

# Plan to Succeed!

By Monica Premo

The New Year is a time for a fresh start, new possibilities, new challenges, and new opportunities. It's exciting to think ahead to what could be and what you need to do to make those ideas and dreams a reality. Goals and dreams are nice, but without a plan to make them happen, they remain dreams instead of becoming reality. As you look ahead to 2007, make time to develop a plan to get you from where you are now to where you want to be by the end of 2007 and beyond.

**Real progress requires vision, thought, planning, measurable goals, implementation, and evaluation.** Spend some time on each of these steps to start down the path of success.

**What is your vision?** Step back and review your current situation and think ahead to what could be. Where do you want to be in one, three, and five years? Brainstorm and let your creative juices flow, listing every possibility, wild idea, or specific item that comes to mind and write them all down. Then step back and sort, edit, combine, prioritize and come up with your vision. Beware: this is an exercise that requires time for your creative juices to flow, and for you to think, ponder, and dream. Set aside quiet time, possibly offsite, for this exercise.

**Think about where you are now and where you want to be in the future.** Look back at this year, review your goals and achievements, and consider your vision. How do they all line up? Did you accomplish your goals and more? Did unplanned circumstances interfere with achieving your goals? Has your vision changed over the last year? What do you want to do now? Set your goals and write them down.

**What will it take to get from where you are today to where you want to be?** Break your goals down into manageable steps and write them down. Your long-term (three- and five- year) goals will have more general steps, while the one-year goals can be broken down into three-, six- and nine-month milestones. The nearer you get to today, the more specific the tasks become. Don't get bogged down in all of the details, but get enough detail to guide you through the process.

**How will you know when you have reached your goal?** The most effective goals are specific, realistic, challenging, and measurable. This is where the warm fuzzies of great ideas get measured against the cold, hard facts of action. For instance, if your goal is to "finally get organized", how do you measure that? Rephrase the goal and its measurement into quantifiable terms. Your goal to get organized might become "Clean off my desk every day before I leave." Now you can measure your success by tracking if you cleaned off your desk every day.

**Plans are great, but progress requires action.** Simply having goals doesn't mean you are doing anything to achieve them, so don't file them away until next December. Review them weekly, monthly, and quarterly and continue to break the steps down into daily tasks that matter and will help you achieve your goals. Do one thing every day to bring you closer to achieving your goals.

**How did you do and where do you go from here?** Evaluation is the final step in the process. Did you meet your goals, and if not, why not? What did you learn? What is your next step? What do you need to change? Do you need help to achieve them or is it time to celebrate your success?!

Whether you are creating your vision for your business or personal life or both, take the time to think through the steps to achieve your goals and bask in your success when you reach them!

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