

Have a great new year – 2008

2008? No, this is not a typo. Now is the time to start working on being a success in 2008. We live in the age of the microwave pancake. We want our hotcakes, but we don't like doing the work to make them. While this may work in the frozen food case, it doesn't work in real life. We watch champion athletes or popular entertainers and marvel at their great skill, but give little thought to the years of training, practice and rehearsal that brought them to the peak of their professions. Studies have found that the average New Years Resolution lasts just 5 days. Good intentions are meaningless without a commitment to doing the things that will make your dream become reality. Growing a dream is like growing a tomato; you can't plant the seed today and expect to reap your harvest tomorrow. Dreams and tomatoes both require preparation, hard work and nurturing. Like they say in show business, "It takes years to be an overnight success" – today is the day to start making 2008 the best year of your life.

Here are some action steps to help you:

- **Determine what you want to accomplish and why** – do you want to be the top rep in your office? Do you want a certain level of income? Decide what you want to accomplish and be as specific as possible. One of the things that distinguishes true goals from "pie in the sky" fantasies is that goals are very specific and include exactly what you want to accomplish and when. "I want to be a great sales rep" is a dream; "I want to be the top revenue producer in my office by the end of the 2nd quarter" is a goal. Ask yourself "Why do I want to accomplish this?" Understanding your motivation will help you to stay on track.
- **Take stock of yourself.** What are your strengths and what are your deficiencies. What do you need to learn, what skills do you need to practice, what tools do you need to acquire. Ask your boss, your co-workers and your customers to give you honest feedback in these areas. Once you decide what you need, seek out the books, tapes, seminars and mentors you need to polish your skills. Commit to a program of continuous self-improvement.
- **Be realistic when setting your goals.** Goals should be challenging to obtain but attainable. A proper goal should force you to stretch, to take your self to the next level. A goal set too low will stunt your personal growth; a goal set too high is demoralizing and a way to justify giving up. Benchmark yourself against the leaders in your office or your industry, when you become the leader then set a goal of exceeding your personal best.
- **Break your long-term goals into short-term objectives.** Achieving these objectives will give you a sense of accomplishment and give you a means to measure your progress. Focus on behavioral objectives. If your goal is to increase your sales, set an objective of making 2 more sales calls per day. The 2 extra calls is a behavioral objective, it is easy to understand and requires no one else's cooperation, it is simply making a promise to yourself and keeping it. The extra 10 calls per week will lead to more sales and to achieving your long-term goal.

- **Accept responsibility for your future.** Where and who you are today is the result of the decisions you have made in the past. Where and who you are in the future is the result of the decisions you make from today forward. Motivational speaker Les Brown says, “Accept responsibility for your life. Know that it is you who will get you where you want to go, no one else.” If you do not accept this responsibility you surrender your power to affect your future. Successful people do not dwell on external factors. You cannot control the competition, the weather, the economy or the actions of other people. What you can control is your reaction to these outside forces. Focus your energies on doing what you can, with what you have and you will thrive in any situation.
- **Persevere** – In his book “1776” historian David McCullough said that George Washington’s greatest virtue was his refusal to quit. In that year Washington lost 5 major battles, lost the city of New York and lost over 90% of his army. He faced an enemy that was better equipped and better trained than his own rag tag force and which greatly outnumbered him. The enemy and most of Washington’s army believed that further resistance was futile. When everyone else had given up, Washington went on the attack, famously crossed the Delaware and crushed an enemy who thought he was defeated. Washington was not considered a great general, but he never lost sight of his goal, he never lost faith in himself, he simply refused to lose. Don’t dwell on the challenges confronting you; don’t think about the 101 ways you could fail, focus your efforts on persistently doing the things you need to do to succeed.
- **Monitor your progress** – keep track of your progress toward your goals. Set specific benchmark objectives at regular periods (I will have 20 regular advertisers by the end of the 1st quarter) and set aside time to review them. This will help you maintain your motivation by showing progress toward your ultimate goal. Celebrate your achievements and reaffirm your commitment to reach your goal. Tracking your results will also help you to make midcourse corrections. Perhaps something you are doing is not producing the desired results; this is a good time to try something different. New opportunities may have presented themselves allowing you to raise the bar. Regular reviews of your progress are a great way to sharpen your focus and stay on course.

Focusing on long-term goals has obvious pay offs in the future but you will not have to wait until next year to reap the rewards of this practice. Goal orientation will serve to insulate you from the roller coaster emotions that afflict sales people. If your eyes are on your goals you will see setbacks for what they are and not as disasters. Goal orientation counters the temptation to “coast” after achieving a minor victory. Perhaps the biggest reward of taking the long view is that goal focused people have taken charge of their own destiny and constantly push themselves to become better than they are today. Muhammad Ali, who knows something about how to make dreams come true, said it best: I hated every minute of training, but I said, “Don’t quit. Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion.”