

Don't Strive for Mediocrity!

This is the time of year when insurance professionals are focused on finishing the year strong and reaching all those goals their company has set - premiums written, policies issued, agents recruited, etc. It's also the time we begin to think about next year. We think about what goals we'd like to attain, how we're going to do things differently in the upcoming year, and the mistakes we hope to avoid.

As a coach, I'm always in favor of people setting goals and developing a game plan to reach them. We stand a much greater chance of reaching a goal when it's properly developed and it's written down. A properly written goal is S.M.A.R.T. goal. In other words, it's Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Rewarding, and Time-specific. Additionally it should be stated in positive terms. As an example, don't create a goal such as: "I won't be disorganized in the coming year" but rather one stated: "I will organize my time better this year." If we examine this goal, keeping the SMART concepts in mind, we'd ask: Is it Specific? (No) Is it Measurable? (No) Is it Attainable? (Yes) Is it Rewarding? (Maybe) Is it Time-specific? (No)

A better version of "I will organize my time better this year." would be: "I will develop a system for scheduling my day by January 15th." Specific. Measurable. Attainable. Time-specific. Whether this goal is Rewarding depends on what benefit you'll receive by being more efficient.

Let's take the goal-setting process one step further by refining a production goal. Often I'll have clients tell me they have a goal of reaching a certain income level in the coming year. We'll use \$100,000 as our example. If the goal is stated as, "I earn \$100,000 in 2004.", it qualifies as a SMART goal. The problem is that while it may be a SMART goal, it isn't a useful one! It is a necessary goal (stating an income target) but it isn't sufficient to help you get there. While setting a goal of reaching \$100,000 (or \$200,000 or \$500,000) is important, not setting activity goals that support the attainment of your goal is like planning to climb Mt. Everest without planning all the steps along the way! A key, therefore, in attaining a big goal is to set goals for the steps that will bring you there. For instance, if you know your conversion ratios you can set the appropriate activity levels which will allow you to reach your bigger goal.

As an example, if you're a professional who focuses on recruiting, you may have a goal of recruiting three good agents during the coming year. If you "convert" one agent out of every three agent trainees, it means you need to find at least nine trainees during the year. If it takes two interested and qualified prospects to get one trainee, it means you'll need to find 18 qualified and interested prospects during the year. If it takes five interviews to find an interested and qualified prospect, you'll need to conduct 45 interviews throughout the year, or about one a week. You might be tempted at this point to develop a goal of conducting one interview each week of the year. The problem with that is that it's like setting a goal of conducting 20 interviews a week. Nice idea, except that the real key is *how you're going to get* those interviews. The last step, therefore, is coming up with a plan to generate an interview each week. There are many ways to find candidates and to generate interview opportunities. (My e-class on Highly Successful Recruiting helps you develop systems that fit your marketing style.) The key is to develop enough recruiting activity (usually two or three systems) to produce your interview goal. Once you've developed those, the goal(s) that will make a difference in your success will emerge. One of those goals might read something like: "I visit my better agents every other month to ask them for candidate referrals."

Now that we've tweaked your goal-setting skills, I'd like to throw out a challenge for you to consider...

Most folks I speak with are sincere on working towards achieving the goals set by their company. But isn't working towards the company's goals just striving for the minimum? Isn't

that striving for mediocrity? Is it really such a great accomplishment to just “get by”? I challenge you to put the company’s goals aside and instead, set goals that reflect who you are; goals that reflect your greatness. If the company wants 20 policies sold each year, why not sell 40? If the company wants you to add 3 new agents each year, why not add 10? The question really is: Are you the kind of person who wants to be known for not being disqualified or are you a person who wants to be known for setting an example of excellence?

Start engaging in what I call possibility thinking. Rather than look to incrementally improve, why not ask yourself, “If I can sell 20, what’s stopping me from selling 30 (or 40 or 50)? There may be valid obstacles in your way, but by asking that question of yourself you begin to identify what has to change in order for you to accomplish your new goal. Clearly not everything stands in your way towards success. By identifying the one or two issues which are obstacles, you begin the process of eliminating or reducing the bottlenecks and impediments to your progress.

Rise above the average. Don’t strive for mediocrity. Strive to be the best you.

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