

Management Minute & More: It's Never Too Late - New Year SMART Goals

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By Brad Winn, Ph.D., and Brandon Wilde

January rings in a new year and brings with it new dreams, new aspirations, new energy and, yes, new year's resolutions. Well, it's now February, and for many of us our new 2019 goals are a distant memory.

We've all heard the old-adage "New Year, New Me" and heard the jokes about the gym filling up in January before becoming a ghost town again only a few short weeks later. Setting a goal is easy – but keeping one can be hard. That's because one of the hardest things to do in life is change yourself. But it is possible!



Achieving a goal takes a specific kind of dedication. It takes writing them down, going public, establishing accountability, making a timeline, keeping it meaningful, and enlisting a support and reward system.

A manager named Steve set two goals for himself. The first goal was to read one book a month and at least 15 pages a day. The second was to earn an MBA. The idea behind the first goal was to make himself fall in love with reading again. Averaging 400 pages in 30 days provided an easy cushion for finishing at least one book a month.

Steve also knew that getting back into reading would bolster his chance of getting into an MBA program. The second goal of earning a graduate degree was a lot more daunting. Steve knew he had to prepare himself to take the entrance exam and get back into the rigor of academics.

It was easy to set aside time to read daily while working. Steve took advantage of his breaks, closed his door at lunch, and started an evening ritual of reading right before bed. Preparing for the GMAT, however, was an uphill struggle. It had been years since he had been in any sort of academic mindset, and he found studying to be difficult.

What actually helped him overcome his initial setback was enrolling in a prep course that met once a week and held everyone accountable for their performance. For 12 weeks, Steve participated in class, met outside with his group, exchanged text messages of encouragement, and completed the homework. When Steve sat for the GMAT, he was surprised at his feeling of confidence. He held his head high because he knew he'd laid the groundwork needed to succeed.

We can all remember the acronym "SMART" as a guide for setting goals. "SMART" stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. Steve had all of these. Armed with SMART goals and passion, Steve not only accomplished his goals but exceeded them. He finished a whopping 20 books that year and was accepted at three of the four schools to which he'd applied. Steve was later quoted as saying, "I can't imagine setting goals without SMART guidelines, especially now that my MBA education has granted me a new lens through which to view the world. I still read 15 pages daily because it grew from a goal into a habit, a new habit that I am grateful for."

Happy February to each of you! There's still a chance to change yourself for the better and make a positive difference this year. It will make a great year and a SMARTer you!