

PUBLICATION

Revisiting 2020 Goals During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Where do you see yourself on December 31, 2020? In a time of social distancing, working from home, and having more "free" time than we could have anticipated at the beginning of this year, this is a question more of us should consider. We are primed for self-reflection and taking time to set professional and personal goals for not only the remainder of 2020 but for this new decade.

Regardless of your position or where you work, here are some best practices to help you take advantage of your "free" time.

1. **Revisit and Establish Your Goals.** Let's face it. When setting your annual goals or New Year's resolutions, the impact of a global pandemic and economic meltdown was not a consideration. Yet, here we are. COVID-19 has forced the world to slow down and spend more time at home, with fewer or different distractions. Now is the perfect opportunity to use some of this time to reflect on your priorities and adjust your long- and short-term goals. In addition, spend some time spring cleaning and removing any clutter from your surroundings. With a clean and fresh perspective, even by changing the look and feel of your environment, you will be able to think more clearly and outside the box as you revisit your priorities and goals. The key is to adjust your focus to where it is needed the most, whether that is based on your family or professional obligations.

Next, make targeted decisions regarding what you want to work towards, both personally and professionally, and be sure to prioritize those goals. Setting and tackling smaller goals along the way will help you stay motivated to reach the bigger, long-term goals. Otherwise, lack of motivation could make your goals seem unattainable and increase the chances of veering off course.

2. **Record Your Goals Using Tailored Resources.** A good way to remain motivated is to write down your goals. Whether you prefer to type them or write them in a journal, put specific goals on paper. Choose the organizational tools that suit your lifestyle and personality, so that you are encouraged to frequently refer to them throughout the year. My personal favorites are Microsoft OneNote coupled with a portable 7" by 9" monthly and weekly calendar. There are countless other resources, from phone applications to white boards, that you can use to organize your thoughts, goals, and tasks. Identify the tool that will work best for you.

Once you have the right device to fit your needs, be sure to record your goals with as much detail as possible. Avoid writing general, blanket statements, which provide little direction. The more specifics you include, the more likely you are to implement and review them later. Often, writing down your thoughts will help determine whether they are practical and achievable, which is important given the drastic changes that have swept through the country due to the coronavirus pandemic.

3. **Research and Create Distinct, Attainable Tasks.** Ensure that your goals are attainable. Annual goals cannot be reached without working towards them every day, week, month, and quarter. Do your due diligence to determine exactly what steps are necessary to achieve your larger, end-of-the-

year goals using the internet, books, and conversations with others. There are easily accessible "how-to" guides for practically everything. But be mindful of your strengths and weaknesses when crafting your individual plan and be wary of information overload.

To track your progress, identify smaller, attainable action items that will result in reaching your overall goal. For example, if you work in a corporate legal department and have the goal of improving integration of legal and business practices, it is simple to write down a quarterly goal of connecting with different departments at your company. A more helpful approach, however, is to identify smaller, more defined tasks like making a certain number of phone calls to key members of those departments each month. Even further, you could identify in advance the particular business practices you plan to discuss with each of those individuals during your calls, and perhaps then coordinate follow-up remote meetings to promote efficiency and success in those departments.

4. **Grab an Accountability Partner.** To truly be successful, you must hold yourself accountable to completing these tasks. Holding yourself accountable while working at home may not be as easy as it sounds, given family and work obligations. Priorities can easily get lost in the chaos when retreating behind a computer screen. A best practice to assist with these concerns is to share your new goals and action items with others. Verbalizing your goals to another person further incentivizes you to keep your commitment. In the process, you may inspire others to set and/or renew their goals.

You can even identify an accountability partner to help keep you on track. If your goal is work-related, then your employer's internal marketing or business development personnel could make great accountability partners. But, an accountability partner does not have to be a marketing professional, a colleague, or even someone who has deep insight into your work obligations. As long as your selected accountability partner will listen to your goals and ask about your progress, it will work. These types of relationships usually work well when they are mutually beneficial, so consider how you can be a resource for your accountability partner as well.

5. **Keep Going, One Day at a Time.** Accomplishing big goals is a marathon, not a sprint. If you do not achieve some of your smaller tasks or expectations, do not be discouraged. Circumstances beyond your control will occur, including the COVID-19 pandemic, and you may occasionally get derailed from your goals. However, carefully and thoughtfully crafting your priorities, goals, attainable tasks, and action items, as well as selecting accountability partners now, will position you for success despite setbacks.

Maintain a well-rounded schedule by practicing habits that will energize and sustain you. Sharpen your saw by staying informed about your industry and applicable laws. In addition, take time to consider and strengthen your physical and mental health, and keep connected with others, including your accountability partner. Staying healthy and balanced will prove invaluable in having the stamina and drive to push to achieve your goals.

Before you know it, 2020 will come to an end and you will be celebrating your accomplishments. You will be grateful for investing your time earlier in the year to clearly think through, research, and organize your goals. Challenges have the ability to bring out the best in us, so let us turn our current circumstances into a strategic opportunity to position ourselves for success.

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