

## **Management and Performance Associates – February 2015**

### **“The road to hell is paved with good intentions”**

At the moment you're reading this article, many of you have unfortunately already abandoned your well-intentioned New Year's resolutions. One example of that is if you go to a gym. You've probably noticed that the crowds that showed up in January are already gone. At the very least they're showing up less frequently and with less enthusiasm. Research shows that one third of resolutions last a month or less, and less than 50% survive the first six months.

Overall, only 8% of people achieve their New Year's goals. But, perhaps that's the problem, was your resolution a goal or just an intention? There's a big difference between intentions and goals. We all have good intentions such as eating healthier, saving more money, or becoming a better leader. Making it happen is a different story though. If you've ever tried to quit smoking, you know how hard it is.

**The following recommendations will help us to achieve personal goals.**

#### **Differentiate between an intention and a goal**

Imagine that our resolution was to become a better manager. What exactly does that mean? What exactly are we going to do? What are the behaviors and actions involved? How will we measure progress against the stated “goal?” Establishing SMART goals will help us with these questions. Goals need to be Specific, Achievable, Measurable, Relevant and Time Bound. For instance, instead of saying “I need to conduct more coaching sessions with my team,” say “my goal is to conduct monthly coaching sessions with each direct report.” Instead of saying “I need to save more money,” establish a monthly amount to be transferred to a savings account. Perhaps the achievable is the most important part here (be realistic). No one will become a completely different person in a short period of time (that's not realistic).

#### **Opt for progressive change, instead of a resolution**

Make it gradual. Of course all of us want to become a better leader (a resolution). Make it actionable by translating it to behaviors that can be accomplished gradually. Start small.

Establish a goal of having a one-on-one bi-weekly meeting with your staff members. For the first month, make it more personal. Understand who this person reporting to you is—what are their wants and needs. Once that goal is achieved, move to more professional discussions—what are their skills and what gaps exist? For the third layer focus more on expectations that are not being met—what more can be done? . . . and so on.

#### **Focus**

If your intentions for the New Year resemble a laundry list, then perhaps you need to prioritize which ones will make the biggest difference. That's why many companies require that employees establish a maximum of 5 goals for the year in order to ensure focus and alignment to the company's business goals.

#### **Remember that motivation is related to satisfaction**

Once your goal is defined, try to find activities that you enjoy, which are not stressful. For instance, if the goal is to lose weight it's not necessary to go to the gym (especially if that activity isn't very enjoyable for you).

Think of alternatives such as walking more, eating healthier or starting a favorite sport. The more that you enjoy the activity, the higher the chance it will become part of your natural behavior.

#### **Prepare for setbacks**

We all know how hard it is to implement behavioral changes, and it's much easier to stay in our comfort zone. So, when things don't go exactly as planned, don't give up. Keep trying. Use a different approach. Does the goal need an adjustment? Remember that

realistic means according to scenario. When scenarios change, goals need to adjust.

**Reward each milestone**

Don't wait till the end of the year for your reward. Celebrate each milestone and have many milestones. If you did all your scheduled coaching sessions for the month then celebrate.

**See you next time. We welcome your feedback.**

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