

Are You Still on Track?

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Way back in December or January, you set your business – and personal – goals for the year, but have you been keeping tabs on your efforts and progress? BY MARK OKUN

By this time of the year most people have quit the gym and have either given up or pushed all of their business goals aside.

The purpose of this article is to help you determine where you are on your path to success, to bring all your goals back to the forefront of your mind, and to re-ignite the passion you felt for them at the end of 2015.

Mid-year is a great time to look back and reflect on the improvements you have made. It is also an excellent time to redefine what it is you are working to achieve.

CHECK THE MAP

Take a hard look at what you committed to at the start of 2016. Do those goals continue to make sense to move forward on as you had planned? Has something changed in your business as the year progressed to cause you to make adjustments?

Nothing simply goes as it is intended to, either for the good or bad. The mid-year checkup allows you to make changes to your plans and what it takes to accomplish them.

As time moves forward, plans change. Some of the goals you had set are no longer as relevant as they once were; a new objective may have become a priority. Change happens to developmental goals and commercial ones alike. What's nice about setting goals and checking them regularly is that you won't be surprised at what the mid-year brings.

Now, instead of projecting what needs to happen over a year, you have a six-month track record. Now is the time to make the necessary adjustments to stay on track or blaze a new path. Don't wait until December to do this critical checkup! Having goals is not a "set it and forget it" proposition.

APPRAISE PAST DAYS

It's time to look back at what you have done over the last six months. Evaluate every accomplishment you have had in each category. When setting your goals initially, you invested a lot of time in the process. The appraisal aspect of checking yourself will also take some time – from a few hours to possibly an entire weekend.

Keep in mind that you may have accomplished a goal early. If so, it's time to add in a new goal. If you have used any of the standard goal-setting formulas out there such as SMART, you probably have written down your goals and broken them into a series of manageable smaller targets and tasks.

STEP 1: CHECK YOURSELF

Looking into the future is never 20-20; life is an ebb and flow of happenings that we have no way of predicting. As time moves forward, you will either have more clarity as to your path of achievement, or you may have a change of mind or direction. Both are good news. After six months, it is time to tweak and adjust. When navigating or piloting a ship, constant course corrections are needed to arrive at the desired destination. The same applies to your goals; it is all part of the progression.

The most important aspect of this step is to make sure you still want to get to the place you had in mind half-a-year ago. The passion and enthusiasm that you started this process with must be ever-present or you will lose your drive to make it to the end, your ultimate success. This is the time to remember why you wanted to reach your goal. Remembering the why makes it real again. Placing your goals at the front of your thoughts will rekindle the fire you had when you set the goal.

STEP 2: ADJUSTMENTS

Are your goals still in line with your vision from six months ago? Have you made some course corrections? It is time to measure your achievements. Put pen on paper, or fingers on the keyboard, to see where you stand. The honest answers you give will be the guide to either stay the course or make a change. In my case, I added a daily journaling goal to my list, and I did not do it daily. It turned out that I was consistent in writing in the journal only once a week. This became my course change. I had not journaled at all before, and the lofty goal of writing daily in my journal somehow eluded me – but

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5

4

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“I am not judged by the number of times I fail, but by the number of times I succeed; and the number of times I succeed is in direct proportion to the number of times I can fail and keep on trying” – Tom Hopkins

I did see a pattern emerge. I did not give up, but instead adjusted my goal to twice a week. I am still way ahead of last year and can still build towards a daily entry.

STEP 3: SPEED BUMPS

When you are traveling down the road towards your goals, there are many unseen speed bumps and detours. These are the points of the trip that you will want to capitalize on. As we carefully traverse these various thoroughfares that our business and personal lives take us, we are assuredly going to run into speed bumps. Some people see them as stop signs; others see them as a point to slow down, investigate the surroundings, and take another look at the map before they proceed. Speed bumps help us identify opportunities for growth. Sometimes they become a detour, and we begin another parallel journey. There is no need to rush; this is a good time to remember that the dates we set to reach our personal milestones are malleable and can be changed.

If you discover that additional skills or knowledge are required to achieve your end point, adjust your timeframe and increase your abilities. With this way of thinking, you have changed your stop sign into a detour. You have not ended your trip, but added a slightly different leg to it. This is like everyone’s favorite GPS phrase, “recalculating.”

STEP 4: ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The mid-year check-in is an excellent time to celebrate the accomplishments that you have achieved. When setting your goals, they are the reverse-engineered mile markers that let you know you are going the right way. Be sure to celebrate each of those markers! Everything you

have done to get to this point took effort, energy, and focus. Acknowledging that you made it past a mile marker is only part of the accomplishment celebration. Tie it to something that makes a lasting impression and is equal to the completed deed, such as a great dinner out, tickets to an event, or a gift to yourself. In fact, any reminder of achieving the goal that creates joy for you, when remembered, is tied to the reality that goal accomplishment is a great feeling.

STEP 5: EMBRACE FAILURE

Failure is the result of attempts to succeed. The great hitters in baseball miss 70 percent of the pitches they see. With each missed pitch, the hitter learns more about the pitcher. In the event you fail to reach your specified goal, you have still won because you learned something. When looking into the face of failure, take pride in the chance you took, for not playing it safe in the middle.

Unlike celebrating our successes, failure becomes ingrained in our minds. Failure can linger in the mind; use it as a tool. Intentionally use this uncomfortable memory to propel yourself forward!

In life, we have only two motivators. The first is easy; it is the motivation towards a goal and the great things accomplishing that goal will bring to us. The other motivator is to distance ourselves from fear or pain. The memory of a failure or missed opportunity can freeze us or provide us the stimulation we need to “live to fight another day.” Failure is not a failure until you stop pursuing your goals and settle for the current outcome.

If you haven’t set goals for the year yet, you can still set them! There is no law that says goal-setting must start on January 1. It is never too late to set out to accomplish something good. It’s a matter of asking yourself, “What do I want to accomplish?” ♦



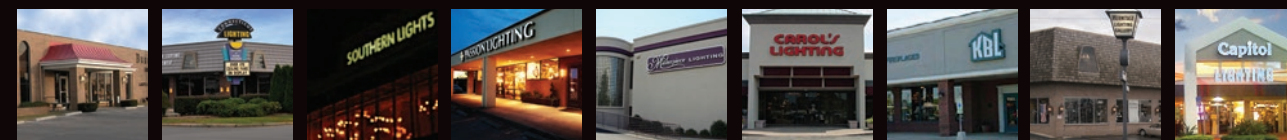
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