

Focus on Your Preferred Future

Without action steps or plans, goals are merely dreams.

by Dick Zalack, President ResultsPlus

Imagine if every morning when you awoke, there was a card table with a mound of jigsaw puzzle pieces on it. And your job every day was to put those pieces together to create a finished puzzle. And tomorrow morning when you awoke, there would be another new mound of pieces to add to today's.

Only, you have no idea what the final picture is supposed to look like because they didn't give you a box with the finished picture on it! How would you proceed? How would you know how far you had to go to get done? How would you know when you *were* done?

This is life without a plan, life without a Preferred Future. And the law of this life is this: "If you don't know why you're doing what you're doing, you'll never have enough time to get it done."

Our personal life and our work are both a series of choices — choices of activities that we will perform next. The activities that we choose to perform determine our results, our futures. And the choice we have is between a future or for a Preferred Future.

If the culmination of the activities we perform is automatically a future, why not have those activities culminate in a future that we choose to have? In a future we prefer?

If life is assembling the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, why not have the final picture be something we'd like it be?

We can.

And we do that by starting with a



goal that's almost too big to achieve.

When a city needs to lure or retain a sports franchise in the 90s, they need a big-dream goal of a new stadium, not an incremental goal like fixing up the old stadium by adding loges!

There's no way that new stadium can be completed in a day, a month, or even a year. It takes about three years to finish a project of this size. When it's first talked about, it's hard to believe it will ever happen. But every day another piece of the puzzle is put in place and eventually the picture on the box becomes a real-live stadium. And the impossible dream comes true.

Remember, now, that the stadium, even though an almost impossible goal, is not really the final goal. The ultimate goal is to get a new team in town (or keep your present one!) And even that goal likely has a larger focus such as keeping your city financially healthy by creating a positive living environment.

Each of us has goals like these, too. But without action steps or plans, these goals are merely dreams.

Have you ever wanted to earn more

money? Have you ever told yourself, "If I just made 15% more I'd be okay?" While this seems a reasonable goal, and doable, it's actually difficult because your options are limited. Usually to something like, "I just need to get a raise!"

If, however, you set a goal to double your income in three years, you have to start to think differently to achieve that. And you'll also have to stop doing something you're currently doing to reach this Preferred Future. As you look at the obstacles along the path to this Preferred Future, you'll discover that these obstacles are actually the action steps you'll need to take to reach your goal.

There are seven areas of your life — each of which needs to have its own Preferred Future.

The first six are: Spiritual (legacy, purpose), Physical, Family, Social (friends, community), Intellect, and Financial. Once you have achieved balance in these six by determining your Preferred Futures, you can then focus on the seventh area of your life, your Career. And when you have a Preferred Future there, and begin to achieve it, you will discover that the success in your career is helping you achieve your Preferred Futures in the first six areas of your life!

The secret of achieving your Preferred Future is this: "Focus on your Preferred Future but respond in the present." When you do that, you automatically identify your highest priorities, for example, and you will find yourself doing not the easiest thing on your to-do list, nor even the next thing, but rather the thing that will help you achieve your goals.

Here are the five steps you'll need to follow to reach your Preferred Future.

1. Clearly define your Preferred Future. I want to make more money is

— over —

by Dick Zalack
President
ResultsPlus



not clearly enough defined. I want to double my income so I can pay off my debts and retire by age 50 is a clearly defined result. Getting a new job is not clearly enough defined — being in charge of the hydraulic engineering department is. If you don't know what the final picture looks like, there is no way you can successfully assemble the pieces of the puzzle.

2. Know why this Preferred Future is important to you. Knowing why the result matters to you, will allow you to make decisions and judgments along the way that will help you get there sooner. Is that new job important to you because of the money? Or because of the status in the eyes of your peers? If you don't know why, you might make the wrong choice for the wrong reason and the goal is always to do the right thing at the right time for the right reason. You can't do that if you don't know why your Preferred Future is important to you.

3. Identify a small step that will open the door. Just like you can't build a stadium overnight, you can't reach your Preferred Future easily. But every jour-

ney has its first step and each step leads to the next. And while all the steps are not the same and some are much harder than others, you have to find a place to start and then begin. You journey nowhere without moving your feet.

4. Monitor your progress. As you progress, look at what you're doing. Keep a record. Make a daily plan. Make a monthly plan. Make a quarterly plan. Make a yearly plan. Make a three-year plan. And take notes. Determine what worked and what didn't. Decide what you would do differently and what you would do better. If you don't keep track of where you are, you won't have any idea if you're getting where you're going.

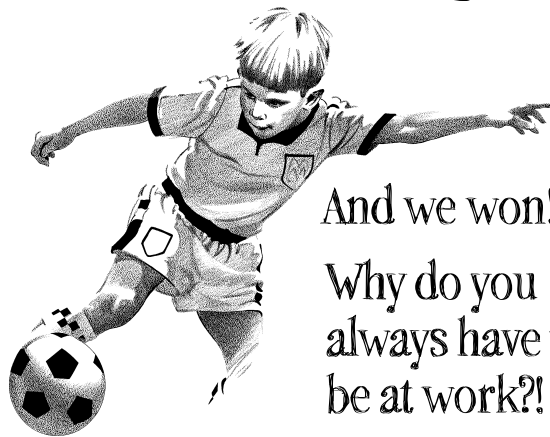
5. Modify your actions based on what you learned. When you have the information on what worked and what didn't, change your action steps accordingly. When you know what you'd do better next time, do it. And constantly revise your plans. If a sailor doesn't change course, he can never reach his goal. The better the sailor, the more frequently he monitors his actions and the more frequently he changes course.

When you Focus on your Preferred Future you are applying the pre-eminent law of body-building and of life. That is, what you focus on gets stronger.

When you create a clearly defined Preferred Future and focus on it constantly, you will discover that every day you are choosing the important puzzle pieces in life that will best help you build your Preferred Future. ■

Dick Zalack, author of "Are you Doing Business or Building One? How to turn your business into your benefactor," is an entrepreneurial strategist based in Cleveland, Ohio, who helps sole practitioners become better small business owners and/or entrepreneurs. He is the president and founder of Focus Four, a program for entrepreneurs that helps them develop a personal strategic plan, and of Result Plus which helps small business owners develop systems to hire, train, and motivate their staff. He can be reached at 330-225-0707 or www.focusfour.com

Dad! I scored a goal!



And we won!

Why do you
always have to
be at work?!

IF THIS SOUNDS ALL TOO FAMILIAR, we'll show you how to *win at business without losing at life*. With our proven process, you'll spend *less* time at work, become *more* effective in everything you do, make *more* money, and *grow* your business faster.

With ResultsPlus, you can watch him make his goals, while you achieve yours!

resultsplus[™]
Better results. You can plan on it.SM

4178 Center Road
Brunswick OH 44212
330-225-1511

© 2001 RESULTSPLUS

www.resultsplus.cc