

The Problem with New Year's Resolutions



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Sage Leadership Strategies

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What's Wrong with New Year's Resolutions?

It's almost 2010! Tell me, will you spend time on New Year's Eve making well-intentioned resolutions? And what will happen with your resolve a week or two later? Honestly, when was the last time you or your organization made last minute resolutions that lasted for *any* length of time?

Here's what I think: setting New Year's Resolutions are a complete waste of time!

Why? Because, even though they may be well-intentioned, New Year's Resolutions seldom have any sticking power. I think they could better be called "A Perfect Recipe for Feeling Like a Failure." Or even, "How to Lower Your Self Esteem in One Easy Step."

My friend, Pat, agrees. For the past 20 years, Pat takes the time to follow a goal-setting process and she has achieved good results. Each year she conducts a backward/forward glance at her goals. During the last week in December of each year she pulls out the list of goals she created the previous year. She checks off all the ones she accomplished. What's amazing is that she often finds many of the goals she'd recorded the previous year have actually come through to fruition. Even though she doesn't achieve every single goal, she does achieve many of them.

Remarkable, isn't it, that by simply taking the time to focus on a set of goals she is able to make some happen without **any** extra effort?

Here's what's really interesting: Pat doesn't review the list after she creates it. *She puts the list away and doesn't even look at it until 12 months later.*

Following her review each December, she then spends a full week creating her new list of goals for the following year. And then she puts that list away, too.

Imagine what might happen if Pat occasionally reviewed her goals throughout the year and then actually created an action plan for achieving her goals. What do think would happen if she focused on her goals each week or even just once a month? Think about the level of achievement she'd reach.

That's Pat's process for individual goal-setting. Here's another:

The Pin-the-Tail on the Donkey Approach to Goal Setting

Is goal setting any different or more effective than New Year's Resolutions? Not if the goals become the "top of the shelf" ideas that get filed away, forgotten and eventually tossed out.

You might as well write down a bunch of goals on post-it notes (stickies), plot them on a wall, blindfold yourself and play a game of Pin-the-Tail on the Donkey with the objective to see if you can pin any goals.

That's how ineffective a hit-or-miss approach can be in goal attainment.

In case you've forgotten (or don't know), Pin-the-Tail on the Donkey is a children's game. A picture of a donkey (without the tail) is mounted on a wall. A child is given the donkey's "tail", blind-folded, spun around and told to pin the tail on the donkey.

If the child is lucky and is facing in the right direction, s/he can walk directly to the wall, approximate where the donkey's back-end is located and then correctly pin the tail in the right place.

Of course, the fun is when the child is not facing in the right direction and heads towards other children (or adults). There are squeals of laughter, everyone scatters, and after a lot of wandering about, eventually the tail is pinned on the donkey's posterior or some other part of the donkey's anatomy. Ouch!

See how goal setting can be like a children's game? A lot of initial laughing and cheering, then people scramble to get out of the way, and someone gets stuck in the wrong place. And as we all know, the "getting stuck" part can be painful when it happens.

Here's the Best Way to Make Plans for 2010

A structured approach to achieving your goals is much more useful. For the past several years I've worked with clients to conduct an end-of-year review and then take a forward glance at what they want to achieve in the coming year. We monitor their goals throughout the year.

Is this really effective? Yes, and deceptively simple.



It's the **10 Step Best Year yet Process** from the book by the same name. It's highly effective for achieving your goals. You can use this approach individually or with your team. For brevity, I'll outline the first four steps and then provide you with the opportunity to read about and complete the remaining six on your own time.

Answer the Following Questions:

Step 1: What are all the successes you've achieved in the past year? Don't get stuck on any "I wish I had" thoughts. Those come later.

Step 2: What are your disappointments?

Step 3: What did you learn from your successes and disappointments?

Step 4: How do you limit yourself?

After answering these four questions, stop for a moment and ask yourself, "Are there any great 'aha' moments or epiphanies?"

You Are Invited to Attend Our January Jumpstart for



Steps 5 - 10: In January you'll be invited to attend a teleconference call in which we'll describe the remaining steps, show you how to create your one page plan, and outline strategies for follow-up.

Can't wait until next month to learn the next steps? If you want to get started now to achieve greater success in 2010, then, before 2009 comes to an end, buy Jinny Ditzler's book, called Best Year Yet and spend time going through all ten questions.

If you received this article from a friend, we invite you to register on our website, at www.SageLeaders.com. That way you will automatically receive an invitation when we launch the January Jumpstart teleconference.

Summary:

Last minute New Year's Resolutions have little sticking power beyond the first few days in January. The way to make 2010 your best year yet is to answer the 10 key questions for creating a powerful plan and then take the time (and make the commitment) to achieve greater success in 2010.

Happy Holidays & Happy New Year!

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