



Make Your Resolutions Stick!

Set goals that are tangible and time-bound.

BY PETER A. BALASKAS

What will your New Year's resolutions be? Eating better? Organizing your finances more effectively? Giving more Toastmasters speeches? Becoming a club officer?



Whether you set goals inside or outside of Toastmasters, establishing concrete objectives can be very helpful. It allows you to reflect on what you want to do to improve yourself, and gives order to your ambitions.

“The practice of goal-setting is not just helpful; it is a prerequisite for happiness,” writes leadership expert Michael Hyatt on his blog, *Helping Leaders Leverage Influence*. “Psychologists tell us that people who make consistent progress toward meaningful goals live happier, more satisfied lives than those who don’t.”

The process is enriching, but not always easy. After all, pushing yourself can mean roaming outside your comfort zone. For example, perhaps you’re inconsistent with exercise but you nevertheless resolve to join a running group or sign up at the local gym. Or maybe you decide to reach out beyond your normal social circle to make new friends.

“The benefits of being challenged physically, intellectually, emotionally and vocationally are enormous,” says Gary Ryan Blair, president of the GoalsGuy Learning Systems, which has offices in New York and Florida. “Each of us has great potential; however, it will never burn as bright as it could if we do not willingly put ourselves in a position to test our limits.”

Make a List

Too often, we set grand New Year’s goals but then watch our good intentions go by the wayside. How do we make our resolutions stick? Start by writing your goals down. That makes them tangible. To make the process more effective, says Hyatt, keep your list relatively short—a handful of goals is good. Also, make your resolutions specific and time-bound.

“Every goal needs a date associated with it,” Hyatt writes in his blog post, titled “The Beginner’s Guide to Goal Setting.” “A goal without a date is just a dream. Make sure that every goal ends with a *by when* date.” Don’t write “Lose 20 pounds,” he says—write “Lose 20 pounds by December 31.”

Andy Smith, another goal-setting expert, adds this piece of advice: State your goals in positive terms. “If you frame your goals negatively, like ‘I will not smoke’ or

‘I will not be overweight,’ you’re putting an image of what you *don’t* want in your mind,” he says. “You need to frame your goal in positive terms: ‘I reach my target weight and maintain it.’”

Smith coaches leaders around the world, including executives in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. When business leaders set goals for their employees, he notes, they have to motivate other people to accomplish their objectives—therefore, leaders must articulate the goals in a way that inspires the team. That means communicating not just with words or figures on a PowerPoint slide, but with images, says Smith.

“What will it look like when you achieve your goal? What will it sound like? What does it feel like?”

“If you can communicate that clearly, it will capture people’s imaginations and inspire their emotions—which is what will really motivate them to make the goal happen.”

It’s also important that business leaders set realistic expectations for their employees. In a highly publicized 2009 academic paper titled “Goals Gone Wild,” the authors said that managers need to be flexible and cautious when setting goals for their teams. For example, they have to remember that employees need to have the skills and training to enable them to reach the goals, says the report, and employees’ short-term efforts to reach a goal shouldn’t come at the cost of long-term work objectives.

Make It Manageable

Sometimes we set goals that are too difficult to achieve, or we get overwhelmed by our list, finding our resolutions too daunting. Make the process manageable by taking it one day and one goal at a time, says Lesley Stephenson, ACG, CL. A member of clubs in Switzerland and Australia, Stephenson says participation in Toastmasters helped her achieve her goal of becoming an international corporate communications trainer and keynote speaker. If there is a lesson she likes to share with others, it is something a teacher once taught her.

“I was moaning about not being able to finish a mammoth biography project I had taken on [when my teacher] asked me if



Goal-setting Resources

Consult these resources for help on setting and achieving your goals.

- The Toastmasters International module *Goal Setting and Planning* (Item 314) offers tips on how leaders can set goals and develop plans to achieve them. The module, which is part of The Leadership Excellence Series, is available through the Toastmasters Online Store at www.toastmasters.org/shop.
- *Toastmaster* magazine has published articles related to goal-setting. The following articles can be found at www.toastmasters.org/pastissues:
 - “Make a Goal ... and Score Big!” by Sushma Subramanian (January 2010)
 - “Set SMART Goals for Speaking Progress” by Dena Harris, ACB, CL (September 2008)
 - “Visualize Success—And It Can Be Yours!” by Judy M. Bailey (January 2008)
- Leadership expert Michael Hyatt’s blog is *Helping Leaders Leverage Influence*, at www.michaelhyatt.com. He has several posts related to goal-setting, including “The Beginner’s Guide to Goal Setting.”
- Gary Ryan Blair is the author of many books on goal-setting and the president of the GoalsGuy Learning Systems (www.goalsguy.com).
- Andy Smith is a leadership and emotional-intelligence coach who has written articles about goal-setting and a book titled *Achieve Your Goals: Strategies to Transform Your Life*. His website is www.coachingleaders.emotional-climate.com.

GOAL-SETTING

I knew how to eat an elephant. When I said 'No,' he replied: 'You eat an elephant the same way you eat a chicken. One bite at a time.'

Taking small steps was a lesson that Eugene Yiga, CC, learned while creating "The Monumental Life," an online personal development course he created for his company's self-coaching platform.

"Every goal needs a date associated with it. A goal without a date is just a dream." — Michael Hyatt

"It was a huge task and one that required over a year and a half of planning, researching, writing and more," says Yiga, vice president education for the Grove Toastmasters in Cape Town, South Africa. "The biggest obstacle was trying to achieve such a complex goal while still making time for other professional and personal responsibilities."

His solution was to follow a series of tips that he recommends:

- Attack your goals one step at a time.
- Have a firm grasp on *why* a goal matters. This boosts your motivation to achieve it.
- Create a meticulous timeline for completing your goals.
- No matter how difficult your goal becomes, never give up.
- Ask for help when you need it.

Stay Positive

Yiga says the most important lesson he learned is not being too harsh on yourself when you fall short of reaching a goal. The key is to keep trying. "It's important to remember that failing doesn't make you a failure," he says. "As long as you stay open to new approaches and refuse to give up, you can make it to success."

When you do achieve the goals you set, your confidence surges. Dee Dees, DTM, knows this well. When she joined

Toastmasters more than 30 years ago, she wanted to overcome her shyness.

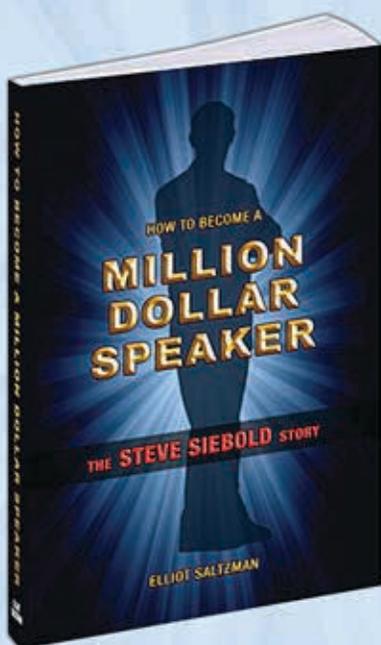
"My short-term goals were just to be able to speak to a small group of people without stammering and getting red in the face," says Dees, a past international director and a member of the Gilbert Toastmasters club in Gilbert, Arizona.

Once she moved past that barrier, she developed a long-term goal of working her way through Toastmasters' leadership track.

"These [leadership] positions were ones I used to look at and think, I could never do that!" Dees recalls. "And yet, by moving up through the positions, one step at a time, I was able to attain goals far beyond what I thought I was capable of." **T**

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