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## Have You Set Your Goals for 2012 Yet? If Not, How Is It Holding Back Your Career?

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Every December or January, most of us reflect on the previous year and think of ways to start fresh and consider new approaches with great intention. Some of us write down these thoughts, some create mental checklists, and some do neither forgetting all about them within weeks. A number of years ago, I made a commitment to block out three hours the first Friday of every December dedicated to setting my goals for the following year in addition to revisiting the previous year—reviewing, reevaluating and adjusting as necessary — and I start the new year with incredible focus and determination. We all need to **have a mission for our career and specific goals we want to accomplish — personally and professionally.** Without a plan, we do not have direction or criteria for accountability. I believe the key to one's success lies in our ability to empower ourselves to take charge of our careers—putting ourselves in the driver's seat rather than sitting in the back going along for the ride.

"In absence of clearly defined goals, we become strangely loyal to performing daily acts of trivia." — *Author unknown*

### Successful Professionals have three commonalities:

1. Know their value add—what they have to offer
2. Know what they want—goal oriented
3. Know how to ask for it!

Annual goal setting will allow you to achieve the following outcomes:

- Mission for your career
- Specific goals you want to accomplish both personally and professionally
- Plan with direction for execution
- Criteria for accountability

The following five-step process can help you stay on target and achieve the kind of success you envision for yourself. It will enable you to drive your career in the direction you aspire to as well as to be open to unexpected opportunities exploring new paths and directions.

### Step 1: Identify Vision, Mission and Values

- Vision – current and future
- Mission – existing and ideal
- Core Values – what matters most

### Step 2: Create SMART Goals

**Specific** – precise and quantifiable rather than vague

**Measurable** – appropriate metrics to qualify success

**Attainable** – realistic, challenging and achievable

**Results-Oriented** – focus on desired outcomes



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**Step 3: Develop Goal Setting Process**

- Short term goals – 1 to 3 years
- Long term goals – 3 to 5 years
- Realistic obstacles and challenges
- Execution strategy – what, how and when
- Follow up plan to review and evaluate

**Step 4: Determine Commitment**

- Identify written personal/professional goals
- Reach out to others for help and support
- Gain cooperation from others involved
- Commit to staying focused and true to yourself, live more intentional life

**Step 5: Maintain Accountability**

- Revisit, reassess and reevaluate goals on a regular basis
- Make adjustments as appropriate
- Continue to formulate process of setting your personal and professional goals

If you reflect on 2011, were there missed opportunities as a result of not having set goals for the year? Did you hold back your career by not identifying specific goals that you wrote down and reviewed monthly for progress? A few years ago, there was a **Harvard Business School Study** that researched their graduates over a 30-year period and found that **written goals can translate into earnings of 10 times more** than those who fail to establish goals or put their goals in writing! Another study conducted by **Dominican University** over a period of a month (on short-term goals) concluded that those who wrote down their goals with specific action steps and follow up fully **realized their goals at a rate of 50% more** than those who did not.

"Our goals can only be reached through a vehicle of a plan, in which we must fervently believe, and upon which we must vigorously act. There is no other route to success." — *Pablo Picasso*

As you begin 2012, establishing your goals is an effective way to clarify your vision and set the stage for success. It takes resilience and commitment to stay true to ourselves. Organizations strive to attract the right mix of talent, develop them and keep them engaged to fulfill their business goals and objectives. Each individual can have a plan that empowers themselves to take charge of their careers and ensures alignment within organizational and functional goals. Enjoy the process, set yourself apart and push yourself out of your comfort zone as you kick off the year 2012!!!

*Rita Allen is the President of Rita B. Allen Associates, a provider of career management/talent management consulting and coaching services located in Waltham at [www.ritaballenassociates.com](http://www.ritaballenassociates.com) and the President of ACPI – NE (Association of Career Professionals International – New England), a strategic partner of NEHRA, [www.acpi-ne.org](http://www.acpi-ne.org).*

