

# New Year's Resolutions

By the time you read this article you'll have had ample time to break all (or most all of your resolutions). Please don't feel bad – you're in good company (with the rest of us). The interesting question is why we fail so successfully in breaking our most heartfelt commitments.

Based on my personal experience, and as a coach, here are my observations.

- First, it's not because we are undisciplined, lazy, weak or stupid. While we all occasionally exhibit some of these characteristics, they are not the basic cause of our inability to meet our goals.
- Next, it's probably not because we are incapable of performing the goal. Most of us are inherently capable of doing what we'd like to do. Most of us can exercise, read or practice the requisite amount to reach our target. (After all the typical resolution is not a commitment to running a marathon, reading 100 books a year or becoming a concert pianist).
- Finally, it's not someone else's fault. Our job, family or other commitments are not the cause of the gap between our desires and our achievements.

Now that I've eliminated the easy excuses, let's examine why we have such a tough time reaching our goals.

We often confuse resolutions with wishes.

<b>Wish</b>	<b>Resolution</b>
I want to lose weight.	I will change my eating habits in order to lose one pound per week until I reach my ideal weight. I will begin on 03/01/05.
I want to learn to play the piano.	I will learn to play the piano by renting a piano and hiring a piano teacher by 03/01/05. I commit to honor this agreement for 6 months.
I want to get in shape.	I will consult a personal trainer and implement a weekly training program. I will begin this process by 03/01/05.

## **Some key distinctions between wish and resolutions.**

Wishes are vague, have no specific deadline, nor are they part of any action plan. They are not actionable. The old Hollywood joke: Two people pass on the street, greet each other and then part by saying "Lets do lunch!" This appears to mean something ... but what? The answer: it means nothing because there is no plan of action. All the wishes listed above are laudable, but offer no plan of action, nor do any of them have a target date.

The Resolution states "what by when."

- I will learn to play the piano – start by ...
- I will get into shape ... begin my program by ...
- I will achieve my ideal weight – begin my new eating plan by ...

Honoring a resolution requires that you have:

- Very clearly defined objectives and ...
- Specific and measurable targets with ...
- A very specific time deadline and ...
- A plan of action to get you from start to finish

A resolution is only useful if all these dots are connected. And you can only connect the dots by sitting down or thinking through the entire process. A good action plan always requires that you consider each cost connected to the outcome. For example:

- A good commander never goes to battle until all the costs and implications are considered.
- A savvy business owner doesn't embark on a new program without considering all the marketing, manufacturing, sales and administrative costs.
- A careful and intelligent homeowner doesn't undertake a remodel until all the many costs are considered (and he also builds in a considerable margin of error).

Nor should you, dear reader, make a resolution without thinking through all the implications. We all know what happens if we fail to honor this requirement.

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