

The Resolution Passes

January, and a whole new year, is right around the corner. Many of us will make resolutions for the new year. Some of us will have already broken our New Years resolutions by the end of January. Why is that?

Based on my experience coaching people, I believe there is one key reason why resolutions are not kept. Resolutions are a form of a goal, and I have found that for a goal to be achieved, it needs to be WHY SMART.

WHY SMART is an acronym for the characteristics of an effectively-stated goal: Written, Harmonious, Yours, Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistically high, and Time-bound. Let me explain each of these elements, one at a time.

Written: Studies have shown that people are much more likely to achieve goals that are written, especially if they are reviewed on a regular basis. A wise friend once told me “The faintest pen is better than the strongest memory.” Believe it.

Harmonious: Goals are most likely to be achieved if they are harmonious with other goals that we have, and in accordance with our values and beliefs. As an example, if I wanted to be on the national lecture circuit, and I also wanted to attend all the sporting events in which my children participate, I would have a conflict between my goals.

Yours: If a goal is something that somebody else wants, but it is not important to us, we probably won't achieve it. Other people can suggest goals, but until we truly embrace the goal, it is not ours. We are most likely to achieve a goal we have set for ourselves, and which fulfills our personal needs.

Specific: Goals need to be stated in a positive and clear way. For instance, having a goal to “not be so out of shape” is a goal stated in a negative and fuzzy way. A better way of stating the goal would be to say “I will engage in 30 minutes of aerobic exercise four times a week.”

Measurable: In order to achieve a goal, we must be able to measure it. A goal of having a better relationship with our children is hard to measure. A goal of spending five hours a week one-on-one with our child, doing something we both enjoy, is measurable.

Attainable: Some people make the mistake of setting an overly-ambitious goal they have very little chance of achieving. This is an inherently self-defeating exercise. Don't do it.

Realistically high: On the flip side, some people set goals that are too easily achieved. It is best to set goals that are attainable, yet cause us to stretch to reach them. This is the key to achieving personal growth and a sense of accomplishment.

Time-bound: A goal is not compelling until we put a due date on it. A working definition for a goal that I sometimes use is “a goal is a dream with a deadline!” If we do

not put a due date on a goal, we tend to procrastinate. Remember, goals are effective only when we take action of them. No deadline often means no action.

There is more to setting goals than I have outlined here, but if our goal is a WHY SMART goal, we've made a good start. I have an excellent goal planning worksheet I use with my clients. Please contact me at goals@pdsystems.net if you would like a copy.