

July, 2009 Goal Setting and “Tolerations”

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July is a great time to use the creative, non-routine days of summer to make positive changes. Use this 6 Week Goal Setting Form to help you work towards your goal. This is for one project or goal broken down into bite size pieces. To quote a client recently, “How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.”

[Print up the form I provided, and pick a project you would like to accomplish before Summer’s end.](#)

Spend a little time, and think about all the necessary steps to get the goal accomplished, then go back and put them in their proper order. To do this, try this idea....

There is a concept used in Project Management called “Critical Path” ([click here fore more info](#)).

The Basics are:

Every project is made up of parts, of Critical Path Activities and Float Activities.

One Critical Path Activity must be completed before the next activity can begin.

Float: Non-CP Path Activities are said to have Float – they can begin or end any time along the path.

Longest activity should often begin first, spending time at the outset to ensure the entire project remains on schedule.

Typically, the CP Activities, set end to end, would determine the length of the project.

These issues are important to understand to determine where your project has flexibility and where it does not.

What this all means is that most projects require some steps to be done before a different one can be completed.

For example, if I wanted to get professional portraits of my sons taken, I would have to

Find a photographer (ask a friend, check out the yellow pages)

Make an appointment (for maybe 2 weeks from now)

Get haircuts, and

Buy a snazzy outfit before we could go.

Obviously, I have to find the photographer before I make the appointment, but the hair cut and shopping tasks are flexible, so long as I get them done before the appointment.

Some times it helps to move back from your deadline to determine your Critical Path. I like to use Party Invitations as an example.

Imagine I am hosting an Event – Today!

One Week ago: I have to call the caterer with my numbers a week before my event

2 Weeks ago: I have to get my RSVPs back, after waiting 2 weeks from mailing invitations

4 weeks ago: Mail invitations

5 weeks ago: Order invitations (takes a week to print) and buy stamps

6 weeks ago: Create guest list and book the date, or plan the party

Some time after we choose the date but before we have the party, we have to choose the food, order the beverages and decorations, buy the gift, etc., but those are our Float Items.

Again, some things have to come before others. I can’t mail invitations unless I have them. And I don’t know how many to order until I have my guest list.

“Critical Path” helps us to think of a project as a group of related tasks, and not one really big and overwhelming task. It also helps us prioritize the tasks required.

So:

We are spending 6 weeks on this project, to make it manageable (it may be part of a greater whole).

Begin longest projects first, to ensure they are done in the 6 week span.

Projects happen in a path, steps need to happen in order. I can’t send out new business cards until they are complete, I can’t get them printed until the new logo is created, I can’t create a new logo until I meet with my graphic artist.

My Summer Goal is to rid myself of Tolerations. It is a goal with many steps. I am tackling one Toleration a week for six weeks, and I'll share a few with you.

What are Tolerations? Think of them as Life Clutter. Things you don't need, that are not useful and that you don't particularly like. Google "Tolerations" for the expert's definitions.

You may actually hate them, but you may also just be so used to them, they no longer excite much feeling, one way or the other.

Identifying tolerations requires us to be aware of them, so I had to look at things with a very critical eye for a while.

After we have identified a Toleration, a dull throbbing tooth-ache in your mental mindscape, we act get rid of the toleration and enjoy our life more fully.

I set my six week goals and decided to do the hiring help / time management one first., to help ensure the others get done, too!

My first example for Tolerations is Always struggling to find Focused Time for my Business in the summer.

My kids are the greatest kids on the planet, but I work from home, and for 3 months of the year, every one is home a lot. This can put a strain on efficiency and effectiveness.

I've known summer is coming, but there are blocks sometimes to putting it all together, or I foolishly think I can do it all and do it all well. Solo.....

Time to work, ever during summer vacation:

I found a trustworthy teenager, for those days when the kids want to stay at home instead of going to daycare;

I signed up the 4 year old for day camp, which he loves and which gives me 7 hours a week to work alone at home or see clients; and

I re-set the parental locks on the family room TV, so the kids can safely watch in another room to give me a little quiet time to get things done.

Another example of Tolerations has to do with my watch.

I try to not be ruled by time. I really like the free flow of life, and if given a chance, I would never look at a clock. This will never happen, though, as I have lots of people I am responsible to and for, and that requires being aware of time.

I found a cool watch in Lake Michigan on an awesome vacation. Really, I did. It is very expensive, a kinetic watch which never needs winding because it gets wound with the movement of my hand. Cool, right? It has never kept good time. Ever. Because I am hyperkinetic, it always runs fast. And I know this, but I still wore it. And if I didn't wear it for a few days it stopped working because it requires movement to stay wound. What is worse, I have other great watches that do work properly whose batteries died in the last few years because I have been wrestling with this cool but unreliable one.

How much time have I wasted checking the time and being wrong, or not trusting the watch and looking elsewhere for the correct time? Two weeks ago, I took in all my good and reliable watches for new batteries. Toleration eliminated.

Another Toleration is my neglected Reading List:

I am a reader. My oldest son asked me the other day what my favorite activity was when I was his age. I said "Reading" and we shared a smile, because this is his favorite (and still mine), too. I love books, new ideas and characters and places that may exist only in an author's imagination and the pages of a book. But.....

I add books to my reading list all the time, that I read reviews for or a friend suggests I might like. But as much as I read, and I read a lot, the list kept getting longer without me ever checking items off, or feeling like I was doing these books on the list justice. I have now

Added a weekly trip to my local library, much to my children's delight;

Rekindled my attachment to audio books, too, which makes travel that much more pleasant;

Decided that reading the professional books an investment in my business, so I have carved out time for that, too, even if it is only one professional book every week or two.

Pictures, pictures, pictures.

I have had a great camera phone for 2 years. The designers created the phone to take pictures but did not manufacture the cable to get them off the phone. I kid you not. Memory was full, has been for months. Turns out there a USB adapter piece, all of \$20 at Office Max, that works like my blue tooth earpiece, that gets the pix off my phone and on to my PC. My phone is ready again to take pictures.

We went on vacation earlier in the month, and realized before leaving that all the memory sticks for the digital camera were full. The pictures were downloaded to our computer long ago, we had just never cleaned off the sticks. 10 minute task once we sat down to do it. Done.

This also enabled me to use dozens of pictures for a Digital Picture Frame we were giving as a gift. It was so gratifying to quickly and efficiently put my hands on the digital images.

And I am happy to say I already printed up the pix from our vacation and my son put it in our scrapbook.

I hope that Goal Setting, and the example of my goal setting and tolerations helps you set your summer goals and take care of some projects this summer! Enjoy!

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