



## Live Your Strengths

Welcome to the February 2009 edition of *Live Your Strengths*, the monthly e-newsletter from In Search of Excellence.

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### ***What Do You Need to Let Go Of?***

As I write this newsletter, we are moving through February and the snow is still piling up outside. As an avid gardener, this is the time of year when I typically look longingly through beautiful seed catalogues and plan out what treasures will get planted in my gardens when the snow disappears in the spring.

This year is different however. I will not be asking my husband to plow up an even bigger part of our property to add more flowers, fruits or vegetables. In fact, last fall we decided to turn the majority of our already much-too-large vegetable garden back to grass.

The reason for this change of heart? *Shifting priorities*. As a new parent who is also busily self-employed, I have decided that for this year (and maybe a few years to come) my gardening passion will have to take a back seat to the other priorities in my life – namely my business, my family, and my sanity!

This month's newsletter will be talking about goal setting and the importance of developing plans. One of the key parts to any successful goal-setting endeavour is figuring out how to make time and space to achieve the goal. So often what happens is that a new goal is added to our already too-full list of 'things to do' and instead of being a motivating challenge, it simply feels like a heavy burden.

As you assess your list of goals for the year – whether they are your 2009 resolutions, or goals you may be setting for a new job you are starting – take some time to also figure out *what you need to let go of*. What goals are no longer motivating to you? What activities are no longer value-added? And maybe the hardest question: what activities do you still find enjoyable and worthwhile, but are now lower on your list of priorities?

Especially in these times of economic uncertainty – when most of us will feel the push to do more with less – the need becomes even greater for us to pare back to our core activities and key priorities and avoid the temptation to try to do everything.

Focus on your strengths, passions and unique talents and cut anything that you don't feel is a key priority from your life. As the saying goes, "You can have it all, jut not all at once!"

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### ***Coaching New Employees to Success (Part 4)***

This month's newsletter will conclude the 4-part series about how to take a 'coach approach' to

transitioning new employees into their jobs. The final step in making a smooth transition is to develop key priorities and set goals for the future.

Using all the information you have learned about the new employee's strengths, passions and unique talents, as well as an understanding of the real purpose of the position, take some time to map out clear goals with the new employee.

What does he/she most want to accomplish in his/her time in this job? What are the key activities that would most contribute to the organization's mission and vision? From this information, develop a \*limited\* number of key priorities for the upcoming year and turn them into SMART goals (see the Monthly Challenge below for more information on setting SMART goals).

Once the employee has created a clearly-stated goal, break it down into smaller pieces to develop an action plan. For example, if the goal will take a year to accomplish, what will he/she need to do in each quarter or in each month to ensure the goal is completed on time?

Having this clearly articulated action plan will also assist in providing accountability for the new employee. Providing feedback and accountability are two of the most important ingredients for the manager-as-coach. It is also a good idea to discuss up-front what form these accountability and feedback channels will take.

Will you meet weekly/monthly/quarterly to get updates on the employee's progress? What, if any, documentation/reports would be helpful in assessing progress along the way? These arrangements may be different for each employee depending on the nature of the position and the scope of the goals – there is no one 'right' way. The important thing is that both the employee and the manager are clear about what is expected.

For more resources to help in the goal setting and action-planning phase, take part in this month's *Live Your Strengths* Challenge: Goal Setting 101.

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### **Monthly Challenge: Goal Setting 101**

When beginning to set work-related goals, I have found it helpful to begin with the end in mind:

- By the time you are ready to move on from your current position, what would you like to have accomplished?
- After you leave the job, what would you like people to say about what you accomplished and the way you did it?

These questions will not only help you to clarify the goals you want to accomplish, but also the manner in which you wish to engage with your colleagues – what are the values you want to live by and the legacy you want to create?

We know that the most successful goals have a few things in common – they tend to be **Specific**, **Measurable**, **Action-oriented**, **Realistic** and **Time-based**, or SMART. Once you have created your goals, ensure they meet the SMART test:

- **Specific** – The goal should address questions such as Who? What? Where? Why? How? By When?
- **Measurable** – The goal should address questions such as How Much? How Many? How will I know when the goal has been accomplished?
- **Action-oriented** – The goal should be based on concrete action, not wishful thinking.
- **Realistic** – The goal must represent an objective toward which you are both willing and *able* to work.
- **Time-based** – There should be a clear end-date by which the goal must be completed,

as well as milestones along the way to measure progress.

Once you have your SMART goals defined, there are a few more questions you should consider to increase your chances of successfully achieving your goals:

- Which of your current activities (if any) do you need to let go of to give yourself time to focus on these new goals?
- What additional resources (for example, time, money, or training) will be necessary?
- Who do you need to talk to about these plans?

Could you use some guidance to achieve your goals? Call Denise for a free 30-minute coaching session to make 2009 your best year yet!

Cheers,  
Denise Cornfield-Furlong  
In Search of Excellence  
[www.insearchofexcellence.ca](http://www.insearchofexcellence.ca)  
Tel: 519.923.9968  
Fax: 519.923.9997  
"Creating the Path to Your Potential"

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In Search of Excellence  
RR#1 Proton Station, ON N0C 1L0  
Email:  
[denise@InSearchofExcellence.ca](mailto:denise@InSearchofExcellence.ca)  
Phone: (519) 923-9968

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