

# YOUR “TABULA RASA”

BY ROBERT M. GIGNAC

Welcome to the New Year! As we strive to start 2007 with a sense of renewed optimism and a fresh set of resolutions, the concept of planning your year with a “tabula rasa” or “blank slate” (if your Latin isn’t what it should be) is an excellent place to start.

As I am going through the process myself right now, let me explain. On a large whiteboard in my office I have listed four large topic areas: 1) My Current Reality, 2) My Richly Imagined Future, 3) My Disruptions, and 4) My Choices.

My Current Reality contains the things I am carrying forward into 2007—business projects, proposals, and personal development items—the things that I am actively engaged in that I will continue to pursue this year. I don’t list the things that no longer inspire me, the things where I said, “I’ll try to get to this...” last year, and know that I won’t this year. Don’t carry the negative baggage with you as it will only slow you down, clutter your mind, and take your focus off of what you want to accomplish this year.

My Richly Imagined Future contains a collage of things that I want to achieve for the upcoming year—not in words, in pictures. I am a strong believer that images often inspire people more than words, so if you truly want something badly enough, find the picture to add to this area. Collect images from magazines, websites, catalogues, or simply take your own picture. If you want to obtain a new house, a new car, a better physical body, better relationship with your significant other, pictures of what you are working toward will inspire you more than the words will.

My Disruptors is a list of things that I will strive to do differently this year, the “bad habits” that I will break, the “aimless time wasters” that I will cut back on (I’m realistic enough to realize I won’t stop everything “cold turkey” all at once). As I add items to this list, I am reminded of the phrase, “If you want to keep getting what you are getting, keep on doing what you are doing”. The principle is that you have to do something different in order to achieve something different. Sound simple? It’s not. Any change can be challenging; changing our behaviour is even harder.

Why does the average person break almost all of their resolutions by the end of January? First, they never really intended to carry through on them, but it sounded good to write them down so they could say they had some resolutions. Second, because they discovered pretty quickly that in order to achieve them, they had to change their behaviour. And it was just too

easy to keep doing what they were doing, rather than facing the pain of changing. That type of behaviour doesn’t cut it for readers of Enterprise magazine, right?

My Choices is the list of decisions that I have to make for the coming year in order to achieve the items listed as part of My Richly Imagined Future. Choices such as, learning more French to be able to converse fluently here in Switzerland, what books I am going to read to expand my knowledge, what courses/seminars I will attend in order to develop new skills and to refine current ones. Notice the language choices here: “I am going to read”, not “I’d like to read”; and “I will attend”, not “I wish I could attend”. Make your choices definite and concrete, and by doing so, increase your commitment to them.

Please keep in mind that this is a dynamic process—it’s not something you do in January and then put it away to be forgotten until next year. It’s a process of ongoing evaluation and renewal. If something that inspired you in January doesn’t do it for you anymore come May, drop it off the list. The acquisition of any new skill that was part of your “choices” area may develop or require a new image for your “future” area—find the picture and add it.

What I continually try to do (I say “try”, I’m realistic enough to admit that I don’t have this “perfected” yet—it’s a process, much like myself, a work in progress) is take a picture of the board on the first day of every month and save them in a folder on my computer. That way I can track the progress and examine the changes to the board throughout the year. I’ll never remember in November what it looked like in April, but the photos will.

The start of a new year is a great time to begin a new process, try something different, “blow up” an old way of behaving. Create an image for your future that is so real when you close your eyes you can already imagine yourself being there. Ultimately, everything we accomplish comes down to the choices we make. Fill up your “tabula rasa” with choices that will inspire you and move you forward.

Wishing you great things for 2007! **E**

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