

Make Your New Year's Resolution **STICK!**

DON'T LET ANOTHER YEAR
GO BY WITHOUT **PROGRESS,**
GROWTH AND **IMPROVEMENT**

By Steve McClatchy

How did you do in 2014 with your New Year's Resolutions? Are you celebrating with jubilation from accomplishing all of them? Did you follow through on your promises to yourself to improve your life, your relationships, your wealth, health and happiness? No? Well, don't be too hard on yourself; lots of people will make the same resolutions this year that they made last year, and the year before.

It usually goes something like this, you resolve to lose weight, write a book, get a new job, go to graduate school, et cetera, you might even write it down on your to-do list, but by the time the Girl Scouts show up to sell their cookies in February, the resolution is forgotten.

So why do so many fail and so few succeed at achieving their goals and resolutions? The key to your success or failure is found in a little difference between your to-do list and your calendar. The most successful people don't let their planning stop with their to-do list. They take out their calendar and they make sure they have their most important priorities scheduled and defended.

If someone were to ask if you were available this Thursday for a meeting the first thing you would do is check your calendar. If your calendar says you're busy on Thursday you would decline the invitation and steer your meeting toward another day. Notice that you did not check your to-do list for Thursday, you checked your calendar. This little difference in the way you treat tasks and appointments can be vitally important to your success or failure in achieving your goals and resolutions.

These two tools that most people use to help their brain manage daily life, the to-do list and the calendar, do not serve the same purpose. Your to-do list contains a list of tasks that are time flexible, to which you have not assigned specific times to complete. Your calendar, on the other hand, contains a list of tasks that are time specific, to which you have assigned specific times to complete. As a result of these time specific commitments you have given yourself a lot more work to do. Each time something comes up you will now have to reference these commitments to make sure you don't double book yourself. You will have to defend them against other tasks or appointments that want the same time slot. You will now have to work everything else around completing this specific task at this specific time. This appointment will influence what you can do, where you can be and who you can be with before it and after it. Do you see all the extra work that is involved in putting an appointment on your calendar? Because of the extra work involved in scheduling them, working around them and defending them repeatedly, we reserve appointments on the calendar for what is most important. If you are going to go through all of this it better be important!

There is another problem we face when it comes to improvement in our lives: our maintenance items. Maintenance items include your morning routine, eating three meals a day, dishes, trash, laundry, bills, haircuts, grocery shopping, car maintenance, house maintenance, taxes,

sleeping, voice mails, emails, reports, expenses, budgets, meetings, presentations and everything in life that would eventually be brought to your attention if you didn't do it. The problem with maintenance items is life creates them every day. There is never a time when they are complete because they repeat. We don't check off the task of putting gas in the car. Every mile you drive means that task is going to repeat soon. This is what happens with all your maintenance items.

If there is always a maintenance item to do then you could spend all of your time doing them and catching up would always be just out of reach. You can always find something that needs to be maintained, cleaned, fixed, fed, paid, filled up or emptied out. If you can fill all your time with maintenance then there is no time in life for goals and improvement! Wait, let me say that again. There is no time in life for goals!

To have goals in your life you have to "make time." The question isn't: "is there time for goals?" The question is "how far are you willing to be behind on your maintenance items to have goals in your life?" "Making time" is an expression we use to describe the process of putting the commitment on our calendar, defending it, working around it and deciding to put off our maintenance items because of it. That is the process we call "making time."

This is the key to success with your New Year's resolutions, your goals in your business, your personal life, and anything that you want to accomplish. What in your life is worth planning, scheduling, defending and being behind on your maintenance items because of it? What step can you take today to make your life better, reduce your stress, move your business forward, or improve your important relationships? Is it exercise, creating a budget, finding a mentor, scheduling a date night, benchmarking the competition, fixing a broken system at work, networking, or enrolling in a training class? If these things are not scheduled and defended they will not happen.

There are some things in life that you remember for a year, five years, a decade or even a lifetime. Goals and resolutions fall into this category. How long will you remember getting a degree or advanced degree, learning a new musical instrument, documenting your family tree, getting a new job, presenting at a big industry convention or writing an article that gets published? These things are much more memorable than your commute to work, paying your bills, taking out the trash, picking up your dry cleaning or submitting your monthly report. When you look at the results that come from moving things forward, achieving your goals, learning new things

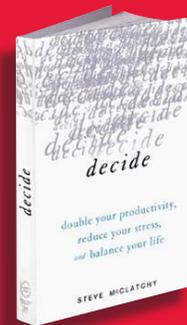
or gaining more experience you will see that these things are worth defending. They are worth all the trouble and extra work that comes from placing them on your calendar and committing to them.

When you see how these accomplishments and improvements contribute to your self-esteem, confidence and your outlook on life, you'll see that these things are worth defending and not leaving to chance. Make a list of your loftiest goals for life or what you want to change for tomorrow. Then take one small piece off your to-do list and put it on your calendar today so you can make it happen.

Achieving goals and resolutions is possible and a lot of people are successful with them each year. Each year in the United States there are over 100,000 people that graduate with an MBA degree, over 300,000 books are published, over 500,000 people run marathons, and over six million people take piano lessons. You can search these and other statistics online very quickly for inspiration.

Don't just dream of a goal, add it to a to-do list and leave it to chance. Take the final step needed to make it a reality! Use your calendar as a weapon to move your life forward. Make this your year for progress, growth, improvement and happiness. Make this your year for results!

Steve McClatchy, president of Alleer Training & Consulting, provides training, consulting and speaking services in the areas of Consultative Selling, Leadership and Time Management. Steve is also author of the book *Decide: Work Smarter, Reduce Your Stress & Lead by Example* which is a New York Times, USA Today and Amazon bestseller. If you would like to learn more about the ways Alleer can be a resource to your organization, email Steve.McClatchy@alleer.com or call 800-860-1171.



Decide! Newly released *Decide* is a New York Times (#2), USA Today Business (#1), and Amazon (#1) Bestseller! Follow Steve McClatchy's no-nonsense and practical approach, and you'll soon lead at your highest level of personal performance.