

FORGET RESOLUTIONS!

HERE'S HOW TO SET GOALS YOU CAN STICK WITH

It's the time of year when many of us are thinking about what we'd like to improve in the upcoming months. Whether you're chasing a dream in life, or dreaming of new opportunities at work, one of the best ways to get to your goals is to follow the right map to your destination.

Happily, there's no need to get bogged down with formalizing your goal-setting process. You don't want to fall victim to overthinking the details or overworking your planning phase—it should be fun to look forward to your own growth and achievements in life!

But, even though you don't need serious methodologies you'd use to set business strategy, it can be helpful to have a clear mission for yourself over the next year. Think of it as focusing on a vision of where you're headed and what it looks like along the way, so you can enjoy the idea of creating a plan with a purpose.

Since getting to your goals typically requires work and commitment, it can make a difference it's not just a sense of obligation that drives you. Imagine tapping into the added energy of believing that the work is worth it.

START WITH A WISH, ADVANCE WITH ACTION

Strong goal setting goes beyond making a wish (which is a desire with no measurement criteria), and it's more than making a New Year's Resolution (which is a promise to yourself, often with no details to back it up).

Ideally, setting an achievable goal is more like making a real plan of action. You not only aim to reach the finish line, you also focus on the journey that will take you there.

In the long run, the greatest benefit we receive from pursuing our dreams is not the outer trappings of fulfilling the dream, but who we become in the process.

—Jack Canfield

Jack Canfield, bestselling author of the Chicken Soup for the Soul series, has recommended a simple approach for setting specific, measurable goals—also known as SMART goals¹. You can use the SMART system as a map for personal goal setting in 2019 and beyond.

S = Specific

Clearly define your goal, not only for yourself, but also so you can share it with others. Include details of your desired result. For example, you might want to grow your career, but defining your goal with a result could be something like “Become the new Insert Desired Title/Role.”

M = Measurable

Include numbers, dates and other measures as part of your goal. Consider what you'd like to try to gain beyond your main desired result. To help you measure the how and why of your goal, “Become the new Insert Desired Title/Role” might also include “and earn State Financial Goal in 2019.”

A = Attainable

Consider how to accomplish your goal within known constraints of time, money and skills. Add in steps you know you need to take in order to attain the results you want. For instance, “Learn Name Education Requirement to qualify for Desired Title/Role” might also include “and earn State Financial Goal in 2019.”

R = Realistic

It's important to know your path in life well enough to set realistic goals, too. Think about extenuating circumstances you have to deal with, or known obstacles you'll be moving past. As an example, if your company is facing budget cutbacks, perhaps your own financial goals are out of range for 2019.

T = Time-Bound

Some goals may take longer than a year to reach, while others can be reached in the short term. That's why target dates for goal completion, and for smaller steps, are useful: “Learn Name Education Requirement to qualify for Desired Title/Role” might also include “and earn State Financial Goal by October 2019.”



BONUS SMART TIP: THE NOT-DO LIST

When deciding on your goals and the smaller incremental steps you'll take to reach them, you can balance your To-Do list by creating a complimentary Not-Do list at the same time.

It might seem odd to make a list of things you aren't planning to do any time soon, but there's good reason: as you brainstorm ways you can grow and advance, you're likely to come up with interesting ideas that don't quite fit with the goals you're working on now.

Too many items to check off your list can lead to getting sidetracked and ultimately losing sight of the goals you're striving for. The Not-Do list helps you avoid that kind of counterproductive distraction and stay focused on the map to your future achievements.

So, think about keeping a list of the things you **won't** be trying to achieve along the way to your current goals. When ideas aren't aligned with your plan at present, you can always come back to them and turn them into new goals in the future!

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¹JackCanfield.com, Powerful Goal-Setting Tips for Creating Your Extraordinary Life, on the internet at <http://jackcanfield.com/blog/powerful-goal-setting-tips/> visited December 13, 2018.

Important information about the educational debt, earnings, and completion rates of students who attended these programs can be found at www.devry.edu/degree-programs/ge.html or www.keller.edu/graduate-degree-programs/ge.html.

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