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Tonight's Top 10 List is ... (drum roll)

S.M.A.R.T goals to drive professional development

How many of you make New Year's resolutions? How many of you actually keep them? That, of course, is a rhetorical question. On a personal front, I don't make New Year's resolutions. Instead, I simply set S.M.A.R.T. goals, ones that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely.

Move over David Letterman, here are my Top 10 S.M.A.R.T. goals to drive professional development:

10. Identify your "end game."

Borrowing from author Stephen Covey, always "begin with the end in mind"... and commit your goals in writing, complete with timelines and measurements of success.

9. Read ... and then read some more.

Knowledge is power. I, for one, am an information junkie. I also "follow" the best business minds in the country with the hope I'll learn a thing or two along the way.

8. Find a mentor.

One of my favorite mottos is, "I am smart enough to know that I am not smart enough." So I surround myself with individuals who challenge my thinking, give honest feedback and serve as a sounding board and source for inspiration. Put another way, I look for colleagues who "question my answers."

7. Eliminate barriers.

An interesting exercise for all of us in business is to identify what, in fact, is standing in the way of reaching our goals — then developing an action plan to eliminate them.

6. Become a saver and sharer.

Create an effective electronic filing system to keep track of those interesting articles, blog posts and Web pages that resonate with you. Encourage those around you to also share documents and/or communications with you that would bolster your arsenal of information.

5. Schedule some "me time."

Life is just too crazy to devote adequate quality time to yourself; but it is imperative that you do so. Find time and a space to think on a daily basis. I, for one, arrive early to work, get my coffee, shut my door, lean back in my chair, look out on the skyline and think. It's amazing what can become clear in moments of quiet reflection.

4. Find a leadership coach.

Leaders often overvalue themselves by believing they have all the right answers. Right? Wrong! Leaders are just too engrained in their organization. Find a coach or trusted adviser. It will be one of the best investments of your professional career.

3. Have a vision.

Failing to have a vision in today's competitive economic climate will quite frankly put you out of business. If you carefully define where you want to go and how you want to get



there, you are already starting to out-distance yourself from the competition.

2. Post your goals.

At the end of the day, it is all about accountability. Post your professional goals on your desk for everyone to see. Share them with your management team and verbally reference them at company-wide meetings to keep them front and center for all to see.

1. Take time to smell the roses.

We Americans are spending more time in the office and less time with our family and ourselves. Your body and mind need the time off from work. Just remember, at the end of the day, you are No. 1. ●

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