

# BE IT RESOLVED

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**Date: January 1, 2014**

Time: 9:37 a.m. (well, it was a late night after all...)

Ok, now what?

As the clock ticked over to start 2014 we are once again on the verge a new period – a new year. I'd like to drag your thoughts back to January 1, 2013 for a moment, if I may. I suspect many of us started last year off with a laundry list of resolutions about things we were going to: a) do more of, or b) do less of.

Many of us refer to them as our "New Year's Resolutions" but I am always surprised when we do not refer to them as our "New Year's Goals". I suspect I know why. With resolutions, when we do not achieve them, we have simply "broken" our resolutions. If we call them goals and we do not achieve them, then we have "failed". It is easier to tell ourselves "it was just a resolution, no big deal". Since "resolutions" do not carry the emotional baggage of "goals", it is easier to live with ourselves when we don't accomplish them. That said, how did you do for 2013? Crossed some off your list? Worked on others? Added some new ones? Tossed your list in the recycle bin so it can't torment you anymore?



A new year is a special time – a clean 12 month slate to plan our future. While resolutions tend to focus only on the year at hand, what I am suggesting for the start of 2014 is that we develop a series of short-, mid- and long-term goals and by writing them down, we've already taken the first step toward accomplishing them. Many people fear that once they write a goal down they are stuck with it, as if they had chiseled it into stone. Somehow it eludes us that goals are flexible and can change with the passage of time or with the completion of other goals on the list. Sometimes we change them; sometimes life changes them for us.

I know what you're thinking. Short-term? Mid-term? Long-term? Schmong-term? Why all these terms? Can't you just have some goals and leave it at that?

The goal (sorry, bad pun...) is to make the process manageable and easier on which to focus. Short-term goals are the present, perhaps a 3-12 month window. Mid-term goals move your horizon out a little further, focusing on a 2-5 year time-frame. Finally, your long-term goals can go out as far as 10, 15 even 20 years or more. It's ok to dream a little bit at this level, so be creative. The pictures will become

clearer as the process starts and as our time frame changes. Remember, there are no limitations on setting goals at any stage in your life.

The process is a flow; the first step is to set goals. Second, we pursue them, doing whatever activities need to be done to accomplish them. Then at some predefined point – perhaps the first day of every month or quarterly – we review what we have accomplished and map it against our goals. What did we learn? How are we doing? Once we know where we are, we can cross off the accomplished or make adjustments if required. We then generate new goals to replace the completed goals and the cycle continues.

Why don't more people do this? My personal belief is that people don't understand that there is no such thing as a right or wrong goal. The fear of failure keeps us from writing them down. Resolutions, after all, are things we verbally tell our friends. When it comes to goals, if we write them

down, we share them and then don't attain them, somehow we have failed. It's not a failure to attempt to do something and not achieve it. The failure comes in not making the attempt in the first place.

Just because you create goals on paper doesn't

mean you'll accomplish them all. Don't kid yourself – it does take work. Far too many people associate the word 'work' with the word 'hard' and, to be frank, that might just be what stops people from beginning the process!

We have a brand new year ahead of us – and when we look back at it ten years from now a decade will have passed by, regardless of our decision to set goals and to navigate a path of our own design. As the clock rolls over on December 31<sup>st</sup> my goal is to clink a glass and say "Be it resolved that this is the start of another great year!"

I wish the same for all of you.'

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