



# TURNING RESOLUTIONS INTO GOALS

by Robert M. Gignac

As the winter weather starts to draw to a close (we can only hope...) and our thoughts turn to spring, I would like to drag your thoughts back to January 1, 2006 for a moment, if I may. I suspect many of you—achievers, readers of this magazine—started this year with a laundry list of resolutions about things you were going to: a) do more of, or b) do less of.

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”. Since they do not carry the emotional baggage of “goals”, it is easier to live with ourselves when we do not accomplish them. That said, how are you doing so far for 2006? Crossed some off your list? Working on others? Tossed the list away so they cannot torment you? Waiting for New Year’s Eve 2006 to start the process again? Perhaps we simply need “SMARTer” resolutions.

The acronym “**SMART**” is often used to define our goals—why not our resolutions? For those of you not familiar with the process, it goes like this:

**S is for Specific.** For a resolution to be a ‘good’ one, it has to be specific. You want to be rich? Lose weight? More sales contacts? These are not resolutions, they are simply statements. How much/how many? Define it. We are often afraid to be specific, fearing that others will pass judgment.

**M is for Measurable.** Yes, I know that there are some things that are just not measurable, in that case, substitute ‘assessable’. Just keep in mind that measuring is how we determine if we are making forward progress.

**A is for Achievable.** People will not pursue anything for very long if there is no hope of achieving it. Some people like

to substitute ‘aggressive’ for achievable—that is fine with me. Aggressive requires you to stretch; stretching is good, but setting yourself up for failure is not. Remember, that fear is a major reason why people refuse to set goals in the first place.

**R is for Realistic.** There must be a sense of realism to the resolutions, or you are setting yourself up to fail. If your resolution is to earn one million dollars, that could be a very realistic goal for you. If you are earning \$75,000 today, and you say your time frame is only 18 months, it becomes less realistic, which leads to the last part.

**T is for Time-based.** Some use time-boxed, time-defined—feel free to take your pick. You can have open-ended resolutions, but they can be difficult to quantify. “T” answers the question: by when? Without a time frame, the resolution is less serious; applying a time frame makes it more than simply a wish.

So call them goals, or call them resolutions, why don’t more people make them (and then achieve them)? I believe that many people do not understand that there is no such thing as a right or wrong goal. Then fear of failure keeps us from writing them down. If we tell someone our goals and we do not attain them, then somehow we have failed. It is not a failure to attempt something and not achieve it; the failure comes in not making the attempt in the first place.

I know it sounds really easy when reading this page, but don’t kid yourself, it takes hard work. So as we focus on the remaining months of 2006, resolve to turn your resolutions into goals, be SMART about them, and you will find it can be a fun and rewarding process, not to mention valuable for your business. I am two-fifths of the way toward completing one of mine right now: “Complete all five Enterprise articles for 2006 ahead of editorial deadline”. Check! **E**

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