



Live Your Strengths

Welcome to the January 2010 edition of *Live Your Strengths*, the monthly e-newsletter from In Search of Excellence.

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Skip the New Year's Resolutions and Focus on Your Passions

At this time of year, many of us are tempted to make New Year's resolutions about things we want to improve in our lives over the coming months. However, often these resolutions are not about things we care much about – they tend to be the “shoulds” in our lives, rather than the goals that we could really be passionate about. So it's not surprising that most of these resolutions have been forgotten by the end of January.

I am certainly not saying that goal setting is a waste of time; in fact if done properly, goals and the action plans needed to achieve them can make huge improvements in the quality of our lives. What I am saying is that we need to give ourselves permission to work on the areas of our lives that hold the most interest for us and put aside many of the things we feel we “should” be doing.

A fun way to try to separate the “should” goals from the “want-to” goals is to think ahead to this time next year and try a visualization exercise. Imagine that by January 2011 you will have achieved (or at least started on the path to achieving) the goals that are most compelling to you right now. What are those things you would like to get started working towards?

Write yourself a letter – as if you were writing to a friend – describing what you have been able to achieve in 2010 and why those things were so important to you. Discuss in as much detail as possible what you have done and why it was so rewarding to work towards these dreams.

By approaching the future in this manner, you are not only creating a list of tangible goals to work towards, you are also creating your list of compelling reasons why these goals are so important to you. These ideas may serve as powerful motivators throughout the year as you encounter times when motivation levels decrease. You may also find that you will be a little more realistic about what can be accomplished because you have given yourself a timeframe of one year to work within.

Of course, just writing this letter will not make these goals magically happen – you will still need to do the work (see the *Monthly Challenge* below about converting this letter into a realistic and tangible action plan). However, knowing exactly what you want – and why you are passionate about achieving that goal – is half the battle to being successful.

If you have done this exercise as honestly as possible (and ignored the little voice in your head saying, ‘yes, but you should do ____’), you will find that you have a letter that makes your heart

beat a little faster when you read it. As you think about the dreams you describe in this letter, you will feel a surge of restlessness as you can't wait to get started working on these things. If you haven't reached that point when you read over your letter, go back and try again.

Wouldn't it be great to have a year where you get out of bed each morning with a feeling of purpose and passion for the dreams you are pursuing? This year, make the goals you work towards all about what *you* most desire.

Are you ready to start working toward your goals? Join me in this month's *Live Your Strengths* Challenge (see below).

Start 2010 With A Focus On Success!

You asked... we listened:

You want to focus on planning your achievements for 2010 in a way that is totally convenient and efficient. No traffic, no weather hassles, and the least amount of time away from your work. Well here it is: Our Success 2010 Teleclass Series.

You can enjoy a mug of hot chocolate in the comfort of your home or office while intelligently focusing on your future achievements! For your convenience we will meet over the phone (no fancy technological tools necessary!), allowing us to concentrate on your goals for 2010 and how to most effectively achieve them.

With a maximum of 10 participants, there will be room for learning, celebration and participation!

Classes #1&2: Goal Setting

- Master effective goal setting
- Document important goals and the relevant measures of success
- Define expected results when goals are kept alive and relevant

Classes #3&4: Personal Productivity

- Distinguish between essential and time-critical tasks
- Tips for avoiding procrastination
- Deal with interruptions productively

Class Dates for 2010:

Class 1: Monday January 25

Class 2: Monday February 8

Class 3: Monday February 22

Class 4: Monday March 8

All classes will take place from 12:00pm to 1:30pm EST. Toll-free number to be supplied upon registration.

Your investment for the series (including all materials, toll-free access to the teleclass, and hot cocoa) is just \$199 per person!

There will be a maximum of 10 participants per class - please register early to avoid

disappointment!

For more information or to register, contact Denise at 519-923-9968 or denise@insearchofexcellence.ca by **January 15, 2010**.

Live Your Strengths Monthly Challenge: Putting Action in Your Goals

Once you have created your letter with the list of passions you want to work toward in 2010, it's time to turn that list of dreams into a feasible action plan.

We know that the most successful goals have a few things in common – they tend to be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Realistic and Time-based). Are your goals:

- 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 could 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?

Once you have a clearly-stated goal, break it down into smaller pieces to develop your action plan. For example, if one of your big goals will take 5 years to accomplish, what will you need to do in each year? Lay out a clear plan for Year-1, Year-2, Year-3, Year-4 and Year-5.

Next, look at just the activities you would need to work on this year and repeat this process: to achieve each of your 2010 goals, what will you need to do in each quarter/month to be successful?

To be a very effective plan, your monthly/quarterly goals should be broken down into the smallest possible weekly or daily steps: for example, one step may be as simple as making a call to someone next week about pricing, or doing one hour of internet research.

Once people have a clear vision of what they want to achieve, the two major factors that prevent them from being successful are:

- 1) Not knowing exactly what step to take next
- 2) Fear of failure because the action required seems too large

By breaking down your goals using the method above, you will avoid both of these problems!

Could you use some guidance to achieve your goals? Call Denise for a free 30-minute coaching session to make 2010 your best year yet!

Cheers,
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"Creating the Path to Your Potential"

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