

## Ready, Set, Goals!



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At the end of the year, many of us perform the annual ritual of making New Year's Resolutions, setting ambitious goals for the next year with the enthusiasm of a Latino soccer announcer screaming after a score, "Goooooooooooooooooooooooooooooal! And by February, our resolutions end up fizzling, like the deflated soccer ball that just couldn't make it through the goal posts.

So how can this year be a game-changer? First, you need to be willing to do things differently in order to turn your New Year's Resolutions into reality in 2012.

Start with the key question: What do you really want? (Damn it, there's that question again, the one that sends people running to the refrigerator to eat their nervousness away.) Still, it's the question you'll have to address if you're going to keep the motivation needed to stay on top of your goals. The number one reason that most people don't get what they want is that they don't know what they want.

Too often, people create goals they think they "should" pursue. But what pursuits or activities are important enough for you to be committed to achieving, now and in the future? I'm not talking about things that spring up from the 24-hour power surge we get when we fantasize about our lives being different (although that's not a bad start!). I'm talking about achieving things that really matter in your life.

In fact, one of the biggest issues with goals is their self-centric nature: They're all about me—how can I make more money, acquire more stuff and get other people's admiration. Maybe people aren't able to accomplish their goals because they're empty, devoid of spiritual and human values. And maybe this year we should ponder how to be of more service to others. There are a whole lot of people out there who can benefit from what we do. Sure, we all need money, but we don't need to be obsessed with it. And it doesn't need to be at the center of our personal mission. Consider the wisdom of *tikkun olam*, the ancient Jewish directive to "make the world a better place."

Next, take a look at potential obstacles and behaviors that are preventing you from achieving what you want. For example, if you previously resolved to generate a certain annual income for your business, what stopped you, beyond market conditions? Did you get involved in fun projects, "shiny things" that distracted you from your goals? It's easy to get distracted—like going into a room to get paper towels, seeing you need to empty the waste basket, and then...you try to remember, "Why am I here again?" I suspect that there has, in the past, been enough of this kind of failure to convince you that following guidelines and making the effort to establish goals is a waste of time.

Perhaps the most important step in committing to your goals is to write them down. (Yikes, not that again!) Yes, again. Stop claiming that you have no time to write down your goals. Maybe you're just too busy doing things that have nothing to do with the results you want. I believe that people resist writing down goals because they don't want to be held accountable for achieving them. But writing down goals focuses your attention; like a magnetic force, it begins to attract the things you want and gives you the feeling of direction in life. So carve out time to write down your goals, even if it means scheduling "goal time," as if you had an appointment with a demanding client.

When you create your goals, be sure to state them as if they already exist—as final results, not aspirations. For example: "My business is growing by 15 percent each year..." "I make five sales calls every day." Picture the outcome, what you want to be saying to yourself and others about how you feel when you have achieved your goals.

In creating goals, answer questions like these to help you focus on creating success:

What three obtainable things am I accomplishing in my business or job?

What three things am I doing with my staff every month to make them more effective?

What three things am I doing each month to improve my performance?

What three things am I doing each month to make myself happier and healthier?

Once you write down your goals, analyze where you are right now, in relation to these goals. Hold your present actions and your goals side-by-side. The differences will create tension, a structural, not an emotional tension, that seeks resolution. Think of it like a rubber band that stretches forward, from present to future, moving you from where you are to where you want to be.

Finally, post your list of goals where you can see them every day. Being engaged with your goals on a daily basis keeps your eye on the ball; it reminds you of what you said you were committed to, especially when faced with competing priorities. Creating effective goals must be part of everyday life, not a one-time exercise that we all do annually—and then forget about for the rest of the year. And here's the secret. Everyday, on an index card, write down one action step you will take today for each of your goals. Keep that up for 365 days and next New Year's Eve, we'll have a whole new you to celebrate! Happy New Year!

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