

Forget Resolutions: Paint a Clear Picture of Where you Want to be.

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Here it is again, the end of the year when a crush of work *MUST* be completed while we pant like overburdened reindeer to shop, entertain, decorate, visit the family and hold on tightly to the few reminders of what the holiday season is truly all about. And worst of all, it is the time of year when that faint voice from within whispers in your ear. Like the ghost of Christmas past the echoes of all your best intentions for the past year begin to haunt you.

You all know what I'm talking about. Those resolutions you made last year while raising a glass of wine and nibbling on yet another piece of chocolate, "I'm going to lose 20 pounds this year," or "I'm planning to read two books a month," or "Let's landscape the front yard" and my personal favorites "This year I'm going to stop (fill in the blank)."

If you are like most people, this self reckoning paints a gloomy picture of the success we have in keeping our annual resolutions. Although we make resolutions that are brilliant in color they often yet lack the ingredients for successful goal setting and accomplishment. Today we are going learn how to set up your canvas, gather your paints and create brilliant goals that you will be proud to frame and hang for all you friends to see.

The reason that 97% of us fail in our goal setting is because we don't know how to set and achieve our goals. Goal setting is not simply verbalizing a resolution for change, but it is a step-by-step process that targets and produces your desired result.

The best thing about setting goals for yourself is that it provides you with a target to shoot for. It is not only important just to define a goal, but more importantly, a goal sets a direction for you to live towards that end. Many of us spend incredible amounts of energy fish tailing through life instead of moving very directly and purposefully towards that target of how we want things to be. A well crafted goal serves as a north star which always points you in your desired direction.

Tip: Establish a target that will keep you moving in the right direction

When setting goals it is best to follow the KISS principle by just "Keeping, It, Sweet, and Simple." Start by setting only one goal at a time and stick with that one goal for a month or until it has taken root, before establishing another. The key to goal setting is to stay focused and this is difficult when you are trying to focus on many goals at the same time.

Tip: Tackle one goal at a time and keep it simple.

When you are ready to clarify your goal, set the mood by creating some private time where you can reflect alone for about 30-60 minutes with a notebook or journal. Now you are ready, but sometimes just thinking of a single goal can be difficult as many ideas, wishes, and desires flood your thinking. So, like tracing an image before you begin a painting, begin by reflecting on your life over the past year and ask yourself what areas could have used some improvement. To help you with this, ask yourself these questions:

1. Physically I am _____.
2. Financially I am _____.
3. Spiritually I am _____.
4. Mentally I am _____.
5. Socially I am _____.
6. Professionally I am _____.

When you have written these statements you are likely to find that you are pretty satisfied with some areas of your life and not so satisfied in other areas. It is these areas of less dissatisfaction that can serve as targets for goal setting. They can also be combined to formulate one comprehensive goal for change for example, "I will improve my physical well being by working out four days a week so that I may have more energy for my work and personal life."

Tip: One good goal can improve several areas of your life.

You have just created an outline for change; now let's begin to add some color by establishing a **SMART** goal. Goals should be straight forward and emphasize what you want to happen and the **SMART** approach for goal setting is a helpful guideline. A **SMART** goal should include these characteristics:

- S** = Specific
- M** = Measurable
- A** = Attainable
- R** = Realistic
- T** = Timely

In writing your goal, clearly define what it is you are going to do and how you are going to do it. An effective goal must be specific, clear, attainable, realistic, and should include a target date for completion (timely). We are not striving for some fuzzy impressionistic goal, but a goal that is clear in its vision. Be mindful in remembering that if you can't measure your goal you are not likely to be able to manage it, let alone attain it.

Establishing a written goal using the **SMART** formula is the first step to helping you establish a belief that you can achieve your goal. If you don't believe you can reach your goal, then you won't. If there is any doubt in your mind, or if the goal is established for

you by someone else, then you are not likely to give it your all and you risk setting yourself up for failure. To truly produce life change and goal achievement, you must cultivate an intense desire to change. Without a passionate desire to attain success we often find only failure.

Before continuing, ask yourself these questions:

1. Do you believe you can achieve this goal?
2. How committed are you to changing this area of your life?
3. Are there conditions will cause you to give up on this goal?"

If your answers are “no,” “not very” and “many,” then you need to adjust your sights. If your answers are “yes,” “very” and “none that I can’t conquer,” then you are ready to continue painting.

Once you have written down your goal it is no-longer just a thought. It has now become something that creates movement in your life and that can serve as jet fuel to keep you moving towards your target.

Because of the importance and value of this goal it is important to keep it in front of you as often as possible until it becomes a part of your very fiber. You can accomplish this by writing the goal out on several flash cards, post its, or creatively designed print outs, and by placing them in places where you will see them throughout the day. Often these places include the bathroom mirror, refrigerator, desk, car, or beside the bed so that your goal is present at the beginning and end of each day.

Tip: Keep your goal displayed where you can see it daily

In the movie “What About Bob?” Bill Murray’s character repeated the mantra of taking “baby steps.” Well, baby steps, or mini-goals, are the key to your achieving your over-all goal. So, let’s break your goal down into smaller steps so that you don’t become overwhelmed with change. Mini-goals help you track your progress, are easier to achieve, let you feel your progress, and target your over-all goal for change. Simply ask yourself, “What steps do I need to take to achieve my goal?” Once again write these baby steps down and post your most immediate mini-goal in places that will help target your focus on them.

Now you’ve completed the greatest challenge in goal setting. You have sorted through all the thoughts, expectations and doubts that subvert your goal achievement and are ready to lay out action steps. Again, write them down and define your tasks for every mini-goal.

Tasks are usually the simple things you must do to put yourself in a position to accomplish your goal like, “get a gym membership and have my workout cloths in the car

each day,” or “empty my stash of hidden chocolate,” or “block out time in your calendar for meditation or personal enrichment.”

Tip: Set mini-goals to remove all obstacles

The foundation has now been laid for your successful goal achievement, but you must now set a deadline for your goal. Set a realistic date of when you plan to accomplish your goal and don't commit to “as soon as possible.” Failure to set a specific deadline for your goal achievement is a failure to create a sense of urgency in completing it and builds in an option of being able to put things off.

Tip: Deadlines help move you in to action and keep you on target.

To make sure that you continue to move in the right direction it is helpful to build in a gauge to measure your weekly progress. This measure of progress can be as simple as taking the time each week to check the pulse of your change and ask yourself “am I on track or not?” Other tools to measure your progress might include food or workout logs, journaling, support group meetings, or simply making an honest account of your progress with a friend.

Tip: Build in a way to measure your progress

Like most things in life, successful achievement of a goal is less likely to occur when it's kept in isolation. When we get our intentions out in the open to a family member, friend, trainer, or coach, we build in accountability and move the goal from just an idea in our mind into reality. If a goal remains internalized we can manufacture a million excuses for taking action now, but when it is placed out in the open, we are more likely to not only take action, but to keep moving.

So, as we close out the year 2006 forget about New Years resolutions and give yourself the gift of a well crafted goal for change. Use a full palate of color, paint a clear picture, and frame your accomplishments to create a gallery of your success. I can think of no better way to ring in the New Year.

Tip: Set a clear goal of where you want to be and have a great holiday season.