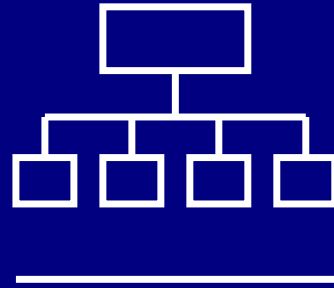


THE PURPOSE PALACE

The Fault Analysis

Why the last thing you tried did not hold – and what to fix first.

A three-minute diagnosis,
and a deeper worksheet if you want it.



Before you start

I ran my own life as a failure analysis. This is how.

I had read the self-help literature. Some of it was good. None of it held.

At some point the engineer in me got irritated. If a system I was responsible for failed repeatedly, I would not shrug it off and try a different supplier. I would run a fault analysis. I would ask why the failures kept happening, not which fix to try next.

Then I looked at my own record, and I had been doing exactly the opposite. A book that did not hold was followed by another book. A habit that faded was replaced by a new one. I was changing suppliers.

So I asked people why the self-help they had tried had not stuck. The answers came back in four general clusters. I recognised every one of them in myself.

Two ways to use this

The three-minute diagnosis

Pages 3 and 4. Think of one thing that did not stick, tick what applies, find your fix. No pen needed – you can do it on your phone.

The full analysis

Pages 5 to 7. Print it, take twenty minutes and a pen, and work it through properly. Worth doing when something has failed more than once.

This is a fault analysis, not a blame analysis.

In engineering you do not ask who failed. You ask what failed. The same rule applies here. In my experience the fault is very rarely the person. It is the way the thing was built.

What failed?

Think of one thing you tried that did not stick – a book, a course, an app, a habit, a resolution. Tick every statement that was true of it, then count the ticks in each failure mode.

1 Not engaged

"The exercises felt like homework."

- ☐ I read most of it but did few of the exercises.
- ☐ The tasks felt like homework set by someone else.
- ☐ Each session took longer than I could give it on an ordinary day.
- ☐ I could not see what I would have at the end of each task.

Score /4

2 Could not picture success

"The self-belief was not there."

- ☐ Part of me did not believe it would work for me.
- ☐ I could not describe what my life would look like if it did work.
- ☐ When I slipped, I took it as evidence I was not cut out for it.
- ☐ I was harder on myself than I would be on a friend in the same position.

Score /4

3 No cost to stopping

"Nobody was watching."

- ☐ Nobody else knew what I was trying to do.
- ☐ Nobody asked me how it was going.
- ☐ When I stopped, nothing happened – no consequence, no conversation.
- ☐ I had no fixed date to check my own progress.

Score /4

4 Nothing connected

"Every piece of advice arrived on its own."

- ☐ I was trying several separate ideas from different sources.
- ☐ I did not know which thing to work on first.
- ☐ What helped one area of my life was undermined by another.
- ☐ When one piece stopped working, the rest went with it.

Score /4

Your highest score is your primary failure mode. Turn the page for its fix.

What to fix first

An engineer does not fix four things at once. You change one thing, you watch what happens, and then you decide what to change next. Find your primary failure mode and do the action beside it this week.

1 Not engaged – Make it small enough to do, not read.

Pick one task that takes five minutes and needs nothing but a pen. Do it at the same time every day for a week. Do not add anything else until it is routine.

2 Could not picture success – Draw it before you build it.

Write five lines describing an ordinary day once this has worked – written as if it already has. Read it each morning for a week. Notice which line you argue with. That is the one to work on.

3 No cost to stopping – Put somebody on the site.

Tell one person what you are doing and ask them to check in with you on a fixed date. Agree a small forfeit if you have not done it. It should sting a little, not a lot.

4 Nothing connected – Work to a plan, in order.

List everything you are currently trying to change. Pick the one the others depend on. Park the rest – in writing, so they are not lost – until that one holds.

One more thing. When I ran this with people, the fourth mode turned up underneath the other three more often than not. When nothing is connected, there is no order to follow, so the tasks feel random. You cannot see where they lead, so you cannot picture getting there. And nobody can hold you to a plan that does not exist. If you ticked anything at all under mode four, treat it as part of the cause, whatever your highest score.

That is the diagnosis. If this attempt has failed more than once, or you want to be certain before you start again, the full analysis follows.

Log the failure

Take the same attempt you used for the diagnosis. Write down what actually happened, before memory tidies it up.

What did you try, and what did you hope it would change?

When did you start, and roughly when did it stop?

How did it end?

- ☐ It faded quietly. I cannot point to a day.
- ☐ Something got in the way and I never went back.
- ☐ I stopped deliberately.
- ☐ If I am honest, it never really started.

What was the last thing you actually did with it?

What did you tell yourself when you stopped?

Write it word for word if you can. You will come back to it in Step 3.

Gather the evidence

Your ticks on page 3 say which failure modes applied. Now write what actually happened under each one that scored – the facts, not what you think they say about you.

Failure mode 1 – Not engaged

Reading about change is not change. If the method asked you to read more than it asked you to do, or if what it asked you to do felt like a chore set by somebody else, your attention drifted. That is not laziness. It is a design fault.

Evidence – what actually happened:

Failure mode 2 – Could not picture success

Somewhere underneath, a voice said this works for other people. If you cannot picture yourself on the other side, every setback becomes proof. You stop, and the voice says: told you so.

Evidence – what actually happened:

Failure mode 3 – No cost to stopping

When I stopped, nothing happened. Nobody asked and nobody noticed. A plan that costs nothing to abandon will be abandoned the first week life gets busy. That is not a flaw in your character. It is how people work.

Evidence – what actually happened:

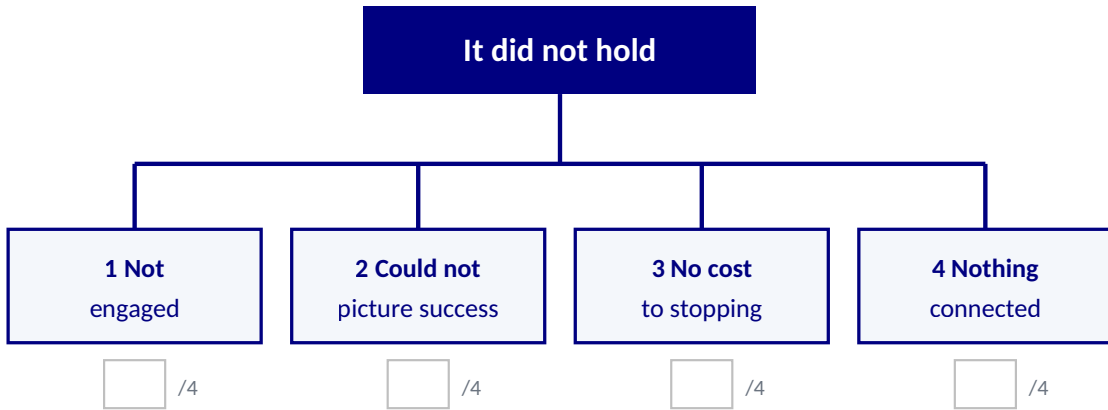
Failure mode 4 – Nothing connected

This is the killer. The advice was probably fine. A morning routine from one book, a time-management trick from another, a mindset idea from a podcast. Each made sense on its own. None came with a plan for how they fitted together or what to do first. You were handed the bricks and left to work out the building.

Evidence – what actually happened:

Find the root cause, and commit

Copy your scores from page 3 into the boxes.



My primary failure mode is:

In one sentence, why it did not hold:

Look back at what you told yourself when you stopped. Was it the real cause?

My one corrective action (from page 4):

Start date: _____

Check date: _____

Who will ask me: _____

What I did next

I ran this analysis on myself and on everyone kind enough to tell me why their efforts had not stuck. The first three failure modes each have a fix, and you have just met them.

The fourth one is different. You cannot fix “nothing is connected” with another list of tips. That only adds more unconnected pieces. The advice is mostly fine. It arrives in pieces, and you are left to assemble it yourself, with no plan and no order.

So I built the structure instead.

It is called *The Purpose Palace*. Nine ordered parts, each preparing the ground for the next, so you always know what comes first. Thirty-nine small tasks – things to do, not things to read. Five minutes a day, a pen and a notebook.

It publishes at the end of the year. Until then, the free reader resources are at **stevenpocula.com/resources**, along with The Site Survey if you want to look at the whole building, not just the part that failed last time.

Keep this worksheet. Run the diagnosis again the next time something does not hold. The answer will be more useful than another new start.

– Steven

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