

new years resolutions - are they meant to be broken?



>> [ah, it's that time of year again, New Years Resolutions!]

Over the Christmas break we normally catch up with family and friends, eat and drink too much and exercise way too little.

12pm the fireworks crackle, hiss and bang. We grab the ones we love (or at least the closet people nearby!), plant them with a big New Years kiss and crack open another cold beverage or two. But then it happens. We just can't help it! That little voice starts chirping in the back of our brains and for the remainder of the evening we balance social activities, normally washed down with a few more drinks, all the while trying to work out new goals for the coming year.

We wake up on the 1st of January, normally a long time after the sun has come up. The evening's celebrations are a distant memory. But then it happens again, that little voice and the same New Years Resolutions. We give a bit more thought to the coming year's goals and really do want them to be a reality. For some reason though for the next few days, we gradually break all of our new years resolutions one by one and in the back of brains that little voice pops up again, 'it's OK – we'll just set them again next New Years Eve?

Sound familiar?

If you were to sit down and actually write your goals out, the majority of people would find they set the same goals year in year out. So how do you avoid the New Years curse and move from writing goals on the back of a VB coaster in the early hours of New Years day to actually making them happen in a logical, structured process?

the darker side of goal setting

So why don't most people set and achieve personal goals, career goals and business goals? Goal setting is a positive, powerful practice when it ignites enthusiasm and provides clear direction.

When practiced poorly, however, goal setting also has a serious downside which can undermine your success. Poor goal setting makes people cynical, wastes their time and fosters confusion about where to concentrate actions and energy. How does such a potentially successful practice as goal setting, go wrong, so often?

Goal setting, executed poorly, thoughtlessly, or for the wrong reasons, can have a significant negative impact on both people and your organisation business plan.

“It normally takes 5 or 6 unsuccessful attempts at goal setting to make them happen”



on when you have to ... off when you can

top 5 goal setting flops

1. Goals set to impress others
2. Goals were forced upon you
3. Trying to do too much, too soon
4. Self sabotage due to fear of failure or low self esteem
5. Poor understanding of the goal setting process

goal setting statistics

- 25% of all new years goals are broken in the first 2 weeks
- It normally takes 5 or 6 unsuccessful attempts at goal setting to make them happen
- Less than 20% of people actually write their goals down
- Of the 20% that do write down goals, only 20% regularly review them

City of Sydney Council survey

Almost one in two people want the next 12 months to be the year they get fit or lose weight, according to a New Year resolutions poll. Travel, quitting smoking, eating better and helping the environment are among the other top aims for the New Year, according to the City of Sydney survey.

The council said its online poll also received more obscure personal goals for the year ahead, with respondents vowing to dump their partner, meet more women, stop biting their fingernails or fall in love. The poll showed fitness topped the list of New Year goals:

- 25% of people have vowed to get fit
- 20% want to lose weight
- 8% of respondents wanted to travel more in the New Year
- 7% wanted to quit smoking
- 6% resolved to eat healthier food.

7 tips to successful goal setting

1. Ask yourself the right questions

- Give some thought to what you really want and why you want to achieve it?
- How much does this really mean to you?
- What are the benefits of achieving this goal? (list all the benefits)
- Who else does this affect/impact?
- Are you really prepared to do what it takes to achieve this goal?

2. Involve significant others

Don't keep your goals to yourself. Enlist the support any buy-in from your partner, significant others, family, friends, colleagues etc.

This keeps you accountable and also sets up your own little support group to keep you on track.

3. Get Anchored

Write your goals down on a sheet of paper, simplify them into point format and then put in a place you will regularly see them. This might be in your diary, in the office, in the car, maybe even in the bathroom.

4. Small bytes

George Miller, a 1950's psychologist, proposed that we can only deal with 7 bits of information at any one time. Any more information and we need to group things into more memorable, manageable chunks. So when you create your New Year master plan, keep goals down to a manageable number and group similar areas

5. Set a plan

After you have written down your specific goals, the next step is to work out a specific plan. Identify the key steps you need to take towards accomplishing your goal and assign specific dates for this

6. Project the future - RAS

Review your goals at least every 7 days, preferably most days. Don't leave it for another 365 days. This helps activate the Reticular Activating System (RAS)

The RAS is an inbuilt goal setting device that tracks us towards our target and filters the type of information we let into our internal system.

Regularly think what it is going to be like once you have successfully achieved your goals. How are you going to feel? We really do become what we think so make sure you forward project the right thoughts and paint a successful storyboard.

7. Be realistic and reward yourself along the way

It is important to reward yourself along the way as you tick off your action plan. Give yourself a pat on the back for sticking to the process.

Human beings make mistakes so don't beat yourself up if you lose focus. If you find yourself breaking resolutions or exhibiting behaviour detracting you from achieving your goals, sit down and go through the goal setting process again starting at step 1.

Following this structured process you are much more likely to achieve your goals and set you up for a happy, healthy and productive 2007. Happy New Year!

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