

The Annual Systems Plan

Why this exists

I built this process after years of being extremely goal- and outcome-obsessed.

It worked, in a narrow sense.
I hit targets. I shipped. I progressed.

But over time, I realised something uncomfortable:
optimising my personal life the same way I optimised companies was making me brittle and unhappy.

Goals and outcomes are excellent tools for organisations.
They are far less reliable tools for a human life.

This document exists because I no longer believe that:

- Hitting personal goals reliably leads to a good life
- Outcomes are a good proxy for alignment
- Motivation is something you can sustainably depend on

The alternative

Instead of optimising for outcomes, this process optimises for defaults.

It replaces goals with priorities and motivation with systems.

Priorities are not things to achieve.
They are things I deliberately organise my life around.

Systems define what happens on an average week, not an exceptional one.
They are designed to survive low energy, distraction, and change.

If the systems run, the year works.
Even if outcomes surprise me.

That is the standard.

I hope this helps you build a happier and more fulfilling life.

Ajay Prakash

My annual review and planning consists of two main components which varies from other traditional goal setting systems

Priorities

Priorities are not goals.

They are the small number of things I deliberately organise my life around.

A priority:

- Is not meant to be completed
- Remains valid even as circumstances change
- Earns protected time and alters tradeoffs

If something is a priority, it shows up in how my weeks are designed. If it does not change my calendar, it is not a priority.

Limit this list to 3–5. More than this means nothing is truly protected.

Systems

Systems are how priorities become real.

A system defines what happens by default on an average week. It does not rely on motivation, discipline, or ideal conditions.

A good system:

- Runs even during low energy or busy periods
- Has a clear minimum viable version
- Can be removed or redesigned when it stops working

Systems exist to reduce thinking and decision-making. If the system runs, the priority is being honoured.

That is the only test.

_____ System Plan

Designing a year that still works when things break

Previous Year Audit

What were your priorities last year?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Which systems ran without issues? Which ones had bugs or hiccups?

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What meaningfully changed this year?

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Where did my calendar lie about my priorities?

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What things gave me energy?

What things left me feeling drained?

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_____ System Plan

Designing a year that still works when things break

Priority Declaration

This is something you will focus on. It is not a binary. Eg. I will focus on health & fitness vs I will get fit

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

System Design

Systems translate priorities into defaults. Defines what should happen in a normal week.

Priority: _____

The system I will follow:

The floor version (bad week minimum):

The kill condition (when I redesign or remove this):

Priority: _____

The system I will follow:

The floor version (bad week minimum):

The kill condition (when I redesign or remove this):

Priority: _____

The system I will follow:

The floor version (bad week minimum):

The kill condition (when I redesign or remove this):

_____ System Plan

Designing a year that still works when things break

System Design (Additional)

Priority: _____

The system I will follow:

The floor version (bad week minimum):

The kill condition (when I redesign or remove this):

Priority: _____

The system I will follow:

The floor version (bad week minimum):

The kill condition (when I redesign or remove this):