

BE IT RESOLVED

BY ROBERT M. GIGNAC

As the clock ticked over to start 2010 we are once again on the verge of two new periods of time—both a new year and a new decade. I'd like to drag your thoughts back to January 1, 2000 for a moment, if I may. I suspect many of us started that year and decade off with a laundry list of resolutions about things we were going to: a) do more of, or b) do less of.

Life has a funny way of intruding on our plans—think of all the things that occurred in the past decade that we had no idea were coming our way. After all, at the start of the last decade I had no idea I'd spend the last six years living in Europe. Life happens. So what about your plans for this first year of this new decade? You have some, right?

Many of us refer to them as our “New Year’s Resolutions” but I am always surprised when we do not refer to them as our “New Year’s Goals”. I suspect I know why. With resolutions, when we do not achieve them, we have simply “broken” our resolutions. If we call them goals, and we do not achieve them, then we have “failed”. It is easier to tell ourselves: “it was just a resolution, no big deal”. Since resolutions do not carry the emotional baggage of “goals”, it is easier to live with ourselves when we don’t accomplish them. That said, how are you doing so far for 2010? Crossed some off your list? Working on others? Deposited your list in the recycle bin so it can’t torment you anymore? Perhaps waiting for New Year’s Eve 2010 to start the process again?

A new decade is a special time—a clean 10-year period to plan our future accomplishments. While resolutions tend to focus only on the year at hand, what I am suggesting for the start of this new decade is that we develop a series of short-, mid-, and long-term goals and by writing them down, we’ve already taken the first step toward accomplishing them. Many people fear that once they write a goal down they are stuck with it, as if they had chiselled it into a granite tablet. Somehow it eludes us that goals are flexible and can change with the passage of time or with the completion of other goals on the list. Sometimes we change them, sometimes life changes them for us.

I know what you’re thinking. Short-term? Mid-term? Long-term? Schmong-term? Why all these terms? Can’t you just have some goals and leave it at that?

The goal (I know, bad pun) is to make the process more manageable and easier to focus on. Short-term goals are the present, perhaps a 3 to 12 month window. Mid-term goals

move your horizon out a little further, focusing on a 2 to 5 year timeframe. Finally, your long-term goals can go out as far as 10, 15, even 20 years, or more. It’s okay to dream a little bit at this level, so be creative; the pictures will become clearer as the process starts and as your time frame changes. Remember, there are no limitations on the setting of goals at any stage in your life.

The process is a flow; the first step is to set goals. Second, we go off and pursue them, doing whatever activities need to be done to accomplish them. Then at some predefined point—perhaps the first day of every month or quarterly—we review what we have accomplished and map it against our goals. What did we learn? How are we doing? Once we know where we are, we can cross off what we have accomplished or make adjustments, if required. We then generate new goals to replace the completed goals and the cycle starts all over again.

So why don’t more people do this? My personal belief is that people don’t understand that there is no such thing as a right or wrong goal. The fear of failure keeps us from writing them down; resolutions, after all, are things we verbally tell our friends. When it comes to goals, if we write them down, we share them and then when we don’t attain them, somehow we have failed. It’s not a failure to attempt to do something and not achieve it; the failure comes in not making the attempt in the first place.

Just because you create goals on paper doesn’t mean you’ll accomplish them all. Don’t kid yourself; it takes work. Far too many people associate the word ‘work’ with the word ‘hard’ and, to be frank, that might just be what stops people from beginning the process.

We have a brand new decade ahead of us—and when we look back at it ten years from now the decade will have passed by, regardless of our choice to set our goals and to navigate a path of our own design. As the clock rolls over on December 31, my goal is to clink a glass and say, “Be it resolved that this is the start of a great year of a great decade!”

I wish the same for all of you. **E**

Robert Gignac is the owner of Taynac & Associates (now in year five of a two-year assignment in Switzerland), providing keynote presentations, seminars, and workshops on personal financial development and motivation. He is the co-author of the Canadian best seller “Rich is a State of Mind” (6th printing) and the author of the US edition of the same title. Sample chapter and reviews at: www.richisastateofmind.com. To book Robert to speak at your next corporate or organization event, please contact him at: rgignac@taynac.com or www.taynac.com.