

“Want True Success? Set Productive, SMART Goals!”

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This is the time of year when, at work, we are all busy wrapping up year-end paperwork and anticipating objectives for the coming year. When we've had a particularly challenging year, as 2008 seems to have been, it's easy to get caught up in focusing on the negative – amplifying any losses, failures, or disappointments that we may have experienced. *“I didn't quite make as much money as I had hoped this year.” “I only read one book per month, instead of two books per month, like I wanted.” “Even though the Zenith Project I managed went okay, the Campbell Project dragged on and on and went over budget.”*

What you will find much more productive is a focus on the positive and constructive results that have come from even the most challenging year. Here's how to magnify your successes and intensify your positive energy for the new year:

Step One – Look over the past year and make a list of all your **WINS, SUCCESSES, AND BREAKTHROUGHS**. Be sure to look at all areas of your life, not just work. Embrace these! Celebrate these! Give yourself a big pat on the back for these productive accomplishments! Take a moment to reflect on these questions:

- How does it feel to have made achievements in these areas?
- What is the specific, positive impact of these accomplishments in your life?
- How can you leverage these successes further in the new year?

Step Two – Continuing your focus on the past year, what are the 5-7 most significant **LESSONS** you have learned? Choose the lessons that you would like to carry over into the new year. Some examples include:

- I learned to better manage people
- I learned that my mistakes do not mean I am a failure
- I learned to wakeboard
- I learned that more is possible for me than I ever imagined

Answer these questions for yourself: How has each lesson specifically contributed to making you a better person or increasing your personal or professional success? How can you leverage these lessons further in the new year?

Step Three – Review your deeply-held personal **VALUES**. Our personal values define who we really are; they are the principles that we hold to be of worth in our lives. When we are actively living life from our primary values, we have a sense of fulfillment, rather than a sense of

disappointment. Some examples of personal values include: Desire to creatively express myself; aim to make a contribution in service to others; love for being part of a cohesive and trusting team. Explore these questions:

- How well are you honoring your values, i.e., living them every day and letting them be known, seen, and demonstrated in your life?
- Where is there an opportunity to make some changes or improvements in honoring your values?

Living from our values means making them the drivers of our lives, and letting joy and satisfaction flow from there, instead of allowing doubt or fear to consume us.

After your encouraging year-end review it's time to look forward, to create resolutions and objectives for the new year. Sometimes we set goals at work and in our personal lives that are vague, unrealistic, or seemingly hard to attain. However, there is a simple formula for making your goals and resolutions reachable and exciting so that you pursue them with zest and achieve them with joy and ease!

Goals drive our action toward the ultimate results we want to attain. The clearer we are about our goals, the easier it is to move forward productively on them. For example, you may have a goal at work to "*increase sales.*" That's a worthy goal, but as stated it's extremely vague. How do you make your goal much clearer so that you can embrace it, drive toward it, and ultimately achieve it? You must set "SMART" goals:

S = Specific: Explicitly describes the desired action to be achieved in understandable detail. This provides a precise, explicit target.

M = Measurable: Identifies specific details that describe successful goal achievement. Measures help you know exactly what you are accountable for, allow you to track progress, and help determine how well you achieved the goal in the end.

A = Achievable: The goal can be completed with available resources. This prevents "pie in the sky" goals and ensures that they are reasonable and attainable.

R = Relevant: The goal links directly to the individual's job and the company's mission (or, on a personal note, your purpose and life mission). It is pertinent to the employee's day-to-day reality and the bigger picture.

T = Time-based: Clearly states by when the goal will be achieved.

I have found that it helps to ask a number of questions to further develop each component:

SPECIFIC = “What?” “Exactly What?” “What Else?” “What More?”

MEASURABLE = “How?” “How Much?” “How Often?” “How well?”

ACHIEVABLE = “Have I achieved this task or one like it in the past?” “Do I have the resources and knowledge by which to achieve the task?” “What difficulties can be anticipated?” “Can the necessary support be provided?” “Bottom line – is it reasonable and realistic?”

RELEVANT = “How does it link to my job (or my life purpose)?” “How does it apply to the overall mission of the company?”

TIME-BASED = “When is the goal to be achieved?” “What are the key time milestones along the way?”

Let’s translate your goal of increasing sales into a SMART goal:

“Increase overall product sales by 5% each quarter, beginning January 1st, 2009 and ending December 31st, 2009.”

As written, this goal is specific, measurable, and time-based. In your planning process, when you are giving it consideration as a potential goal, be thoughtful in determining if it is achievable and how it is relevant to your job and the company’s mission. This level of detail and specificity allows you to know exactly what you are shooting for, and exactly how you need to perform on this objective. These same guidelines work equally well for personal New Year’s resolutions!

After creating a clear set of SMART goals, make them a reality by breaking them down into actual tasks – the details that need to happen in order to make each goal a reality. You can develop a simple Action Plan for accomplishing these goals to ensure that you deliver the expected results. An Action Plan identifies these important details:

Action Plan:

Goal:

Payoff: *(this makes the goal more exciting for you to work toward!)*

Task #1:

Specific action committed to

Time frame

Resources needed (money, other people, time, equipment, etc.)

Potential obstacles (and how to manage them)

Measured outcomes (what, specifically, does success look like)

Milestones along the way or follow-up needed

Task #2:

Same list as above

Etc.

Be sure you are working on goals that will give you the greatest sense of accomplishment – they are so much more motivating that way! Formally revisit your goals often, to ensure that the direction is still sound and the details are on track. *“Are my sales efforts ahead of the budgeted*

figures, or behind?” “What extraordinary circumstances require that I make adjustments to this goal?” “What additional steps do I need to take in order to increase my efforts?” “Exactly how many more widgets do I need to sell to reach the 5% figure?” Monitor your progress, making changes along the way as required. It’s also important to be willing to ask for help from others when you need it – people are usually delighted to give of their talents and be a part of helping you achieve your results!

Finally, acknowledge and honor your achievements! Make note of the positive outcomes in terms of best practices to apply to your *next* set of goals. Happy New Year – here’s to many happy celebrations of success for everyone in 2009!

*“The mind that has no fixed goal
loses itself; for, as they say, to be
everywhere is to be nowhere.”*

~Michel de Montaigne
(1533-1592) French essayist