

5 Steps to Actually Achieve New Year's Resolutions & Business Goals!

by Linda & Tery Tennant, Attainment, Inc.

Surveys indicate that nearly 100 million Americans will set New Year's resolutions, both personally and in business. Often these are thought up hastily, with little deliberation on how they will be accomplished. A recent study by the University of Washington indicates that confidence, commitment and a good plan are needed to succeed. So if you are serious about achieving your goals, follow these five steps.

1. Clearly Define the Goal in Writing. The top personal goals set in the New Year are: exercise more, lose weight, stop smoking, cut-down on alcohol, eat a healthier diet and make new friends. The top business goals are: make more money, get everyone on the same page, reduce costs, improve efficiency and productivity, and have less stress. These are admirable goals, but they are not clearly defined. If you start with a fuzzy definition of your goals, your results will likely be fuzzy too!

Let's say you want to exercise more, but how much more? How will it be measured, and how will you know when you have achieved it? It is hard to accurately measure words like more, better or faster.

Use the S.M.A.R.T. acronym to define your goals:

- **Specific**
- **Measurable**
- **Attainable**
- **Relative & Realistic**
- **Timed & Tangible**

Turn the exercise goal into a S.M.A.R.T. goal by defining how much time you want to exercise, how often, and what kinds of exercise. This will make your goal more specific, measurable and provides a timeframe. In addition to saying, "exercise three times a week for an hour", think about an end result such as, "Hike Camelback Mountain without stopping by April 1." This establishes the ultimate goal of the exercise and is more tangible.

Set yourself up for success; pick a goal and timeframe that is reasonable to achieve. The best goals are "stretch" goals that challenge you and are realistic.

The goal should also be relative. It should line up with other goals and values. If the goal is not relative to these, consider what effect its achievement will have on the rest of your life.

Article continues on page 2

5 Steps to Actually Achieve New Year's Resolutions & Business Goals! – Page 2

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2. List the Benefits. Thinking of benefits helps motivate you. Write down every way you and others will profit from the goal. Don't just look at surface things, but all advantages to be gained. The more reasons you have, the better you will be motivated! Refer to the benefits if you find yourself losing motivation later.

3. Write the Obstacles & Solutions. Be honest. If laziness or a tendency to procrastinate is an issue, write that as a possible obstacle. Think of everything that could hinder you.

Brainstorm solutions for each obstacle. Get the creative juices flowing! If you get stuck, bring in someone else to help you brainstorm ideas.

4. Develop Action Steps and Measurement. Ask yourself, "What specific thing can I do this week, tomorrow, or even today, to accomplish this goal in this timeframe?" Don't try to do too much at first. ***Taking 10 small steps beats just thinking about making a big leap every time!***

List and prioritize the action steps and set target dates for each step. Put the target dates into your calendar. Successful people do this to provide timely reminders. ***Remember, what gets scheduled gets done!***

Measure your progress. Use a simple wall chart or other tools to measure progress, and to provide a visual reminder.

5. Build in Accountability & Celebration. While some people do well with keeping themselves accountable and on track with a goal, most of us can benefit from having others involved. Ask yourself, "Who else can I inform about this goal?" Tell them your target dates, and give them permission to ask you about it.

Lastly, celebrate those accomplishments! Give yourself and others small rewards for reaching milestones rather than waiting until the goal is achieved. These will encourage everyone and keep it fun. You might think the achievement of the goal is reward enough, but consider savoring it through a celebration with others.

Follow these five steps and you will accomplish things you may have tried to achieve many times in the past. Have confidence as you take each step, and visualize the goal already accomplished. If you stumble a little, don't beat yourself up, just remember why you are doing it (benefits) and get back on track!

Linda & Tery Tennant operate Attainment, Inc., a 22 year franchise of Leadership Management International (LMI). Using a proven Behavior Change Process with verifiable ROI, Attainment facilitates leaders in improving Leadership, Productivity, Communication, Team Building, Coaching and Sales. Visit www.AttainmentInc.com for more articles and tools or call 602-615-4163.