motivate you or discourage you. Knowing who must be engaged and how will avoid unnecessary conflicts and roadblocks.

EXAMPLE STAKEHOLDERS

- **Online Business:** Suppliers of the posters, web developer, customers
- **Career Change:** Hiring managers, a resume coach, and references
- **Fundraiser:** Sponsors, event vendors, and major donors

HOW TO FIND YOUR STAKEHOLDERS

- 1. Think broadly about the people connected to your finish line:**
 - Who does work or is affected by the outcome
 - Who controls something you need (e.g., money, space, permissions)
 - Who has useful knowledge or strong opinions
- 2. For each, ask: "how much does the outcome actually impact them?"**
 - Directly impacted- it changes something real for them. They're doing the work, funding it, or living with the result.
 - Indirectly impacted- they're touched by it but not changed by it. They can help or advise but the outcome isn't really affecting them.
 - Not really impacted- they have opinions but no real stake.
- 3. Decide how to engage with the people connected to your outcome**
 - Actively seek input from those directly impacted, These are your key players.
 - Engage those indirectly affected as needed for Seek their input. Value their insights but don't let them drive directions.
 - Politely acknowledge those not really affected. Recognize their input then move on.

ONE MORE THING

Some stakeholders, like hiring managers or admissions committees, cannot be engaged directly. You reach them through the quality of your work, not a conversation.



PREPARING

Momentum grows from confidence that you know how to reach your finish line.

TOOLS

SCOPE clearly delineate your finish line

Lay out what must be included in and excluded from your outcome

CHUNKS determine the work needed to reach the finish line

Decide what must get done to deliver your outcome

RESOURCES identify who and what you need to do the work

Determine the people, place, and things necessary for the outcome

SEQUENCE lay out when the work must happen

Outline a general timeline for the work to start and finish

Try one of these tools when starting your work



SCOPE

clearly delineate your finish line

To prevent last minute ideas and expectations from distracting or frustrating you, clear boundaries are needed. They also provide guardrails to keep focus on what and what not to be working towards.

EXAMPLE SCOPE

- **Online Business:** Includes web-based shop, artist bios, marketing via socials. Excludes small-format art prints.
- **Career Change:** Includes new resume, outreach on hiring sites, 15 applications per week. Excludes using other social media.
- **Fundraiser:** Includes venue, catering, and music. Excludes auction.

HOW TO SET YOUR SCOPE

1. List everything that might belong as part of you outcome

- What you've promised or what others expect
- What you expect of yourself
- What may be needed behind the scenes

2. Keep only what's essential as *in scope*

- ✓ Required for health, legal or safety:
- ✓ Needed for the basic outcome to work or succeed
- ✓ Promised to someone

3. For everything else, decide whether to

- Skip- it's nice to have but not worth the effort right now
- Postpone- it matters but it can wait for another time
- Simplify- it's worth doing but in a smaller or easier form

1. NOTE: Anything you skip or postpone is *out of scope*

ONE MORE THING

When pressured to add something to scope always check whether it's essential or not. And if it is, the CHANGES tool in the Doing Stage covers how to make a scope change.



CHUNKS

determine the work needed to reach the finish line

Working towards an outcome, especially if it takes weeks or months, invites hesitation because the effort seems overwhelming. So break your finish line into clear work chunks that are doable.

EXAMPLE CHUNKS

- **Online Business:** Build store, populate pages, set up supplier contracts, market on socials
- **Career Change:** Update resume, get references, research job openings, apply for jobs, prep for interviews
- **Fundraiser:** Book venue and musicians, recruit sponsors, manage RSVPs, run the event

HOW TO IDENTIFY CHUNKS

- 1. Look at each item in your scope and ask:**
 - Is it big or complicated?
 - Does it have separate parts, phases, or versions?
 - Does this it span different people or processes?
- 2. For any item with a yes, break it into chunks like:**
 - Parts, phases or versions
 - People doing the work
 - Processes used
- 3. Right-size each chunk by checking whether**
 - ✓ You can readily see completing it?
If not, it may be too big and should be broken down further.
 - ✓ One person or group can do the work in the same way?
If not, break it down further for the different people/groups
 - ✓ It's a short easy task?
If so, you may have gone into too much detail.

ONE MORE THING

You may wish to note the scope and chunks that depend each other and must finish before others can start. These dependencies will shape your work sequence.



RESOURCES

identify who and what you need to do the work

A frequent reason momentum stalls is someone, something or someplace you need to do your work is not available. Or you run out of money. You can prevent these interruptions by listing the resources required to reach your finish line.

EXAMPLE RESOURCES

- **Online Business:** Web hosting account, product photos, suppliers of art posters, upfront cash to get started
- **Career Change:** Two strong references, access to hiring websites
- **Fundraiser:** Venue, musicians, caterer, volunteer team, budget

HOW TO IDENTIFY RESOURCES

1. **For each scope item and chunk, ask "what do I need to deliver this?" across five categories**
 - Money- funding, savings, or income to cover costs
 - People- someone's time, effort, or expertise
 - Skills or knowledge- abilities you or others need to do the work
 - Tools or materials- physical or digital things required
 - Access- space, permissions, accounts, or connections
2. **For each resource, ask "do I have it ready to go?" If not, it's a gap.**
3. **Close each gap by choosing one:**
 - Get it- acquire or arrange what's missing
 - Borrow it- find someone who has it and can share
 - Substitute it- find something else that works well enough
 - Recruit help- bring someone in who has what you need
 - Shrink something- reduce your scope to fit what you actually have

ONE MORE THING

It pays to double-check the estimated expenses for these resources against the money you have access to.



SEQUENCE

when does work need to happen?

Momentum is sustained by knowing you're focusing on the right work at the right time. A simple work sequence shows this and avoids slowdowns and lulls.

EXAMPLE WORK SEQUENCE

- **Online Business:** Secure start up-cash (week 1-4), set up up contracts with suppliers (w3-7), build online store (w4-7), add pictures of art and artist bios (w6-10), market launch the website on socials (w10-14)
- **Career Change:** Update resume (week 1-2); get references (w 1-3); research, apply and interview weekly (w4-8)
- **Fundraiser:** Recruit sponsors (week 1-2); finalize budget (w3); book the venue (w4-5), book the musicians (w5-6), manage RSVPs (w6-10), run the event (w10)

HOW TO BUILD A WORK SEQUENCE

1. For each scope item and chunk, note three things:

- Roughly, when does work and end?
- What does it depend on?
- Who's does the work?

2. Order them by start date. Then sanity check

- ✓ Does the order make sense?
- ✓ Are the dates realistic given everything else in life?
- ✓ Is any one person doing too much at once?

3. If the sequence doesn't work, try:

- Adjusting the timing
- Reducing the scope
- Adding more help

ONE MORE THING

Timing and sequencing changes as work progresses. That's expected. Simply adjust the sequence as things change.



DOING

Sustained momentum comes from confidently handling the unexpected and adapting.

TOOLS

RISKS deal with things that could go wrong
decide how to prevent or adjust to undesirable situations

PROGRESS know whether you can finish on time
understand whether you're making enough headway

CHANGES efficiently adapt when things shift
know when and how to adjust course

Try one of these tools when you're hard at work



RISKS

deal with things that could go wrong

When you worry about the unexpected, and things like too little time or too few resources, momentum drains away. But treating such worries as risks prevents them from stalling progress.

EXAMPLE RISKS

- **Online Business:** Cost-effective suppliers of art posters can't be found; too little of the available art is truly "unusual"
- **Career Change:** Too few openings match new career; too few requests for interviews are offered
- **Fundraiser:** Good venues aren't available, budget for event gets cut

HOW TO HANDLE RISKS

1. Write down the worries or concerns you have with delivering your outcome.

Phrase them in terms of how they will impact your progress or outcome so they becomes risks.

2. For each risk, ask:

- How likely is it to happen? Base it on facts, not feelings.
- If it happens, how bad is the impact on your finish line?

3. Only for risks that are likely and have a bad impact, take one or both of the actions below:

- Mitigate- find ways to reduce the likelihood they happen.
- Plan contingency- decide how you'll adjust if they do happen.

4. For risks that are unlikely and low-impact, let them go.

Not every worry needs attention.

ONE MORE THING

Risks change as work progresses. Make it a habit to revisit your risks periodically to prevent new surprises from derailing you.



PROGRESS

know whether you can finish on time

Unfortunately, feelings of steady momentum don't always mean steady progress has been made. Likewise, feelings of dwindling momentum don't mean progress has stopped. Doing an honest check-in on your progress reveals if you are off track and need to adjust to reach your finish line.

EXAMPLE PROGRESS CHECKS

- **Online Business:** Store is built but lots of small bugs are delaying when it can go live
- **Career Change:** Resume and references are complete, but finding and applying for jobs takes longer so only 7-9 go out weekly.
- **Fundraiser:** Sponsors are on board and venue is booked but disagreement over the music is delaying hiring the musicians.

HOW TO CHECK PROGRESS

1. Understand your progress by asking:

- Are any scope and chunks unfinished but should be?
- Is any work taking longer or proving harder than expected?
- Has something not started but should have?

2. For anything that's delayed or stuck, either

- Problem-solve- find a way to catch up
- Adapt- adjust your timeline or scope to reflect reality
- Let it go- if it's minor and not blocking anything, move on

3. Assess your worries and risks

- Have new worries appeared that should be named as risks?
- Are any risks becoming more likely or serious and need action?

ONE MORE THING

A progress check isn't about judging yourself, it's about catching potential problems early so you can adjust.



CHANGES

efficiently adapt when things shift

A potentially disruptive change almost always comes up when an outcome takes months of work. Having a way to handle such changes equips you to decide confidently and regain traction.

EXAMPLE CHANGES

- **Online Business:** Include a newsletter/blog in the marketing scope to better promote the website.
- **Career Change:** Include public relations roles in the job
- **Fundraiser:** Switch to a larger venue; cut the sit-down dinner to a reception format

HOW TO HANDLE CHANGES

1. Write down the change

Phrase it in terms of adding, modifying or removing something from the scope.

2. Decide whether the change is essential

- Check out the SCOPE tool to help determine if the change is essential.
- If it's not, stay the course. The change is out of scope.

3. Make room to absorb the change

- Check whether your current timeline and resources can absorb it.
- If yes, adjust your scope and chunks
- If no, make room: add time or resources, or cut something else to make space.

ONE MORE THING

Not every potential change should be adopted. But be sure it's essential and can fit.



curious about more from PMEZ?

UNSTUCK GUIDE

If everyday obstacles like hard decisions, too many demands, or nagging worries have you stalled, the UNSTUCK guide gives you practical tools to act on them. Free at PMEZ.org

WORKSHOPS

Bring the FINISH LINE to your team. PMEZ offer hands-on sessions with participants working through the tools with their own goals.

WEBINARS and TALKS

Engaging talks on how to build and sustain momentum towards a big goal using practical tools. Available for conferences, companies and community events.

ONLINE Q&A

PMEZ.ORG hosts a forum where people can raise questions and get answers.



A note from Kathleen

I spent over 35 years in big tech using super-effective tools to sustain momentum and get things done. But for regular goals or everyday life, they were impractical. There was too much jargon and complexity. So I deciphered them and made them practical for regular people.

I knew I'd gotten them right when attendees of my sessions started saying, "this seems so obvious, why didn't I know it sooner."

And since retiring from big tech, I've discovered an unusual passion: helping people gain and sustain their momentum so they can accomplish the things that matter to them... using these cool tools stolen from business.

If this guide helped, I'd love to hear from you.

Kathleen

Founder of PMEZ.org