

Kick Start the New Year by setting SMART Goals

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Many people are not able to articulate what they really want in life in clear and concise language. Oddly enough, people are generally pretty good at articulating what they don't want. So it's no wonder that a large percentage of the population go through life getting what they don't want and don't fully realize their goals and desires. You get what you focus on!

A good place to start when setting '**SMART** Goals' is to sit down and make a list of all the things you DON'T want or are really unhappy about. For example, I don't want a mortgage, I don't want to work until I'm 65, I don't want to be overweight, I don't want to be a smoker.

Next, look at your list of DON'T WANTS and convert each one into something you really want instead. For example, I don't want a mortgage becomes I want \$200K equity in my home. I don't want to work until I'm 65 becomes I want to retire by the time I'm 55 years old. I don't want to be overweight becomes I want to reach and maintain my goal weight. I don't want to be a smoker becomes I want to become a non-smoker. Notice not only how the language changes but also how the language feels and the emotions that are evoked. Instead of feeling like you have to move away from something you don't want, you are drawn to moving toward something you want instead. That feels better, doesn't it? You are more likely to be motivated and achieve your goal if you are moving toward something you want and desire as opposed to something you don't want.

The next key step is to turn your wants and desires into specific and measurable goals as a way of gaining clarity and focus. So, let's start by defining **SMART** goals.

S is for Simple and for Specific

The simpler you make your goal, the more clarity the goal will have. You should be able to articulate your goal in 10 words or less. Here's an example: I weigh 150lbs by December 31st, 2010.

M is for Measurable and for Meaningful to you

You have to be able to measure whether you have successfully achieved your goal. The goal must also be meaningful to you. Consider my weight goal above. Is it measurable? Absolutely, all I have to do is stand on the scale on December 31st and weigh myself to determine if I have achieved my goal. Is it meaningful to me? Absolutely, I have total control over whether or not I personally achieve the goal.

A is for As if now, Achievable and All Areas of your life

Often goals are stated in the future tense. For example, I will have or I want to have. The language puts the focus out into the future. Stating the goal as if you have already met the goal or are in the process of meeting the goal keeps the goal achievement close at hand. I weigh 150lbs by December 31st, 2010 is more powerful than I will weigh 150lbs by December 31st, 2010. Now ask yourself Is the goal achievable? Is it possible? Is it probable? How will it affect other areas of my life? For example, you may have a goal to travel around the world this year. While possible is it likely? How would your business or job be affected, or your family? Therefore, goal setting is also about prioritizing and making choices that honors not only what's really important to you but also considers the impact on all areas of your life.

R is for Realistic and for Responsible

Is the stated goal realistic? I know someone who has a goal of winning a lottery. The chances of anyone winning a lottery are so slim—that's not a goal, that's just plain luck. So, let's stick to realistic goals—sure they can be and should be a stretch, but they must be doable for it to be a goal. As for responsible---please make sure your goals are ethical, moral and responsible.

T is for Timely and for Toward what you want

The last consideration in setting SMART goals is to ensure there is a time element to the goal and that it is written towards what you want rather than away from what you don't want. Using my weight example, By December 31st, 2010 I weigh 150lbs. This has a time element as well as provides a target weight that you can work towards.

This is the perfect time to set goals for the year and years to follow. I personally keep a list of all my SMART goals and read them out loud regularly. Maintaining focus on your goals is key to successful goal achievement. Now, take action. No matter how big or small the action is, taking a first step toward the goal puts the wheels in motion. Before you know it all your goals become reality.