

## **Failing to Plan is Planning to Fail**

With as much as has been written about the value of planning, it is amazing that there are still so many people who resist this advice. From Napoleon Hill to Jack Welch, virtually every successful business person states that having a plan was essential to their success.

So, why do so many not heed this essential element of success? Here are a few reasons (maybe one of them ring true for you):

- **Fear of Failure.** Plan or no plan, this common fear is a deadly saboteur of personal and professional success. It leads to procrastination, paralysis and passivity – all of which undermine any planning process. Someone may have made a commitment to planning, but then fell victim to this fear, failed to implement, experienced failure, and ultimately blamed the plan. After experiencing this a few times, they stop planning altogether.
- **Lack of Reality.** Another way to undermine the planning process is to set unrealistic goals. This may also be associated with fear of failure. After setting a few unreachable goals and experiencing failure, the person again may choose to stop planning.
- **Over Reliance on Experience.** Some folks who may have a lot of practical experience may think they have no need to plan. They believe they know all they need to know and they take action. While this works at times, the more complex the endeavor, the less likely experience alone will suffice.
- **Lack of Experience.** We've all heard of the novice entrepreneur who walks into a bank seeking a loan for a business idea. The banker asks if he has a business plan and the entrepreneur points to his noggin and says, "It's all in here." Obviously, the "it's all in here" approach doesn't work that well, especially if you don't have years and years of experience.
- **Laziness.** Probably the primary reason for lack of commitment to planning is pure, unadulterated laziness. Effective planning is work. It takes effort. A great deal of intellectual energy, and, in a team environment, cooperation is required. A lot of people just don't want to put in the time and energy. Unfortunately, it shows.

Do any of these sound familiar or true? No matter what your reason for resisting the planning process, here are seven key points that will make it easier.

- **You, in fact, already do planning.** Do you keep an appointment book? If so, that's a very simple plan with respect to how you spend your time. So, if you can keep an appointment book, you can create plans for accomplishing your goals.

- **Look upon planning as a road map.** When you plan a trip, especially to a place you've never visited before, you get directions, right? Well, look upon your goals as a destination you've never visited. You plot your trip, highlighting key places along your route, and then take your trip. Will there be side trips along the way? Yes. And, could one of your routes be blocked? This could happen too. And you can plan for these, also, through contingencies or alternate routes. When you approach your goals this way the planning process can be a lot more fun.
- **Be real.** This is not to say you can't have big dreams. Big dreams are perfectly fine; but remember they consist of smaller, very doable objectives that will need to be met on your way to the Big Dream. Rome wasn't built in a day and neither will be your big dreams. So when planning, plan on taking realistic steps forward in pursuit of your bliss.
- **Be real, part 2.** When you don't set realistic goals, you set yourself up for failure. So when setting a goal, think about what you can attain and then reach just a little farther. For example, if you need to make 20 sales calls to get 4 appointments...set a goal of making 25 calls to get five appointments. That seems doable, right?
- **Be specific.** There's a saying: "That which cannot be measured does not exist." While this may or may not be true, in goal setting measurement is pretty darn important. But what makes measurement possible is the degree of specificity you give to your objective. It's one thing to say "I want to acquire a lot more clients," than to say "I want to acquire 10 new clients by August 1." See the difference?
- **Implement.** A plan is only as good as the implementation. Implementation is action. The action part is the most difficult part of the equation...that's why you break down your goal into smaller, very doable actions. These smaller steps make implementation far more likely and effective.
- **Be faithful.** You *will* encounter obstacles and challenges along the way. When these challenges come, fall back on your plan. Work your plan until every possible action is taken. If you're still not moving forward, have faith. Look at your challenge and your plan in a different way. Get a second opinion. Adapt the plan to the circumstance and move forward.

The most successful people in business make solid plans. One of the interesting fringe benefits of making a plan and being faithful to it is that quite often unforeseen benefits come your way. When you open one door, sometimes many others will open too. And, these open doors will often catapult you further than you ever might have imagined.