StevePavlina.com *Personal Development Insights*™ Newsletter

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How to Achieve Your New Year's Goals

Have you ever started off the New Year by making grand new promises to yourself? You list out your new goals (and re-list some old ones). You get excited about what you'll accomplish. You think about how great your life will be when you get all those things done.

And then sometime in December, you look back and wonder where all the time went?

You certainly kept busy. You got a lot done. But somehow the stuff you didn't get done was the stuff that really mattered. The stuff you completed just wasn't as important. You did a good job of maintaining the status quo, but you failed to get ahead. This year turned out very much like the year before... and the year before that.

Where did you go wrong?

Setting the Right Goals

One possibility is that you set lame goals. It's very common to set goals that come from social conditioning instead of setting goals we really care about. For example, maybe you set a goal to make a certain amount of money, but deep down you just don't care that much about money. If you'd set a goal you really cared about instead, you might have accomplished it by now.

If you set a goal, and you aren't as enthusiastic about that goal as a child asking for a piece of candy, your goal is probably pointless and uninspiring. You think you want it. You tell yourself you should want it. Intellectually you think it would be great to have it. But deep down it just doesn't connect. You simply don't care... not really. I know it's hard, but you need to dump these types of goals. Otherwise you're trying to climb a ladder that's leaning against the wrong building. You're not being authentic.

Good goals stir you emotionally. They scare you. They push you to grow. They require you to face your fears. They practically dare you to chase them down. They expose your inadequacies. The best goals are those which make you think, "Damn, it would be awesome to achieve that! But I'm really not sure if I can pull this off..."

One of the goals I set at the beginning of this year was to become a raw foodist. I've been a vegan since 1997, and I wanted to make the transition to a 100% raw diet. This was a goal that inspired me. It also scared me because I didn't know how I'd pull it off. I successfully achieved it though. It was hard to adapt to this way of eating, but fortunately it's very easy to maintain. I've been eating 100% raw for most of the year now.

Setting Priorities

You don't need to set a ton of different goals. Fewer is better. It's better to achieve one big goal than to set 20 goals and fail to achieve any of them. Setting too many simultaneous goals will just dilute your focus.

A goal is a decision. If you set lots of goals at the same time, you haven't made any real decisions. You're just playing the field, hoping you'll find the time to squeeze everything in. But there's no commitment. What you have is a quagmire of potential distractions. One goal is clarity. Ten goals is confusion.

If you want to succeed in achieving your goals, pick just one or two at a time, and stick with them until they're complete. You can also set new goals afterwards.

Try limiting yourself to one major personal goal and one major professional goal at a time. Stick with these priorities until they're 100% complete. You'll achieve your goals much more quickly if you do this.

One of the reasons I had such a great 2008 was that I was very clear about my primary goals. Going raw was my #1 personal goal. Finishing my book was my #1 professional goal.

While these goals were on my plate, I worked hard on them. They never slid under the radar. I couldn't forget about them or ignore them. And since these were goals I really desired, I was inspired to take a lot of action.

If you have a goal that's too big to stick with until it's 100% complete, break it down into phases. For example, I broke my book project into different phases like creating the outline, writing the first draft, editing the book, and then promoting the book after it was released. That way I could work on other projects between phases to fit the schedules of others I worked with.

When you think about your New Year's goals, try setting just one personal and one professional goal. Then commit to sticking with them until you've achieved them. If you aren't willing to do that, then you're just playing games with yourself. If the goals are really important to you, then you should get them done quickly and directly by minimizing distractions and obstacles.

Focus Focus Focus

If you set strong, worthy goals, they'll probably require tremendous focus. If you allow all sorts of minor projects and tasks to creep onto your plate, you'll find yourself feeling pretty lousy around December.

When you focus on a goal, this means you must prevent yourself from focusing on anything that isn't part of that goal. So get used to saying NO -- a lot!

When I'm working on an important goal, I imagine I have a shield up that deflects anything that isn't relevant to that goal. I often let other parts of my life slide, at least to the degree they can handle some sliding.

Life is filled with potential distractions. If you try to keep on top of everything, you'll fail to keep on top of what's most important. You'll soon find yourself drowning in pointless tasks and not getting the important stuff done at all. Your goals will never become reality.

When I'm working on an important goal, many phone calls go unanswered, and long emails go unread. Why? Although these tasks may seem important, they aren't nearly as important to me as the goals I'm working on. So I simply blow them off. I don't have time to attend to all these things and stay focused on my goals at the same time. I have to triage one or the other. I choose to become a published author and a raw foodist this year, and the price was that I blew off a lot of email that I considered unimportant. I think that's a pretty good price.

If you're working on minor tasks and projects instead of your primary goal, then on some level, you're procrastinating. Ask yourself if those minor tasks are so important as to justify putting off the achievement of your goal? Do you really need to take that phone call or answer that email? Or would you rather be one step closer to your goal?

If you aren't working on your most important goal, how can you even claim to be working?

This hidden procrastination is just one step away from full-blown procrastination, where you actively disengage from doing any seemingly productive work and just mess around instead. You're actually better off taking time off to mess around because then you can't kid yourself that you're working. If you need a break, take a break. There's nothing wrong with that. But when you want to be working, work on your goals. Don't get mired in distractions that only seem like work.

If you aren't working on your goals, you aren't working. You're just wasting time.

Put in the Time

Many goals can be achieved if you simply put in the time. If your goal isn't physically impossible, chances are good that you'll eventually achieve it. You may have a lot to learn, but there's nothing stopping you from learning what you need to learn. Just put in the time, persist, and you'll get there.

For my goal of becoming a raw foodist, most of my time went into education and experimentation. I spent a lot of time reading books and talking to successful raw foodists. I tried lots of different recipes over a period of months to learn what worked best for me. There was no getting around this. I had to invest hundreds of hours to reach my personal tipping point for long-term success. After that the goal was achieved, and I was able to enjoy the benefits day after day.

For my goal of writing a book, most of my time went into thinking -- before I even started writing. Figuring out what kind of book to write took longer than the writing itself. Again, this required hundreds of hours of effort. I actually achieved the tipping point before I started writing the book. Planning the book was incredibly challenging. Writing it was fairly easy.

How many goals have you failed to achieve because you didn't put in the time?

If you throw 200 hours at your #1 goal, could you make a serious dent in it? Very likely you could. Even if you don't know how to achieve the goal, 200 hours of education would take you pretty far. "I don't know how" is a nonsense excuse when there are so many educational resources available these days.

Chunk it Down

If you get clear on your #1 goal, and you let the distractions slide for a bit, then what stops you from putting in the time?

Most likely it's a lack of clarity about what to do next. When you stare at a big goal, it's easy to feel stressed and overwhelmed. This encourages you to procrastinate.

Realize that some feelings of stress are quite normal on a big project. When you're not working, the stress feels negative. But when you're working steadily, mild stress transforms into positive focus. So if you feel a little stress at first, don't worry about it. It will soon become your ally. If you see the stress as something to be avoided, you'll simply fall into the trap of perfectionism.

To achieve a big goal, chunk it down into smaller steps. Don't worry about breaking down the entire project into tiny pieces. Just break off a piece from the front edge. Chunk it down until it's small enough that you have enough clarity to start working on it. Then get to work.

When you've completed all the small pieces in front of you, break off another piece from the new front edge of the project, and chunk it down some more. Then get back to work.

If you have goal-related actions you can complete, then go do them first. Don't worry about chunking down the rest of the project until you need to do so. Don't use over-planning as a means of procrastination.

Very often you'll find that once you get into a good flow of action, the chunking-down takes care of itself. One action flows smoothly into the next. Just get started on any piece of the project, and you'll soon build the momentum to keep going.

No Excuses

It's so easy to make excuses for not working on a big goal. I don't have the clarity I'd like. I'm not as motivated as I should be. I'll just get these little things off my plate first. If you succumb to such excuses, your goal will take 10x longer to achieve -- if you achieve it at all.

All of those excuses will go away if you just say "screw it" and get to work anyway. Start off by tackling some small piece of your goal, and you'll be too busy to hear the excuses. Drown them out with action.

Think of it like this. If you love to drive much faster than the legal speed limit, a part of your consciousness will be preoccupied with the possibility that you may get a speeding ticket. That's always a risk. So while you're driving, part of your mind is preoccupied with looking out for Highway Patrol officers. Even if you aren't consciously aware of this, your subconscious mind will tackle it for you. This means that part of your attention is elsewhere.

However, if you don't speed when you drive, then you needn't worry about getting a speeding ticket. Consequently, the part of your mind that was obsessed with this possibility is free to think about something else. Your attention is no longer divided.

Similarly, when you work on non-priority tasks, your attention is always split. Part of your mind is thinking about what you're doing, and another part is worrying about what you should be doing instead. You're splintering (i.e. lowering) your consciousness when you do this. You aren't fully present.

On the other hand, when you work on one of your key goals, your mind is made whole again. Distracting thoughts normally fade within the first 15 minutes, and now you're 100% focused on the important task at hand. And afterwards you feel great for making progress toward your goal.

Notice that when you work on something that's really important to you, once you get past the first 15 minutes or so, you normally feel wonderful. You feel relaxed and productive. You also feel very present.

However, when you work on unimportant tasks and put off the big ones, you can't consistently reach this state. You feel more stressed and distracted. There's this subtle nagging voice telling you, "This isn't what you need to be doing right now." And it just won't shut up. This leads you to try to drown it with even more distraction and pointless entertainment that leaves you feeling empty. This can lead to a cycle of addiction where you're constantly drugging yourself with daily distractions to avoid feeling so unsettled. You can never cure the problem with this strategy though.

The solution is that you have to start living up to your potential. No more excuses. Set those big goals, and go after them with gusto. This isn't just the right way to live. It's also the way that feels best.

It feels great to look back on a year knowing that you achieved your biggest goals. Who cares if you didn't return every phone call or answer every email? Yes, some people will be bothered by that. So let them be bothered. They probably shouldn't be wasting time calling and emailing you about trivialities anyway. Surely they have more important things to do with their lives as well. :)

Quick Self-Assessment Exercise for New Year's

The first chapter of my book Personal Development for Smart People includes a self-assessment exercise that will help you decide how you'd like to improve your life in 2009.

If you own a copy of the book, you'll find this exercise on page 20. If you don't have the book yet, you must be new here or something... or perhaps just a bit behind the curve. :) Don't worry though. You can still download a Free PDF that includes the intro and first chapter; the exercise can be found on the 17th page of the PDF. You should be able to complete this exercise in about 2 minutes.

This simple exercise will help you bring more truth to your life. Many people find it eye-opening. Just be aware that this is one of those tough love exercises that can shed light on parts of your life where you've gone dark. If you want to live consciously, you can't go dark!

The book makes a great stocking stuffer by the way. You can pick up a copy in most major bookstores, including Barnes and Noble, Borders, and of course Amazon.com. My sister bought 10 copies to give out as gifts. Did I mention what an awesome sister she is? :)
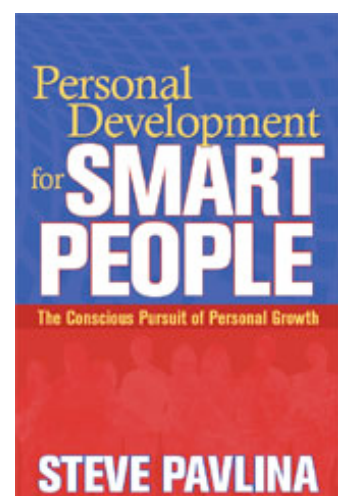
Buy One Get One Free Holiday Promo for Site Build It

Site Build It! is currently offering a **special buy one get one free holiday promotion**. This is their best offer of the year.

This is an extra optional bonus where you can get a second Site Build It! subscription for a friend or relative (or even yourself) for FREE instead of the regular $299 price. And by the way, they price in Canadian dollars, and the U.S. Dollar currently gets a very favorable exchange rate with the Canadian dollar, so this is an even better deal that usual. This comes out to be about $245 USD at today's exchange rate.

This offer is only good until midnight on December 25th, 2008, so if you want to take advantage of it, now is the time to look into this and make a decision. There's a possibility they may extend it (they often end their discounts by about a week), but I can't guarantee they'll do that this time.

SBI sometimes runs other promos like getting a second subscription for $100, but this one is their most generous and popular promo of the year by far. The last time they did this was in 2007.

This is a great deal for couples, since you and your partner can build your own online businesses together, giving yourselves two chances to succeed instead of just one. Additionally, parents have given Site Build It! to their children and vice-versa, as well as friends to friends.

What Is Site Build It?

Site Build It! is a very popular service that helps you build an income-generating website. It includes the education and tools you need as well as hosting for your site.

Be sure to read my full review of Site Build It if you're interested in learning how to make money online with this service.

Personally I don't use SBI... simply because I don't need it. I spent years developing the skills to deliver value to people over the Internet, and I learned how to generate abundant income from my work as well -- without having to do anything scammy or dishonest.

For example, whenever someone signs up for SBI, I earn a commission from the referral. I think this is a very fair way to generate income. It enables me to create and deliver tons of free content (800+ free articles to date), and I'm able to help people start new online businesses without having to personally tutor them (which would be untenable).

I used to try to teach people how to earn income directly from blogging, but for most people the learning curve is way too steep. You can still succeed this way -- obviously many people have -- but you must be dedicated to mastering the creative side, the technical side, and the marketing side. And you'd better have the ability to crank out lots of lots of high-quality, original content. That isn't easy. Most people just can't do it.

SBI is a better approach for people who prefer to focus most of their energies on the creative side, to let someone else handle the technical side, and to get help with the marketing side. With SBI you can generate income from a static website, so you don't have to post fresh content every day or every week like you might do with a blog. It's an easier, gentler model for online business than the typical blogging model.

Generally I find that the people who don't like SBI are the technical wizard types. I think SBI bothers many of them because it automates the technical aspects of building and running an income-generating website. Such people mistakenly assume that technical prowess is the key to making money online. But all too often, they sit on the sidelines ruminating about their impressive but not yet implemented ideas. Meanwhile, people with little or no technical skill go sign up for SBI, and within months they're making money.

This really irks the technical types to no end. They figure that since they're so smart, they should be able to make money online, and (in a somewhat elitist fashion) the non-technical types should have a much harder time with it. But the truth is that when you're dealing with a content-based website, you can often provide more value to people with your creativity and your writing skills than with your technical knowledge and programming skills.

StevePavlina.com isn't exactly a technical marvel. I have the technical skills to create a much snazzier site if I wanted to. But the value is in the content, so that's what I focus on. Remember that I used to design and program computer games for many years. But I do much better financially by leveraging my writing and communications skills than I ever did by harnessing my programming talent.

You see... the real value is in the content you create. The underlying technology doesn't matter so much... as long as it gets the job done. When the technology really works, you usually don't even notice it.

Creating and Delivering Value

I love that SBI is committed to providing real value with their service. They provide the education and the technical infrastructure you need to build a successful online business. Their business model is rooted in your continued success, so you'll keep renewing year after year.

Moreover, SBI teaches you how to CREATE and DELIVER genuine value as well. You'll learn to build websites that provides beneficial and useful content for your visitors.

When you use SBI, you still have to CREATE the value, but SBI will give you the tools to DELIVER that value and to generate INCOME from it. This greatly simplifies things. If you can handle creative work but dislike dealing with technical details -- if you can come up with cool content ideas but get stuck on the "how to" implementation part -- then SBI would be a great fit for you.

Centering your business around CREATING and DELIVERING value works really well. If you can focus on CREATING and

DELIVERING value, whether you use SBI or not, the money will follow. I've been doing my best to hold this mindset for several years, and it works well even during a major recession. Suffice it to say I'm in no need of a government bailout. :)

Getting Started

If Site Build It! sounds interesting to you, a good place to start is to watch their video tour.

Then you may want to read my full review.

After that you may want to poke around the SBI website.

And finally I recommend you read my Site Build It! Walkthrough.

I've written tons about this service already, so the above articles will give you a solid overview.

If you have any questions about SBI though, please submit them via their questions form. Your questions will be answered by an actual SBI customer.

Once you get a good cash flow going with your SBI site, you can either keep it and enjoy the ongoing passive income stream... or sell it and cash out. Personally I'm not into flipping websites, but many people enjoy building and flipping income-generating websites for profit. Some people built several SBI sites this year and then sold them for a nice profit. Apparently it works much better than flipping houses these days. :)

Just remember that the holiday two-for-one bonus offer is only good until midnight on December 25th, 2008, so you have a few days left to decide if you want to take advantage of it. Again, there's a possibility they may extend it for about a week -- if they do, you'll see the extension notice on their website around the 25th.

If you signed up for SBI when I wrote about it earlier this year and used their service to build your site, most likely you're already enjoying a positive cash flow from your site. But just in case you didn't have the foresight to do that, here it is again. :)

Until next time, live consciously! And Happy Holidays too!

-Steve

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