

Without a Plan, You're Doomed

By John Madden

“My job is an endless series of deadlines, I am constantly putting out fires” You’ve probably heard talk like that a time or two. You may sound like that yourself on occasion.

Are you a planner or a “firefighter”? Of course you know that real firefighters plan more than most of us do - to be ready to save lives and property when the emergency occurs. Not so for those of us who just play it by ear and hope that everything will turn out okay.

If you want to be a failure, then don’t bother to plan; avoid any phrase, document, or discussion with the word “plan” in it. You see, planning is only a habit of the really successful, so if you want to steer clear of that lot, no planning is the guaranteed modus operandi.

A major reason we don’t plan is that we have to deal with the future, and the future forces us to ask questions about what might or could be - as opposed to what was and what is. Because the future is unclear, many believe that planning for it is little more than guessing about the unknown.

Life’s greatest challenge is making a plan for what we would love to do at some time in the future. We know we need a plan. But we don’t know how to get started. Here’s a way you might try:

1. Plan backwards.

Start with the desired outcome or result. Take a period of time, say a year. Take a goal, and divide the year by the goal to end up with segments of the goal. So you have twelve months to achieve the goal.

You break the goal down into segments of “next steps”, and you break the year into months or weeks. Allocate a period of time for completion of each step, working backwards from the final step.

Let’s say you want to publish your book in a year (Not impossible – some writers can finish a book in a couple of months or less). Twelve months from now, write, “First printing of (Title) delivered” You have the goal, the published book, and you have the time, twelve months. Now carve up the goal.

2. Take small steps toward big results.

What needs to happen before the book is published? Make a list. Just brainstorm with yourself or a friend on all the things you know or think have to be done. Write them down, as you think of them - in no particular order. Then put them in the order in which you believe they need to be done. For instance, proof reading will need to be completed before the final printing; getting the book copyrighted will come after editing, and so on. Find out what time it will take for each step and allocate that in the plan.

Of course the major task is *writing* the book and you should put a target number of words or pages to be completed each month, each week - or even each day, if you can commit to more than one day a week.

3. Ask for help

Plans change for all kinds of reasons. A resource you thought you had may not be available any more, or you have personal or business problems that you didn’t expect. These things will inevitably throw you off balance, but keep your goal firmly in front of you and you will maintain focus. Ask those who have been there on the same journey or project for help. Get on

the Internet for tips on writing, planning, goal achieving, etc. There are so many resources out there available to us that there is no excuse today to not have a plan to reach your goal and fulfill your dream.

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