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## *Business Toolbox: Setting and Reaching Your Objectives*

*Do you have trouble sticking to a set of goals? Read the first part of this series to get tips on how to focus on your objectives.*

BY [JOHN D. MAYFIELD](#)

We're now a couple of months into the New Year, and if you're like most people, you set some good goals at the end of 2012. The question to ask yourself now is: Have you lost sight or focus of the vision you set at the beginning of the year? Are your goals still as relevant and meaningful today as they were on Jan. 1st?

If you answered yes, well good for you! On the other hand, if you said no, there's good news for you too: There's still time reinvigorate yourself to reach your goals and vision for this year. To do that, you need have the same mind-set as author Diana Scharf Hunt, who says, "Goals are dreams with deadlines."

To me, goal setting is similar to a favorite meal or dish. Some ingredients might seem interesting or add a unique flavor, but if it does not help encourage or push you toward reaching your goals, try another ingredient that will. On the other hand, is your goal fictitious, or real and relevant; can you commit to it? Do you want to?

My advice for reaching goals may be the perfect recipe for some people to fulfill their vision, while others may need just a little tweaking or something else to reach their dreams. Read and study what others have to say about reaching your goals. In any circumstance, the important point to remember is that you have a set of goals and remain focused on reaching them throughout the year -

Here are a few suggestions:

- Set reachable goals.
- Set short-term and long-term goals.
- Break some of your goals up into smaller bite-size objectives.
- Set deadlines for achieving your goals.
- Make sure your goals are clearly measurable.
- Put your goals into writing.
- Read your goals daily.

## Set Reachable Goals

Let's face it: If you set goals that you can never come close to achieving, it will become discouraging over time. It also will begin to have a negative effect on your subconscious thinking. Consequently, when you set new goals, you would believe you were defeated before you ever started. Don't misunderstand my point — I do believe goals should have a degree of challenge, and I think everyone should aim high.

However, it's important to set goals that will help build your confidence and encourage you, not tear you down. If you're having a tough time with your business — for instance, you haven't had a closing in a month or two and have a low inventory of listings — then you should make your goals attainable. Set a goal to get one or two new listings over the next 30 or 60 days and one new written sale contract accepted.

Another good goal would be to contact a certain number of potential customers in a farm area or your sphere of influence. Remember, contacts will lead to future business. By accomplishing this objective, you will gain confidence that will help you move forward on your bigger goals.

## Set Short-Term and Long-Term Goals

Short-term and long-term goals in combination help provide you with a vision for your future. Recently, I was in Europe and took a train ride from Brussels to Ghent. (Both cities are in Belgium.) Unfortunately, I got on the wrong train to Ghent. There were two trains for my intended destination, one with only a couple of stops (a 50-minute train

ride), and the other with multiple stops (a two-hour train ride). I ended up on the longer train ride, and every time the train would begin to get up to full speed, we would slow down and stop at the next station. It seemed like it took forever.

Going back to Brussels, I made certain I got on the right train, the one with fewer stops. You can think about short- and long-term goals in the same way as this train ride. Short-term goals help boost the train out of the depot to move down the train tracks, and long-term goals keep the momentum of the train moving toward the destination. Without long-term goals, you'll be constantly starting and stopping. Having a long view will help keep your vision and momentum in place to fuel your passion throughout the year.

## Set Deadlines

Your goals should have due dates. Without a date, you may procrastinate. Setting deadlines for your goals will remind you of the need to stay focused and help you work hard at achieving your dreams.

## Break Your Goals Into Smaller, Bite-Size Objectives

Many notable authors and public speakers who focus on goal setting will tell you that breaking your goals into smaller ones is important. For example, let's say one of your goals is to build a Web site for your real estate business. Rather than trying to have a completed, fully functional Web site by a certain date, try breaking this goal into smaller ones, such as choosing a vendor and determining your site's architecture, with their own specific deadlines.

You can apply this same concept to reaching a certain dollar production for a given period of time in your real estate career. If you want to earn a particular amount of money this year, then set smaller goals to help fuel the train down the tracks. Knock on a certain number of doors this week; contact a specific amount of people in your sphere of influence today, and so on. Along the way, remember this saying: "How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time."

## Make Sure Goals Are Measurable

Often I will hear someone in one of my seminars tell me that they want to be a better real estate agent this year. Or, they might say their goal is to be a better parent. Those are good aspirations, but unfortunately they are goals that cannot easily be measured. How can you define or measure being a better real estate agent or parent?

You can't, so you have to structure your goal to make it measurable. If you closed X number of transactions last year, then how many transactions or how much money do you need to make this year to qualify as a better real estate pro in your mind? What new activities could you do this year with your children to become a better parent? By assigning a number to specific tasks, you now have something you can measure to determine if you made your goal or not.

## Put Goals in Writing

Research shows that only a small percentage of people put their goals in writing. Writing your goals down is powerful and can be a huge factor in determining whether you achieve them. I love the story from the book *What They Don't Teach You at Harvard Business School*. Author Mark McCormack studied the 1979 graduating class and found that only 3 percent of the class had written goals when they left Harvard. Ten years later, those 3 percent were making 10 times more money on average than the entire graduating class. McCormack concluded that their clear, precise vision on what they wanted from life after Harvard was the reason for their success.

## Read Your Goals Daily

I once heard a famous motivational speaker encourage me to read my goals the first thing in the morning and before I retired to bed at night. Reading your goals every day to remind yourself what your vision and intended destination are keeps you focused on achieving your goals.

## In Closing

When I think about goals and goal setting, I'm always reminded of a story I heard years ago as a young real estate pro: Three people standing on a hilltop planned to walk down the hill and through a valley and climb a mountain in the distance. The first person said he was going to attempt the feat blindfolded. Off he went to reach the other mountain peak with his blindfold on. Unfortunately, he became lost and never made it to the destination. The second individual bragged about his attempt to reach the target by walking backwards. But he spent most of his time wandering and zigzagging about as he became disoriented by focusing on his past failures and problems. The final individual had told the group that he was not going to the other mountain peak blindfolded or even walking backwards. He raised his hand and pointed to the intended target, exclaiming, "I'm walking over there!" As you might guess, he made the destination.

Finally, don't beat yourself up if you don't always succeed in the end. Sometimes circumstances we have no control over arise and prevent us from reaching our goals. When that happens, pick yourself up, wipe the dust off, and begin a journey toward a new set of revised goals. The important point is to always have aims, both long-term and short-term. By following this process, I am confident you will succeed in anything you set your mind to. Best of luck.