

Stop Wishing, Start Doing

Amy Simone, A Space in Time

Recently, I saw a sign that read “Stop Wishing, Start Doing”. As we enter this new year, wouldn’t it be wonderful to adopt this motto? Setting goals and making resolutions is the “wishing” part of this statement. But how do we move beyond writing wishes on a list in the hopes that they will magically be accomplished? Unfortunately, unless you are a Disney character, your wishes likely will not come true without some specific action on your part.

You may not be surprised to learn that I am a list-maker. I’m really quite good at it. However, people like me can get caught in the planning-to-do stage. If you find that you’re excellent at jotting down what you’d like to learn, where you’d like to travel to, and how you’d like to improve yourself this year but nothing ever comes of it, it’s time to update your implementation process - in other words “start doing”!

This is where that fancy acronym SMART can help you. I introduced it last spring as a goal-setting tool because it really does provide the guidelines to ensure success. I’ll use an example of a big trip that might be on a wish list. In this scenario, the measurement would actually be the realization of the wish.

Specific – This year I would like to travel to Peru.

Measurable – Did I actually go to Peru?

Action-Oriented - Researching the country online, purchasing a Peru travel book, working with a travel agent, speaking to friends who have been to Peru, determining what areas to visit, ensuring that passports are up to date, buying plane tickets, reserving hotels, lining up other transportation and booking sight-seeing tours.

Realistic – Can I afford this trip? Do I have enough time off from work to make the trip worthwhile?

Time Based – When should I go? Work backwards from there to determine when you’ll need to start researching and reserving the travel arrangements.

Of course, there are a host of other roadblocks that might try to keep you from achieving your wishes. One impediment might be having too many wishes. Another may be uncertainty about where to start. What if you are convinced that your wishes are too big to actually accomplish? There are also wishes that seem like they’ll be just too much work. The trick is to take a hard look at your list and whittle it down to those wishes that you’re most passionate about. Those are ones that you will truly be able to commit to focusing on. Make sure they’re specific and then run them through the SMART reality meter to see if they’ll be a go for this year.

And what should you do if you determine that your wishes are not going to materialize this year? The answer is to put them aside on a “maybe next year” wish list. The advantage of making this new list is that those temporarily unattainable wishes will not be forgotten. Instead, you will be free to focus your attention on the wishes that you can realize this year. Continue to process the wishes until you’ve come up with a short list of achievable ones. It may be tough to admit but it is better to fully accomplish three (or less!) wishes than to partially accomplish or not even make a start on ten wishes.

Happy New Year and keep on wishing – and doing!