

## Fatal Flaws of Goal Setting

By Jessika M. Ferm

The start of the new year traditionally brings out resolutions and promises for a better or different year ahead. Make sure you avoid these "**Fatal Flaws of Goal Setting**" to make this year's resolutions a reality.

**Fatal Flaw 1: Goals are Not in Writing:** It seems obvious that we should write down our goals, but most of us don't. Or maybe we don't think it really matters. The truth is it makes a big difference. In sales, research shows that having written goals (personal and professional) is one of the top distinguishing factors between average and top sales performers. This year, avoid this fatal flaw by writing out your goals. Place the written list where you can easily refer to it and begin outlining steps for accomplishing each goal.

**Fatal Flaw 2: Goals are Not Connected to a Theme:** One of the biggest challenges with goal setting is remembering what the goals are even if we refer to our written statements. By creating a "theme" or "slogan" for the year, it is much easier to keep the mind and activities focused on reaching the goal. Once you have your goals in writing, a natural theme is likely to emerge. Identify it in writing and put a Post It note somewhere handy. For example, the theme may look something like: "Work smarter, make more," or "Balance," or to borrow Nike's famous slogan "Just Do It." If you are a visual person, you may want to

consider a vision board made up of pictures that speak to you. The key is to jog your memory about your goals.

**Fatal Flaw 3: Goals are Not S.M.A.R.T.:**

The acronym S.M.A.R.T. stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timed. Once your goals are in writing, check to make sure they are articulated using the acronym. For example, is the goal specific enough? Can you measure it? Is it attainable in the time frame you have set? Is it relevant to your other goals or life plans? Does it have a timed start and ending? A non-S.M.A.R.T. goal may look like this: "Lose weight." The S.M.A.R.T. version of the same goal may look like this: "Lose four pounds in three weeks starting on January 21."

**Fatal Flaw 4: Goals are Not Celebrated:**

It is difficult to keep the momentum going and execute on even the most exciting of goals. A University of Scranton study showed that almost half of Americans fail to follow through on their New Year's resolutions after six months. Celebrating accomplishments and goals met keeps the momentum going. This becomes especially important over time, when we are likely to lose our way and revert to old habits. After each major goal, write down how you will celebrate. Avoid over-indulging and set small attainable celebrations. If this is the year where you commit to

setting aside a certain amount in your 401K, avoid a celebration that involves spending a lot of money and consider an annual subscription to Money magazine to keep the momentum going. If your goal is to lose weight, celebrate your goal attainment by cooking a healthy dinner for friends or family, encouraging them to support you and your goals as you keep at it.

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