

Q: How can my goals for 2010 avoid the mistakes of 2009?

A: Your business goals probably are set already. But what about your goals for personal development? And what about those goals you set for 2009?

Great plans often start with a bang but end with a fizzle. Well-intended people set goals but don't reach them, then wonder what they should have done differently.

During my 18 years of coaching executives, facilitating strategic planning and training businesses on leadership, this issue has come up quite a bit. Here are things I've learned from people who consistently follow through on their goals:

State goals in positive terms

Imagine that nine patients are given identical diagnoses of heart disease. All will die unless they improve their diet, lose weight, cut back on alcohol and reduce their stress. How many will make the necessary changes?

Only one, according to Dr. Edward Miller of Johns Hopkins University. "If you look at people after coronary-artery bypass grafting two years later, 90 percent of them have not changed their lifestyle," Miller said.

Even when faced with bad news, most people do not change. Positive emotions, however, drive people to action. The message: Set goals in a way that creates positive feelings.

Connect your goals to intrinsic motivators

According to Daniel Pink, who writes about the changing world of work, and 40 years of research, people aren't motivated by the carrot-and-stick approach: "Do X well and we'll reward you with Y; do X poorly and we'll punish you." This approach actually hinders performance. Instead, Pink advises to set goals that tap into three intrinsic motivators:

1 | Autonomy Create goals that allow you freedom to choose how they get accomplished.

2 | Mastery Become an expert in a skill that will encourage follow-through and focus.

3 | Purpose Choose goals that express your purpose.

Use your network for help

Set up informal peer-to-peer mentoring. Suppose Susan, an acquaintance, has a skill you know is necessary to your career. Tell Susan your goals and when you want to accomplish them. Pick her brain, ask her questions and shadow her in her work. Then implement what you've learned and report your results.

Tell Susan what you want to be told if you haven't committed to your plan. What should she say to get you back on course? Sometimes all that's required is a simple reminder of why your goal is so important. Return the favor and mentor Susan in one of your talents.

Going it alone increases the chance of repeating bad habits. You're more likely to succeed if you involve others.

Einstein was right when he said that to solve a problem, we can't use the same type of thinking that caused the problem in the first place.

If 2010 is going to be different from this year, we must use a higher level of thinking. To start, let's set goals that are powerful, purposeful and tap into our network.



Dean Newlund is president of Mission Facilitators International, a leadership-development firm. www.missionfacilitators.com. He works with large companies, including *The Arizona Republic*. Newlund can be reached at dean@missionfacilitators.com. Send him your leadership questions.