

SETTING GOALS FOR 2018?

FIRST, TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO BE PROUD OF ALL YOU DID IN 2017

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ARE you thinking about your goals for 2018? Whether or not you believe in traditional New Year's resolutions, I'm willing to bet you've already put some thought into what you hope to accomplish this coming year.

That's great – but before you set out to fulfil your next ambitions, you must take a little time to celebrate what you've achieved this year.

Imagine that you work at a job you love, but your boss is hard to please. Every week, your boss sets goals for you to achieve.

Some of these are easy goals and some are stretch goals. There are lots of them, covering every aspect of your job.

You do your best, achieving some, partially achieving others, and completely making no progress at all on a few of them.

But no matter how well you do, every Monday morning, you arrive to find a new list of goals.

Sometimes your boss complains about the tasks you didn't finish. But he or she never says a word about the objectives you did reach.

How motivated would you be to keep trying your best for that hard-to-please boss?

How long would it take before you went looking for a different job where you could report to someone else?

If you're like most people (including me), that boss is you. You set yourself lots of ambitious goals, and yell at yourself when you fail to meet your own challenges.

But you hardly ever stop and praise yourself for the things you did right.

The problem is that, like any good employee, you will lose patience if you never get rewarded or

even acknowledged for the things you did right and the level of effort you put in.

If you never hear a word of praise, you may even get discouraged and quit trying.

So let's fix that right now.

For the past couple of years, I've been working with best-selling author and executive coach Wendy Capland, and writing about the process.

She helped me set some goals of my own for 2017 and, before I start that process again for 2018, she asked me to review those goals and report on the progress I'd made in the past year.

It was an enlightening exercise – since I tend to focus on what I haven't accomplished.

I bet it will be for you too. It's a very worthwhile exercise.

1 REVIEW YOUR GOALS FOR THE PAST YEAR

Start by looking at the goals you set yourself for 2017. If you wrote them down, which I hope you did, pull out that paper or open that file and look at the list.

If you didn't set goals for last year, you can still do this exercise – just skip straight to the next step.

Write down the ones that you accomplished or partly accomplished.

One of my goals was to sell a book and, while I didn't quite do that, I did complete a book proposal.

Don't write down the ones you didn't do – you can review those later on when you set this year's objectives.

For now, we're only focusing on what you have done.

2 ADD YOUR OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Chances are, you had some accomplishments last year that were not part of your original goals.

An opportunity arose, or a need, and you met it by achieving something you hadn't originally planned. Write those successes down, too.

3 INCLUDE SOME NON-WORK ACHIEVEMENTS

Your goal-setting should include both professional and personal goals, and your list of accomplishments should too.

For example, after putting a picture of a person walking through a forest of giant, moss-covered trees on my vision board at the beginning of last year, I started hiking regularly, and later finished a 16-kilometre hike in good shape.

After many months of research, I bought an electric car.

And after years of thinking that I wanted to get back on horseback, I began riding again last summer.

What non-work accomplishments did you complete last year? Write those down as well.

4 WRITE DOWN HOW IT MADE A DIFFERENCE

Now, for each of those accomplishments, write down how it changed things.

How did the progress you made on this goal benefit you, further your career, or improve the lives of people around you?

Even if your efforts failed – for instance you created a wonderful new product but it didn't sell – you likely drew valuable lessons from the experience or found other ways to use the new skills you acquired.

Now for each of the things you accomplished or even partly accomplished, write a sentence that begins: "I am proud of myself because..." Go ahead.

No one will ever read it unless you want them to.

5 HAVE A CELEBRATION

If you had a good boss, he or she would plan for some sort of team celebration – an evening out or a special award or something – to commemorate a project completed or a job well done.

So you do the same. Have a celebration, public or private, to mark the accomplishments that you completed in 2017.

If you're like most people, you set yourself lots of ambitious goals, and yell at yourself when you fail to meet your own challenges. But you hardly ever stop and praise yourself for the things you did right.

What you do to celebrate is up to you. It could be an evening alone at the movies (often a favourite of mine), or one spent binge-watching your favourite television series.

It could be taking your spouse out to a fancy meal or riding the Ferris wheel at your favourite amusement park or taking a belly dancing lesson.

The only rule is that it should be something that you choose for yourself, and that you truly enjoy.

This doesn't mean you will forget about the goals you didn't accomplish, or the many things you still have to do before you reach your dreams. You will turn your attention to those objectives soon enough.

But you'll improve your odds of getting there – and you'll be happier along the way – if you stop first and give yourself credit for all you've already done.

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