

5 Steps to Start Your Year with Real Goals, not Resolutions

Rita's Career Corner ...With Rita B. Allen

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New Year's Resolutions – something we all look forward to and get excited to create! But...how serious are we about keeping them and do they truly impact our dreams and aspirations?

Every December or January, most of us reflect on the previous year and think about how we may be able to start fresh and/or consider new approaches with great intention. Some of us write down these thoughts, some create mental checklists, and then many do neither forgetting all about them within weeks. Creating resolutions at the start of each year is a ritual that we have all practiced along with breaking our resolutions within a short period of time. I'd like to suggest replacing resolutions with goals.

As you begin the new year, establishing personal and professional goals is an effective way to clarify your vision to set the stage for success. **It takes resilience and commitment** to stay true to ourselves. Organizations continue to strive to **attract the right mix of talent**, develop them and keep them engaged to fulfill their business goals and objectives. Similarly, each individual can have a plan that empowers themselves to **take charge of their careers** while ensuring alignment within their organizational and functional goals.

Several years ago, I made a commitment to block out 3 hours the first Friday of every December dedicated to setting my goals for the following year in addition to revisiting the previous year – reviewing, reevaluating and adjusting as necessary – and this allows me to start the New Year with incredible focus and determination. We all need to have a mission for our career and specific goals we want to accomplish – both personally and professionally.

Without a plan, we do not have direction or criteria for accountability; *we just simply exist*. Our success lies in our ability to have this vision putting ourselves in the driver's seat rather than sitting in the back going along for the ride.

The following **5 step process** can help you stay on target and achieve the kind of success you envision for yourself. It will enable you to drive your career in the direction you aspire to as well as to be open to unexpected opportunities exploring new paths and directions.

Step 1 - Identify Your Vision, Mission and Values

- Vision – what do you envision for yourself, current and future
- Mission – what is the purpose of your career for you, existing and ideal
- Core Values – what matters most to you, identify top 5 values

Step 2 - Create 'SMART' Goals

- Specific – precise and quantifiable rather than vague
- Measurable – appropriate metrics to qualify success
- Attainable – realistic, challenging and achievable
- Results-Oriented – focus on desired outcomes
- Time Bound – specific target dates for completion

Step 3 – Develop Goal Setting Process

- Short term goals – 1 to 3 years
- Long term goals – 3 to 5 years
- Realistic obstacles and challenges which you may encounter
- Execution strategy – what, how and when
- Follow up plan to review and evaluate regularly

Step 4 – Determine Commitment

- Write them down, both personal and professional – put them on paper
- Reach out to others for help and support
- Earn trust and gain cooperation from others involved
- Commit to staying focused and true to yourself, live more intentional life

Step 5 – Maintain Accountability

- Revisit, reassess and reevaluate goals on a regular basis
- Make adjustments as appropriate and necessary, keep an open mind
- Continue to formulate process of setting your personal and professional goals

When you reflect on the last year, were there missed opportunities as a result of not having set goals for the year? Did you hold back your career by not identifying specific goals that you wrote down and reviewed monthly for progress? Creating our vision, determining our direction, identifying and writing down our goals will keep us focused and more likely to achieve our goals. Set goals for this year and start anew with drive and focus! Happy New Year and many wishes for a happy, healthy, safe and prosperous future!

Ask Rita...

Question: I am having a difficult time determining what kinds of goals I want to set for myself. I can think about the next twelve months realistically but I have a hard time seeing beyond that time period. How do I go about identifying goals for myself further out when I am barely able to see what lies ahead in the next year or so?

Answer: We will never have access to a crystal ball that enables us to know what kinds of opportunities and/or challenges are in store for us, however, the one thing we do have is the ability to create a vision for what we would like and hope to achieve. This requires a lot of thought, reflection and truly challenging ourselves by digging deep to ask hard questions.

First, we have to get intimate with who we are by identifying our strengths, interests, values, priorities, weaknesses, limitations, as well as our aspirations. We need to be able to determine our differentiators, the value we add...our “personal brand”. As we do this kind of due diligence, we start to identify what we really want, where we see ourselves achieving the greatest fulfillment which will enable us to start identifying and articulating what kind of goals will allow us to do so.

It sounds good on paper but this process is very difficult and takes much time; however in the end it feels quite exhilarating!

Make the commitment to yourself to take the time to do this kind of reflection. It can take several months but you should allow yourself to experience the highs and lows in doing so. The final outcome is empowering – enjoy the journey!

Send your questions to: [Rita B. Allen](#)

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