

## Success: It's Between Your Ears

If you're like most high-achievers I know, you found some quiet time during the holidays to reflect on 2006 and look ahead to 2007.

Now you're back at work and facing obstacles and distractions.

Goals created during your year-end reflection or at an offsite planning meeting now seem to float away as unexpected issues emerge. Your fourth-quarter growth spurt has placed new pressure on cash flow. Your most important customers have new needs – and only you can address them (or so it seems). That huge new business opportunity you spent most of 2006 cultivating is ready to move forward, but you're not sure you have all the necessary people or systems in place to deliver on your promises.

In short, your time is not your own. Whether you're a CEO or a department head, you really want to achieve your goals so you're looking for some kind of system that will help you do so.

You're in luck. The system you need is resting atop your shoulders. It's between your ears. Attitude – more than any other factor – is the single greatest contributor to achieving the goals you set.

So whether you call the process making New Year's resolutions, goal-setting, business planning, time management, list-making or something else, leaders who follow seven proven steps achieve more of what they're after. If these seven steps sound simple, you're right. They are. But just because they're simple doesn't mean they're not difficult to implement.

**1. Be clear about what you want.** It all starts with setting clear objectives – whether at the outset of an engagement, an internal project or a New Year. Clarity helps reconcile priorities, time constraints and budgets, and establishes a specific vision of success. Clarity is a critical component of success. If we can't define success precisely, we can never achieve it.

Plans of any kind – personal or professional – dissolve when:

- Goals are abstract or ambiguous
- You live in the past and only dream about the future
- You don't set your attitude to make the required changes
- You don't see that what you're doing today makes a difference toward achieving your goal

So set clear, measurable objectives. Limit yourself to three measurable goals. Trying to achieve more than three goals will dilute your efforts. When you achieve them, develop three more.

**2. Set a deadline.** Assigning a deadline to a specific goal makes the goal more attainable. Deadlines are powerful tools. We start our planning process by asking, What do you want to celebrate one year from today? Be specific. Wanting to lose weight is a dream; losing 10 pounds by July 1 is specific.

**3. Write it down.** Saying it isn't enough. Committing your goals to writing requires discipline and increases the odds of success. In fact, studies have shown that individuals that commit their goals to writing are 10 times more likely to achieve their goals than those who don't.

**4. Commit to improvement.** Ferry Porsche believes "Change is easy, but improvement is far more difficult." Last August, I started running again after a 20-year hiatus. The first day, I couldn't jog around the block. The second day was better. And the third day was better still. By the end of the week, I was up to a mile. It's a mind-set. The choice is yours.

**5. Make each day count by holding yourself accountable.** Work back from your ultimate goal and break it into bite-size chunks. Review your progress regularly.

**6. Never give up.** Quitting is a matter of mindset. Resist the urge to give up. Recalibrate your objectives if you must, but don't quit.

**7. Celebrate victories.** Reward yourself if your goal is personal. Reward your team if it's a group goal. Celebrations are important because they acknowledge short-term successes and refresh minds, bodies and spirits for the next step on your goal-getting journey.

In 2006, Lewis Gordon Pugh became the first swimmer ever to complete a long-distance swim in all five oceans of the world – a feat many considered to be the Holy Grail of swimming. He also became the first person to complete a long-distance swim in both the Arctic and the Antarctic.

What drives him? "I never do the same swim twice," Lewis says. "The next swim must be harder and more challenging, otherwise I am going backwards. Sometimes we set boundaries for ourselves in life, or even worse, we allow others to do so. In many cases, these boundaries are just in our mind and need to be pushed away."

Put your attitude to work for you in 2007.