





It seems like everyone has that one friend who seems to be perfect. He or she gets everything done on the “to-do” list. The house is perfect, children well behaved, not a hair out of place. They magically accomplish any goal they set, no matter the curve balls. Have they found some secret way to stop the clock and find more than 24 hours in a day? It’s hard not to feel just a bit envious of someone who seems to have it all together and accomplishes so many things seemingly so effortlessly.

by Marie Herman, CAP-OM, ACS

With a few simple steps and some self-discipline, everyone can have that level of seemingly effortless accomplishment.

Identify Your Priorities And Goals

If you ask people what their priorities are and then review their daily diaries to see how they spend their time, their time management would rarely match up with their stated priorities. It's the perfect illustration of Stephen Covey's "Parable of the Rocks." If you don't put the big rocks (important things) in first, the sand and water (unimportant time wasters) fill all the available space.

First, define your goals and make sure they're yours. Communication and public speaking expert Felicia J. Slattery spells it out this way.

"When it comes to reaching goals, ask yourself, 'who set this goal for me?' When you think about it deep down, if it's your mom who always wanted you to have a college degree, or your spouse who wants you to get more organized, or your boss who wants you to roll full steam ahead in the company, you won't be as committed to your goals as if that goal came from inside yourself."

Most of us have probably received some training over the years for how to set SMART goals. You remember those, don't you? Specific-Measurable-Attainable-Realistic-Timebound. That acronym is the holy grail of goal-setting principles.

Breaking The Goals Down Into Action Steps

Setting goals is rarely the problem. The real problem is actually achieving those goals. Days become weeks and a year later we look back at that list of goals and realize we haven't accomplished a single thing. Life kept interfering, or more accurately, we allowed life to interfere with our priorities.

What is the single most important thing you would like to improve in the next year? It could be professional (get a promotion or new job, achieve a certain certification), personal (learn a skill, write an article, discover a new hobby), spiritual (read the Bible, learn the art of meditation), etc. Only you can decide.

Once you identify your primary goal, the next step is to ask yourself some key questions to determine how best to achieve that goal.

For example, what might be holding you back from advancing in your current position or moving up to a higher

Goal: Take the Microsoft Office certification exam in Word, Excel, Outlook at the Expert level by (insert date). Here are steps to take to accomplish that goal:

- Visit certiport.com and review the requirements for each exam

SETTING PERFORMANCE REVIEW GOALS

Administrative professionals sometimes struggle with setting goals because our day seems to be filled with 100 five-minute projects that don't translate well to performance review goals. How do you make an annual goal out of clearing paper jams from the copier? Here are a few examples of goals that may jumpstart your thought process in coming up with goals for your performance review.

Personal/Team Development Goals

- Will distribute minutes/action items within 48 hours of meeting
- Will create agendas and assist team leader in following agenda during meeting to help keep team on track for time and content
- Will track metrics of team (i.e. whatever we are being measured on)

Managing The Business Goals

- Will review procedures within my realm to ensure that they are most efficient
- Will file all incoming materials within 48 hours of receipt
- Will oversee all travel arrangements for the people I support to ensure they are in the right location at the right time

Client Management Goals

- Will set up meetings with my boss with clients
- Will ensure that clients are contacted regularly to ensure ongoing client satisfaction
- Will maintain client database
- Will oversee mailing of holiday cards
- Will oversee mailing of marketing materials to clients

position? Are there certain programs you need to learn? Are you prepared for all the responsibilities in that new position? What certifications might be helpful?

Once you've identified the answers to those key questions, you can begin putting together an action plan. Using our previous example, perhaps you decide Microsoft Office certification would be helpful. You can break that goal out into concrete steps:

- Identify local testing sites
- Decide the order in which you are going to take the exams.
- Research classes or self-study options.
- Talk to boss to see if company will pay.
- Set a deadline for taking the exam (example: 60 days). Put a note on calendar at two-week intervals to remind yourself to prepare.
- Buy the vouchers for at least one

test (determine if you want the retake option; check expiration dates).

- Sign up for the test.
- Take the test.
- If you pass, repeat process for next exam. If you don't pass, note areas

amount of time per day working toward your goals. Just 15 minutes a day works out to almost a full day a month devoted to your goal. Having a list of quick projects available at your fingertips and getting into the habit of checking that list whenever an unexpected 15 minutes

your computer. Many experts say that the very act of writing down your goals by hand helps to set them in your mind. The physical act of carrying study materials with you everywhere you go is another good reminder and allows you to study in spare moments.

Have someone hold you accountable. As Executive Assistant Stacey Brewer, CAP-OM, says, "recognizing where one's strengths and weaknesses lie is key to understanding how successful one will be toward achieving a goal. Having an accountability partner who checks in on you frequently is also a great tool. We are always more likely to achieve a goal when we tell someone about it."

There are three simple steps you can take to achieve goals:

- 1) Identify the final goal.
- 2) Decide what the next step is toward achieving that goal.
- 3) Do the next step within the next "x" number of days.

As long as you are continually working on the next step, you will make progress on your goals.

By identifying next steps, you may find you can work on multiple goals at one time by completing one step toward each goal each week or month. When your goals are broken out into 15-60 minute tasks and you know exactly what you have to do next, it's not hard to find pockets of time to work on them. Keeping the steps front and center makes a difference.

Our actions show our priorities. Do your actions match your stated priorities? Facebook or the Microsoft Office Specialist certification? If you don't prioritize your time effectively, life tends to swoop in and prioritize it for us, usually placing less important tasks first.

□ Business Development Goals

- Will research industries and trends for my boss as requested or on my own initiative
- Will call "x" number of clients per week to ask if we can assist them in any way
- Will set up "x" number of client marketing lunches with boss per month
- Will work to update marketing materials so they fully reflect our company's services

□ Technical Competence Goals

- Will take classes in preparation for CAP exam
- Will sit for CAP exam
- Will take Microsoft Office Specialist exam
- Will take two 1-2 day seminars during the year on topics that are relevant to my position
- Will submit an article for publication in a relevant publication

□ Career Development Goals

- Will meet with executive to discuss how my responsibilities might be increased to provide more value to the company
- Will train to be a back up to "xyz" so that I increase my value to the company
- Will share my knowledge with my coworkers by offering Lunch and Learn sessions on various topics or following up on seminars attended
- Will act as a role model for other administrative professionals by being available as a mentor as needed

Ask your boss what new skills he or she thinks you should be acquiring. Come up with a list of suggestions to be considered. The best type of goal is one that can be broken down into steps to demonstrate progress during the year.

on test where you felt weak and focus on those areas.

Each step can be assigned a specific timeframe and marked as complete or not complete. In some cases, certain steps are dependent on a prior step but in other cases, certain steps can be completed simultaneously. You could visit the research website and locate the testing centers at the same time.

Commit to spending a certain

amount of time per day working toward your goals. Just 15 minutes a day works out to almost a full day a month devoted to your goal. Having a list of quick projects available at your fingertips and getting into the habit of checking that list whenever an unexpected 15 minutes

opens up ensures you will make progress even more quickly. Make full use of calendar technology by using tasks and alarms to remind you of what you should be working on. You don't need to record every step, but you need to record the next step you are taking.

You may find it helpful to have something physical to remind you of your goals. It could be a sticky note on the wall or a background picture on

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