Goal Setting Packet

A hand-picked selection of Self-Development columns from the archives of *Uncommon Sense.*

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I. Some Thoughts on Goal Setting (12/26/2011)

Goal setting is an exercise that occurs for many driven, enterprising individuals at about this time of year. Christmas is behind us. A new year looms on the horizon. And people like those who read *Uncommon Sense* tend to formulate aspirations - also known as goals.

Goal setting is the method self-starters use to augment their lives. This cannot be overstated. Virtually all progress, with the exception of those rare "happy accidents," occur because someone set a goal. For examples of a grand magnitude, the putting a man on the moon was the result of a goal, as was the building of the great pyramids of Egypt, as was the erection of the Great Wall of China. Most people elected to high office (exceptions would include Gerald Ford, Harry Truman, and Theodore Roosevelt who attained the presidency through circumstances beyond their control) do so as the result of a goal. And most of our accomplishments in life, be they mundane or stellar, are also the result of a goal.

Goal setting can occur in any dimension of our life, be it physical, mental, social, emotional, economic, aesthetic, or spiritual. And while some people set goals in all dimensions of their life, other people opt to concentrate on only one area, or perhaps on a few (though not all) areas of their life.

Goal setting is often focused on strict, quantifiable objectives that are easily measured. Success or failure in such settings is unambiguous. If you set a goal to run a 7- minute mile, you know whether you achieved that goal. Anything over 7 minutes means failure to reach that goal - even if it was merely one second over. Anything at 7 minutes exactly or faster spells success. It's black and white.

Some goal setting may involve objectives that are not easily quantifiable. I once met a colleague who confided to me that he had set a goal to be happier. Admittedly, he may simply have to rely on his internal sense of what constitutes happiness in order to determine whether he has achieved his goal at some future point in time. Unlike the objective measurements of running a 7-minute mile, my colleague will have to turn to subjective impressions to ascertain his success or failure in the attainment of this goal, and his assessments will necessarily lack the precision of the more quantifiable goals.

Goals can be thought of as an attempt at achievement in the form of a project. And the achievements are almost always something that takes extra effort and focus. Thus, a student of the martial arts, for example, can set a goal to advance to the next belt (or rank) in her particular discipline. To do so, she will have to practice the various self-defense techniques with regularity, she will have to attend her lessons prepared to demonstrate competency, she may have to master some katas (i.e., choreographed self-defense forms that can go on for several minutes and can be quite intricate.) It

may take dedicated focus over several months to advance to the next belt. The same could be said for a guitarist who wishes to be skilled enough to perform in a recital. The student of the guitar will have to practice scales, chords, strumming, picking, and other techniques. In addition, the guitarist will have to build up a repertoire of songs that he can, over time, master to a "concert-ready" proficiency. Then a date and a venue will have to be secured.

Notice that in both examples above, the overarching goal is comprised of many tasks that must be accomplished. Indeed, attaining one's goals can keep one busy.

There is no particular rule that says your goals must be set with a one-year time-frame in mind. The time-frame is important to consider, as setting a deadline can spur effort. But the exact duration of such time-frames should be dictated by a variety of factors, including the difficulty of the goal, and with a consideration of what else is going on in one's life at the time. Deadlines should challenge, but should be realistic.

Likewise, the number of goals set should be given careful thought. Consideration of how much one person can handle for a given window of time is paramount in the successful accomplishment of goals.

Your goals should be written, and stated in language that is elegant and commanding. You should review your written goals regularly and determine what needs to be done next, on a micro-level, to bring you closer to the attainment of your goal.

Finally, you should set goals that galvanize you. The goals should stir something within you, call it motivation, yearning, drive, determination, or passion. Whatever the goal, it should fan the flame of ambition and cause you to relish life.

And always remember: while the attainment of your goals is strongly preferred, and one should never be satisfied with failure, I should hasten to point out that even missing the mark by a bit can still mean progress in your life has been accomplished. In other words, it is far better to set a goal, miss the mark a bit, but reap the benefits of the effort involved, than it is to never set any goals on the grounds that you will have never actually failed. Such a mindset betrays a deep-seated failure, for as Stephen Covey once said to me personally, "The greatest risk in life is not risk, per se; the greatest risk in life is never to have taken any risks."

II. Goal Setting: The Kick (11/10/2012)

On December 26th, 2011, I published issue #18 of Uncommon Sense. In that issue I devoted this column to a discussion around goal setting. A lot of people sent some positive feedback my way, as that article struck a chord in many. I hope readers of that article ended up setting some lofty goals for 2012.

And here we are, more than 11 months into the current year.

If you set some goals for 2012, how are you doing at this point? Have you achieved any of your goals? Are you close to achieving others? Or have you gotten sidetracked?

If you have not achieved your goals, this column is for you.

Think about long-distance runners (athletes who run, say, one mile, or perhaps two miles.) They run most of the race at a certain pace. But when they get to the last 100 or 200 yards, they throw caution to the wind and turn on the burners. You see them literally sprinting towards the finish line at the time in the race when they are most fatigued. They do this because they have nothing left to lose, so they muster all of their remaining energy and spend it with reckless abandon. This last burst of energy is known as a "kick", and having a strong kick can often win the race and set records.

The same is true with professional football teams. If a team is losing by a touchdown, and there is only six minutes left on the game clock, that team may engage in what is known as a "no-huddle offense." Rather than lose time in the huddle, they forgo the huddle altogether as they have a pre-planned set of plays they will run and all of the players have memorized the sequence of those plays. That enables them to save time and step up the pace of the game. Many teams come from behind to win the game using the "no-huddle offense."

The principles in play with both the long-distance runner and the football team can be applied to goal setting. If you are behind in the accomplishment of your goals, recalibrate your priorities. You've got just over six weeks to explode to greatness. Review your calendar and competing priorities and ask yourself what you have to shift in order to accomplish as many of your 2012 goals as possible. Then pick up the pace and attack those remaining goals. Even if you don't accomplish all of them, you should be able to accomplish some of them and end the year on a positive note.

Put your efforts in high gear. Go for broke. Recommit yourself to greatness. Make something happen. The clock is ticking. You can do it.

Now do it!

III. Primer on Goal Setting (11/30/2014)

The year is winding down. 11 months are behind us with one remaining. You have almost certainly accomplished some things this year, and likely, some intended objectives have not yet been completed.

My advice: be relentless in your efforts for the remainder of the year in accomplishing all of the goals you have set for yourself. In addition, begin now to map out your goals for 2015.

Think of your goals as projects - projects that answer the questions:

- What do I want to happen this next year?
- What do I wish to accomplish?

You should think very carefully about what matters to you. Consider what would be sound accomplishments that would make your proud or cause you to find deep fulfillment. Consider also the built-in restraints that could prevent you from accomplishing certain things. You need to make sure that your goals are not mere dreams, but realistic given your present circumstances. The goals you set should be achievable, but only with some effort and focus.

Spend an adequate amount of time in December to consider possible goals for 2015. And the goals you consider could come from any dimension of your life. Here are some random possible areas of your life to consider along with some examples:

Physical: Run a mile in 8 minutes. Begin taking private lessons in Ju-Jitsu. Begin taking a certain vitamin regiment and follow it religiously for the year. Commit to getting an average of 8 hours of sleep each night.

Business: Take a class in Entrepreneurship at the local college. Launch an online business. Become a regular reader of the *Harvard Business Review*.

Financial: Earn 10% more in 2015 than you did in 2014. Bank 10% of your net income for the entire year. Begin investing in the stock market. Payoff a credit card.

Social: Go out with one or more friends once each month. Identify your 30 most-important-relationships and acknowledge their birthday in 2015. Start a monthly Bunko Club and host the game at your place 3 times during the year.

Spiritual: Attend church services each Sunday. Spend some time each week reading The Holy Bible or other sacred literature. Do one act of anonymous service each month,

helping someone in need without them knowing you are the source of that help. Make prayer a daily activity. Fast once a month.

Mental: Learn French. Add 365 new words to your vocabulary. Take a class in a subject you are unfamiliar with, simply to broaden your horizons. Attend a debate. Schedule time each week for deep thinking. Write and submit 2 papers to be published in peer-reviewed, scholarly journals.

Aesthetic: Take a class in Painting. Begin learning how to play a musical instrument. Perform on a musical instrument in public. Study poetry and write a certain number of poems. Visit six museums in your town.

Do these things and your life will be meaningful and fulfilling. You may not accomplish all of your goals before the end of the year, but you will almost certain accomplish a certain number. And you will grow and be productive and a contributing member of society in the process.

IV. Goal Setting Pep Talk (12/28/2015)

The year comes to an end and our thoughts invariably turn towards how our life might be different going forward. Our thoughts turn to, in a word, *goals*.

Very few things galvanize us the way goal setting does. This is because we are the architects of our lives and it is our goals that direct us to greater heights. Indeed, the setting of goals (which amounts to the charting of your life's course) is one of the most important endeavors one can take. It requires careful thought, and consideration of many factors, for the expectation is that you will actually attain your goals, not merely set them.

There are many approaches to effective goal setting. Here is my approach.

First, I ***define my roles*** . This is not an inconsequential exercise that happens only in my mind. I write down my roles as they stand at the present time. And my roles, while not exhaustive, are the major components of my life. Take a look at how I define my roles and see if they spark some clarity in your own situation:

Teacher/Scholar: this encompasses not only my formal, albeit part-time, endeavor of teaching at the college level, but it also includes my roles as a speaker and a scholar. This role is about me conveying information and knowledge and skill and wisdom to others, usually orally.

Manager: This involves my bread-and-butter work of managing other teams to carry out the vast majority of my working activities.

Life-Long Learner: This is the flip-side of my Teacher/Scholar role. This role is about me taking in information. I am the student here, not the teacher. This role is all about the things I plan to learn more about. I am an apprentice, not an expert, in this role.

Writer: Similar to my Teacher/Scholar role in that it involves output on my part, but this time only in written form.

Consultant: As I run a consultancy, I need to continually grow the practice. Whereas the Teacher/Scholar role and the Writer role are devoted to my agenda, as a Consultant my job is to assist in the agenda of others; to bring value to other entities; to help them solve the problems or capitalize on the opportunities that mean something to them. The difference is nuanced, but important.

Family Man: As I head a family, it is important that I manage and lead and nurture every member in it, as well as maintain and manage our largest physical asset -- our home.

Friend: As my relationships with others are critically important to bring satisfaction and well-being to all involved, I recognize that I must cultivate and protect these key relationships.

Musician: While there is a business element to being a successful musician, there is also an artist element that has its own unique value. I have to give attention -- lots of attention -- to grow and develop as a musician, and to position myself (and my music partner, Venessa) to be able to bring our music to others.

Disciple: this word comes from the same root as the word discipline, which means that I have chosen to exercise a certain kind of discipline in the following of the Person I consider to be the greatest, most reliable, and most singular Source of wisdom and goodness -- Jesus Christ. So with this role, the question becomes how can I put off the weakness, the foolishness, the selfishness that is part of me (and probably part of all of us) and be a more virtuous human being.

Next, with those roles clear in my mind, I s imply ask myself if, for each role, there anything I wish to have in the coming year. . . I s there anything I wish to do or experience relative to that role. I s there anything I wish to be. Essentially I am seeking growth and development in some way.

Although I am not obligated to set a goal for each and every role, I try to set at least one goal per role. Sometimes, if the goals are basic tasks that simply require discipline and execution, I might set several goals for that role. Here's an example: for my Life-Long Learner role, I decided to continue my study of six specific Founders of the United States. As there are six of them I seek to acquire expertise on, and as there are 12

months in the year, an obvious goal is to read two biographies on each of the six. I have even mapped out precisely which biography I will be reading in each of the next 12 months. This enables me to schedule how many pages need to be read each week to maintain that pace.

Some goals could simply be a *maintenance goal*, in that the goal simply enables you to continue to maintain a practice or a process. Many fitness goals fall into this category. For my Writer role, I set a single goal: to continue to publish *Uncommon Sense* twice a month next year. It's a maintenance goal.

As you consider your major roles, ask yourself these questions to help jump-start your imagination as to what is possible:

- Do I wish to finally organize a certain area of my life (perhaps my home) that has been ignored?
- Do I wish to take action to improve my financial strength?
- Is there a specific source of debt I commit to eliminate?
- Do I wish to acquire a tangible "thing" that I have always wanted to own?
- Are there certain relationships I wish to acquire, develop, strengthen, or rid myself of?
- Do I have a hobby I wish to develop or a skill I wish to enhance?
- Are there avenues for a new revenue stream? Are there new markets to enter? Are there new and better ways of doing something?
- What could I produce so that at the end of the year I will feel immense satisfaction?
- What could I learn that may come in handy in the future?

Questions such as these can open your mind to the possibilities that await you. And if you set your goals carefully, wisely, and intelligently, and then monitor your progress with relentless regularity, chances are high you will nail most, if not all, of them.

And that's not a bad outcome.

V. Goal Setting Concretely (1/10/2016)

I talked about goal setting last month, in Issue #110. But there's much more to goal setting than simply deciding what you want to accomplish. You also have to map out how you will accomplish your goals -- presuming your goals are plausible (which they sometimes are not -- more on that in a moment.)

Let me give you a concrete example.

Suppose you have a goal to compete in a 5K run on July 4th. (For those of you unaware of the distance of a 5K, it's about 3.1 miles.) Let's imagine that you participated in this same race last year, and that you came in 9th place for your age group -- certainly not enough to win a medal, but not too bad considering you were not in prime shape when you ran it last year. This year you have three levels of achievement in mind. First, at the very least, you wish to beat your previous time of one year ago. Next, you wish to place among the top 3 runners in your age group, thus earning a medal. And let's imagine that your "stretch goal" is to finish in first place, winning the race for your age group.

While it's wonderful that you have such clarity around your various goals, you've got to do more -- much more -- than memorize those three objectives. You've got to map out exactly what has to take place, each week, leading up to the July 4th event. For instance, you have to know how fast the winner of last year's run completed the 5K in. So you research that and discover that the winner of last year's 5K for your age group ran it in 22:48. The second place runner came in 12 seconds later, and the third place finisher came in 12 seconds after the second place finisher. That is all very valuable information. It tells you that, while there are no guarantees, if you are able to run the 5K in about 22:45, there is a good chance you will win the event, and almost certainly place in the event.

So you create a training schedule, beginning with the first week of the year, that looks something like this:

Every Monday, you will have a fairly easy run of 3 miles. That will actually shift to 4 miles starting in Week 6. Again, it's an easy run, not timed, and is meant as a sort of a warm-up for the week.

On Tuesday, you are going to run one mile, perhaps on a track, and you are going to time that one mile run. You're pretty sure you can run a mile in 9 minutes so you start there. But every Monday in the succeeding weeks leading up to the week prior to July 4th you determine to shave five seconds off your time. That means in Week 2 you will have to run one mile in 8:55; in Week 3 you must run it in 8:50. By the time you get to the week before the July 4th event, you will be running one mile in 6:55 if you are successful in shaving 5 seconds off each week.

Continuing with your plan, we will say Wednesday is a rest day. No running that day.

On Thursday, however, you will do something that runners call a Tempo Run, which means that you would run one mile in a certain pre-determined time, say 9:20. Then you would rest a bit. Then you would run a second mile, again in 9:20. This would happen every Thursday for several weeks with the time allocation for each one mile run shortening a bit each week. After about 5 weeks of this, your Tempo Run would jump to 3 miles, meaning you would run one mile in, say, 9 minutes, followed by a brief rest

break of a few minutes, then another mile in 9 minutes, followed by some rest, and then a third one mile run, again in 9 minutes. Each week thereafter, you would shave a little time off the allocation, so that the week before the big race you would be doing your 3-mile tempo run in 7:20 per mile.

While Fridays and Sundays would also be rest days, Saturdays would be dedicated for your "long run" -- where you would run anywhere from 5 to 10 miles, changing the distance each week, with no particular time pressure.

OK, now without getting too bogged down in the details of this particular scenario, I want you to glean the key take-away: The running schedule I have outlined was created with the end in mind. If the stretch goal was to win, I basically set up a training schedule that set the necessary performance levels the week before the big race, and then worked my way backwards to the first week of the year. And then I made sure that I was able and willing to discipline myself to follow that schedule.

If you follow the same basic principles, you will very likely achieve your goals, whether they involve health and fitness, your social life, your career, things that fall in the spiritual realm, your intellectual life, or any other area you care to focus your energies on. It's all about getting very granular in your approach to goal setting.

And one final word: If you discover in your planning process that your circumstances are such that you won't likely be able to achieve a certain goal, then drop that as a goal for the present time. Wait until your circumstances change in a favorable way before you pursue that goal.

VI. Goal Setting Pep Talk – Part 1 of 2 (12/19/2016)

I'll never forget the first real presentation I experienced on goal setting. It was delivered to me when I was about 21 or 22 by DA, a Vice President and General Manager of Marcus & Millichap, the Palo Alto-based commercial real estate firm. I learned in that electrifying presentation how people as diverse as Abraham Lincoln, Jim Thorpe, Julius Caesar, and others overcame severe limitations to achieve greatness, and that we can be either the creatures of circumstance or the creators of our circumstance. I also remember DA talking about the fact that there are three kinds of people in this world: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who don't know anything happened. All of that cliché-larded hype actually had an impact on me and caused me to want to take control of my life by setting annual goals.

As a result of DA's influence, I made the regular practice of goal-setting on an annual basis. It has had quite an impact on me in 3 ways:

First, having goals helps keep me organized. I learn to avoid time consuming events that do not lend value and that rob me of the time I need to pursue my goals for that year. Some opportunity or invitation will come up, I quickly assess whether hat opportunity leads me towards my goal, and if it does not, I have little trouble turning it down.

Second, having goals helps keep me moving. I do not experience much lethargy in life because my goals have me in a near-constant state of movement. The energy required to attain my goals forces me to be active, and so there is a dynamic in my life that would be absent without having goals to pursue.

Third, goals enable me to attain. Sometimes the goal has to do with finances, and so when I attain such goals, I come away wealthier than I would have been otherwise. Other times the goal has to do with relationships, and so when I attain those types of goals, I end up having the right kind of people in my life and the relationships are stronger. Still other times, the goal may have to do with my physical life, and when such goals are realized, I enjoy a great measure of good health, athleticism, physicality, or less stress.

My advice to you is to examine the totality of your life, and ask yourself two questions:

- Are there areas of my life that are problems that I wish to rid myself of, and if so, what has to happen to remove from my life the problem issue?
- Are there areas missing from my life that represent opportunities, and if so, what is out there that I should pursue and seize hold of, and acquire?

And whatever your goals, they should arouse some passion within you. So don't go for the bland or the pedestrian. Go for things that you deeply care about and perhaps even crave a bit.

VII. Goal Setting Pep Talk - Part 2 of 2 (12/31/2016)

The new year is upon us. So let's have one final pep talk about your 2017 goals. I have just a few quick things to remind you of when it comes to goal setting and goal attainment.

First, your goals should be carefully thought through, and you should be judicious in how much you commit to -- because
it is a commitment. Be mindful of
what is
possible. Don't over do it: Better to have 3 to 5 goals rather 11 or 12. Set goals that inspire you. Whatever it is you land on as your 2017 goals, make sure they cause you to salivate!

Second, look at them regularly -- at least weekly if not daily. Every week you should be reviewing your goals, assessing your progress, and noting any roadblocks. If you are absolutely committed to achieving your goals, you will make the changes necessary and take the requisite actions to forge ahead. Don't allow anything short of the destruction of your family and health to stop you for keep at it. You should commit to doing something to move you closer to their attainment every week, if not every day.

Third, you may opt to focus on some goals early in the year, while other goals wait their turn. Timing is everything and some seasons lend themselves to some goals more so than other goals. So do not feel you must be working on all of your goals simultaneously. But if they have a deadline of year-end, you must find a way to pull it off. (I myself had some very important goals involving my professional life that were mission-critical. And for the last two weeks, I worked nearly round the clock to get them all done. I finally crossed the finish line this evening at 6:00 PM! Talk about getting it done at the wire!)

Fourth, take satisfaction in accomplishment. When you achieve any goal, you have earned the right to see yourself as a person of accomplishment. And that calls for a celebration!

VIII. Goal Setting Pep Talk (12/31/2017)

This topic, one that I generally address in late December, is one of my very favorites. I suspect my interest in this topic stems from the realization that when you are engaged in goal setting, you are engaged in leadership at its highest levels -- self-leadership. When we discuss goals, we are literally talking about something profound. We are talking about the power you have to direct your life, orchestrate your outcomes, and map out where you will take your life.

In 2017, I set 8 goals for myself. As the year comes to an end, I see that I have accomplished 6 of them. While I'm disappointed in failing at 2 of those goals, I have deep satisfaction that I did end the year with 6 significant accomplishments for the year.

The key message I want to pass on to you involves the notion of focus. Eight goals was probably a bit too much to expect to hit in one year -- especially given the fact that all 8 were significant.

My advice is that we look at each new year as an opportunity to place our energies on a very limited number of very significant goals -- probably no more than three. Again, these goals are to be significant. They may involve something tangible you wish to acquire, such as the car of your dreams. They may involve an experience, such as a dream vacation. They may involve skill acquisition, such as learning a new foreign language, or mastering a certain software program, or becoming proficient on a musical instrument. They may involve money matters, such as the acquisition of cash, or the elimination of debt. They may involve relationships in some way, such as the establishment of a new friendship or romantic relationship, or getting together with specific friends you haven't seen for a while. They may involve other things -- the possibilities are endless. But all great goals are:

- Clearly defined
- With an understanding of current reality
- A clear target (i.e., where you want to be, what you want to do, or what you wish to have)
- And a deadline date (which, for me, is almost always December 31st.)

Having only a very few significant goals provides the focus needed to accomplish them. Too many goals means our energies and resources are stretched too thin, and we can easily be stymied. President Kennedy announced one colossal goal in the early

1960s: to land a man on the moon and bring him back safely to earth before the end of the decade. He did not announce ten new goals of that magnitude. Had he done so, we likely would not have accomplished many (if any) of them. Steve Jobs is reputed to have said on one occasion that he is very proud of the many worthy goals Apple had decided not to pursue.

As for myself, I have decided that for the year 2018 I am going to focus on only two specific goals. Both of these goals are very lofty. One involves writing my first book, thanks to the prodding of RS, a constant source of encouragement and inspiration. And the other involves taking my musical performing duo, Dawn of Ascension, to the next level, with a specific number of live (paid) performances. That will involve a lot of rehearsing, the building of our repertoire, some equipment acquisition, and a lot of marketing.

But I will absolutely accomplish both goals over the course of 2018. And I will be highly satisfied in doing so.

Now, what about you? What will you focus on in 2018? Focus on a very few lofty goals (no more than 2 or 3), map out your game plan for all the things that have to happen in order to accomplish them (and celebrate the accomplishment of these sub-goals), have a deadline, and then organize your life around their pursuit. And I look forward to watching you take a bow when you finally cross the finish line!

IX. Goals (12/29/2019)

Most achievers have a regular list of tasks they wish to accomplish on a daily basis. *Go to the gym. Work on that project. Send over the PowerPoint deck to a colleague. Process the notes from the quarterly planning meeting.* For me, completing the writing of this very newsletter is on today's task list. But I am not writing about the achievement of such tasks in this column. They are merely an illustration of what I am *not* writing about.

In other words, the micro-tasks of a daily task list are necessary but insufficient for true greatness.

Thus, while one could think of the tasks on a daily task list as goals for the day, they are usually inconsequential in the big picture.

Instead, to achieve extraordinary greatness, and to enjoy a life of meaning and fulfillment, one must set lofty goals. I learned this as a young man back in about 1979 from a towering influential figure in my life, Don Atkinson who, at that time, was a Vice President for the commercial real estate firm, Marcus & Millichap. I've never forgotten his lessons, as they were transformative. Taking Don's inspiring advice, and building on that foundation with the keen insights from others, I am now in a position to offer you some important instruction on the power of goals, goal-setting, and goal-achievement. Here it is.

First, you need to limit your loftiest goals to a very small number for a given point in time. In fact, having only one lofty goal is not unacceptable, but probably quite prudent. It is important to resist the urge to commit to many lofty goals at the same time. Having a small number of goals, one, or perhaps two - three at the absolute maximum - at one time greatly increases the likelihood that you will achieve greatness, because those one or two lofty goals do represent significance. They are highly consequential. Achieve one goal of this caliber and you are achieving greatness by definition. However, if you succumb to the temptation to commit to five or six or ten goals at one time, all of them being lofty, you will almost certainly achieve none of them. You will be stymied. You will be overwhelmed. You will lose your focus. Your frustration will spike. Do not make the mistake of taking on too much at one time. Instead, follow my advice and only commit to one or perhaps two (absolutely no more than three!) lofty goals.

Second, your goals should involve matters that cause you to salivate. These types of goals make your blood boil - not in the sense of angering you, but in the sense of galvanizing you. Your goals should concern things that inspire you and motivate you to muster the energy and the focus and the resources necessary to have staying power. Think of a classic boxing match for the heavyweight championship of the world. Those things were scheduled for 15 rounds. If you can imagine the pursuit of your lofty goals to be like a 15-round bout, you must have the energy and the stamina to come out just as strong in the 15th Round as you did in the 1st Round. You simply must not lose focus, nor throw in the towel, before you achieve victory.

Third, you must have a time-frame in mind that you are committed to. There must be a deadline. Most lofty goals of significance are not - cannot be - achieved in only a few months. (If they can be, I have to question just how significant and daunting the goals were in the first place.) For many people, they think in terms of one year. This is something I do as well. However, there really is no innate validity to a one-year time

frame. It's an artificial construct. Those of us who set goals with a one-year time frame in mind do so out of sheer convenience. Western society (and much of world society) has arbitrarily placed significance on a one-year cycle due to nature's templates (i.e., the natural phenomenon of the time it takes the earth to circle the sun.) But your goals do not necessarily have to be limited to such strictures. Lofty goals could conceivably have a time frame of 8 or 9 months to complete. Conversely, they could have a time frame of 14 months, or 19 months, or 16 months. The time frame for the achievement of your lofty goals can be whatever you decide is a realistic, plausible time horizon. But once you commit to that time frame, you must stake your honor on accomplishing the goal by that deadline. You must take that time
frame very seriously.

Fourth, if the goal you set is truly significant, you have to recognize that there are various layers or dimensions that lead to the attainment of your ultimate goal. Think of your huge, bodacious goal as this giant boulder you have to move. What kind of leverage points will help you to move it? What sort of broad activities will lead to the attainment of that king-sized goal? There are usually some moderately-sized activities that have direct influence on the attainment of your major goal.

Let me give you a simple example: Let's imagine your goal was a very personal one involving your physical health. Let's say you wished to lose 30 pounds within 8 months. Now, doing so is certainly achievable. But it won't happen without serious focus and effort. So think about it: what sorts of leverage points would influence the process of losing weight to the tune of 30 pounds?

Two things come to mind immediately:

- Food intake (or, how many calories you consume)
- Exercise (or, how many calories you burn)

Once you know that your direct influence over how much food you consume and how much exercise you do will lead to the ultimate attainment of your commitment to lose 30 pounds, you can begin to make regular, weekly decisions about what you are going to commit to at the micro-level to eat the proper amount (and types) of food and to get the proper amount (and types) of exercise.

Here's a different example: If your lofty goal was to generate $600,000 in revenue over the course of a year, selling whatever it is you sell, you would realize that you need to generate approximately $11,540 each week on average for the entire year. What activities would you have to engage in to ensure you are performing at that level? Perhaps it involves a certain amount of internet marketing or some form of advertising. Perhaps it involves picking up the telephone and placing a certain number of phone calls per day to prospects and existing clients. Perhaps it means you must make at least 4 actual presentations to qualified decision-makers each week. Perhaps it

involves setting up a referral program where you reward people who refer you to qualified leads. In other words, if you do the advertising, make the requisite number of phone calls, conduct the right number of presentations to decision-makers consistently, and work your well-designed referral program, you will achieve your weekly goal of generating $11,540 in sales revenues, and thus, you will hit the $600,000 in total annual revenues.

Fifth, and finally, you have to have a system in place for keeping track of your progress towards your goal. You have to know if you are on track to succeed or to fail. You have to have a scoreboard of some kind so you can know where you stand in real-time. The pursuit of lofty goals is much like running a race. You have to know if you are on track to win the race. If you are, that's great - you just keep on going all the way to the finish line. But if you find you are not on track to win the race, you must pick up the pace. You have to run faster! Losing is not an option. You must sacrifice. You must draw upon untapped energy reserves. You must give it your all. You must bleed a little to ensure you win. Goal achievement is not for the faint of heart. So be sure to set up some sort of system so that your progress is being measured at all times, and that you know where you are in the game at any moment in time.

Whether your lofty goals involve your health and fitness, your financial strength, your mastering of a skill, your relationships, your knowledge base, your habits, your character or mannerisms, or some tangible thing you wish to acquire, if you follow the principles I have outlined above, you will bend the odds in your favor that you will attain your goals.

And in attaining your goals, you will have achieved true greatness.

X. Goal Setting Imperative (1/25/2021)

We are in a new year. This is a good thing because it gives us an excuse to reassess our priorities, and rethink the direction of our life. All of us have an opportunity to strive to better our situation and improve our condition. The choice to determine our outcomes and the quality of our life is ours to seize or to squander. We call this goal-setting.

2020 was an atypical year. We faced much political upheaval and contention. There were riots and looting. Portland, Oregon faced (and still faces to this day) enormous upheaval by radicals and anarchists, and local as well as state government officials, not to mention law enforcement professionals, seemed incapable of putting a stop to the lunacy and public destruction. There was a contentious and controversial presidential election. There was a pandemic that affected vast swathes of society. I myself was directly affected by the Coronavirus and at one point felt I was going to succumb to it.

But it's time to put all of that in the past and recognize that, come what may, we can do much to improve our lives if we make sound decisions, plan well, and take decisive action.

So ask yourself some questions. Are there things you wish to acquire? Is there something you wish to own? I'm talking about actual, tangible "things" such as a new technological tool (think smart phone, tablet, laptop computer) or perhaps a new gaming console, or a high-end pair of sunglasses. Or perhaps something involving clothing, or a musical instrument, or a new car, new bed, new major appliance for the home, or a beautiful garden in your backyard. Or perhaps your "thing" is tied to a new medical procedure involving your teeth or your hair or your waistline or your eyesight or your complexion. There is nothing wrong with having a desire to acquire new "things," provided we keep such desires in their proper perspective. (No "thing," regardless of its cool factor can take the place of great health or great relationships.)

Here is another set of questions to consider. What would you like to do? Are there experiences you are interested in? Do you have a Bucket List that clarifies what those experiences are and why they are important to you? There is an endless array of potential experiences you could pursue. For instance, do you want to develop a skill of some sort? Perhaps mastering the game of chess, or learning to dance the tango, or archery, or becoming highly proficient in the use of Excel, or becoming proficient in speaking and writing Italian? Would you like to travel – perhaps to every state in the U.S.A, or perhaps to certain key cities, or perhaps to various foreign countries? Or maybe you'd like to go to certain events as a member of the audience to experience various forms of education or entertainment – magic shows, Broadway musicals, concerts, poetry readings, lectures by eminent scholars, or symposia on various fields of study. Maybe you would like to just get out more and discover the many hidden treasures that are within your local region of the country, as you'd be amazed at how many fascinating venues are right under your nose or within reach by a moderate road trip.

A third area of inquiry involves personal development, or how you evolve and improve as an individual. What kind of a person do you want to be? Are there quirks in your personality you wish to eradicate? Are there personality traits in others you deeply admire that you wish to adopt? Do you have a characteristic that you would like to expand upon and enhance in some way? What kind of a person do you really wish to grow into? Does your temper need to be tamed? Do you wish to be more patient? Do you wish to develop a sense of humor, or become happier? Do you wish to be less pessimistic, and more spirited and positive? Do you wish to be a more romantic individual or have a rich social life?

All of these areas – things we wish to have, things we wish to do, and things we wish to be – can be attained by setting a specific goal to address that particular area. In

writing down our goal, it should be stated as clearly and precisely as possible. And it is wise to set various sub-goals that lead to and support the main goal. And of course, we should visit those written goals very frequently, at least weekly if not daily to ensure we are putting forth the necessary effort to work on our goals.

If you haven't taken the time to chart some new goals for yourself for 2021, I recommend you carve out some time to do so, because it is not too late. Review the questions I have posed here, and allow your imagination to flourish as you consider all of the rich possibilities that can be yours.

Do this, and you are virtually certain to have a productive and meaningful year in 2021.

XI. Long-Range Goal Setting (6/30/2021)

Successful people are goal setters. That means they have aspirations with a time-horizon beyond the next 10 minutes. People who are largely unsuccessful, who lead lives void of meaning or purpose, rarely ponder desired futures beyond things of immediacy (e.g., what's on TV right now; where is the nearest place they can relieve themselves; what is in the refrigerator they can eat now, etc.) Such persons rarely make something of their lives.

Goal-setters, on the other hand, generally lead productive lives. They set out to accomplish things of significance, and while they may not succeed in accomplishing everything they aspire to, most of the time they do accomplish more – much more – than they would have had they not set goals on a consistent basis.

I mentioned time-horizons. Let's explore that a bit more. Time-horizons represent the reasonable span of time associated with the achievement of certain goals. They can range from a narrow span of time within a given day, say, one to three hours to a vast window of time, something along the line of several decades. Many for-profit businesses set goals that last a 3-month window – what they think of as a quarter (meaning a quarter of the year.) When a person has a "To-Do" list or a "Task List," they might be hoping to achieve the things on such a list within a day. Some goals may be such that they can be achieved within one month, such as losing a small amount of weight, perhaps 5 or 10 pounds or completing the reading of a book. Many people, myself among them, go to great pains to map out what they wish to accomplish each year. These yearly goals are usually quite significant, and they have the added benefit of bequeathing meaning and purpose to our lives.

It should be obvious that the more daunting a goal the longer the time horizon needed to achieve it. There is a direct correlation with the attainment of high achievement and

the duration required to get there. Thus, becoming a candidate for President of the United States takes years of careful preparation, as does becoming an Olympic athlete.

I would suggest that forward-thinking people are generally more accomplished than others precisely because they reflect on a series of accomplishments of great significance that they are bent on achieving.

Allow me to draw upon my own experience as an illustration. I am now 63 years of age. Because I firmly believe that my greatest accomplishments lie ahead of me, I expect to live well past my 80s and at least into my 90s. That means I have about one-third of my life before me. I know I must make this last third of my life count. My best work must be done during this time-horizon. So what will I accomplish?

I am committed to authoring and publishing four books during this time. I know what the topics are. I am already well into the first of those four books. But I know these books will not be published quickly. Because I am very serious about making them of a very high quality, this will require a painstaking and methodical amount of effort on my part. It will take perhaps more than a decade to publish them all. But doing so will represent something of significance, and an important contribution to the world of ideas.

Other goals will involve travel, speaking engagements, client acquisition, and attaining various and sundry items on my bucket list.

My advice: continue to have micro-goals that can be attained in a day, or a week, more significant goals that may take a year, and certainly include goals of deep significance that may take several years or even a decade or more to accomplish. Doing so will give you a sense that the show must go on, which will prevent you from becoming complacent. More importantly, when you eventually sit in your rocking chair after you have arrived at an advanced age, you can bask in the satisfaction that your life here on this planet was laced with significance, that you lived according to your aspirations, that you achieved greatness while here.

Not a bad way to live. . .