

NEWS

Are New Year's resolutions outdated?

Did you make any New Year's resolutions for 2008? Apparently about half of us do – down from 88 per cent a couple of decades ago. It seems we are slowly giving up our pursuit of higher standards, better results, more fulfilling lives and improved communities.

Perhaps we are accepting mediocrity. That is sad news indeed, because constant striving is one of the things that makes us uniquely human and it is how we, as a society, have historically progressed and thrived.

Most of us would admit to having some failings in our work performance, personal discipline, health habits, professional results, integrity, confidence and relationships.

We'd admit that we could probably do more with our lives and make a difference in our work and home communities if we strived for some improvements. Yet we rationalize and even excuse our failings as being just part of who we are. As if we have no capacity to change.

The truth, and I say this at the risk of offending, is that many of us are lazy and undisciplined, preferring to escape from the reality of our unfulfilled, mediocre lives to the ersatz gratification found in shopping malls and big screen TVs.

Making resolutions, to most people, means setting goals – goals that are written, measurable, timed and for which discipline is required.

That doesn't sound like a lot of fun, does it? And in 2008 we're all about having fun

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and being happy. This contrasts with the attitudes of our ancestors who subordinated their own happiness to things like service to others and hard work (which is how we all got to where we are today).

But in 2008, at least on this continent, being happy and content are some of our most important values. Discipline is a dirty word. So let's forget about setting specific and measurable goals.

What if your New Year's resolution just

involved, in effect, "polishing" what you've already got going?

I coach dozens of people every year. Some are looking for a career change; some want to sharpen their performance; others have been mandated by their employer to get help for a particular flaw that they possess (like poor time management, lack of interpersonal skills or a problem with anger). All of them need to polish some aspect of their behaviour or performance in order to meet their goals.

When I reflect on the clients with whom I have worked over the years, totaling in the hundreds, I see something very clearly. They all needed to polish one of three universally required behaviours.

These three behaviours seem to transcend differences in organizational levels and job functions – that is, they are as important in the receiving department as in the finance department, as critical for front line staff as for the CEO. When well polished, these behaviours make people satisfying to be around and do business with.

Polishing any one of these could represent a worthwhile resolution for 2008.

#1: Developing People Savvy – This is the number one reason that people fail in their jobs and relationships and it is the main reason that employers hire me as a coach. Frankly, if so many of you didn't lack people savvy, I would be living in my car. Someone with people savvy is easy to like. He is a low maintenance colleague that is a pleasure to work with.

Never manipulative, negative or

controlling, this individual has a way with people that brings out the best in them. He is gracious and genuine; people at all levels respect him. Polish your people savvy by getting feedback. Conduct a small survey of co-workers or friends. Find out what your strong points are and where to strive for improvement. Little things can make a big difference: like smiling more, being agreeable, not needing to be right all the time, and even counting to 10 when angry.

#2: Striving for Excellence – Everyone appreciates working with people who strive to do every aspect of their job with excellence (as opposed to perfection). Whether it's the execution of a project, the meeting of a deadline, a prompt return of phone calls or the manner of conducting a meeting, excellence means exercising self-discipline, having high standards, tending to the details, leaving things and people better for your having been involved.

A common mistake is to assume that a friendly nature compensates for a lack of excellence in work – it doesn't. Striving for excellence does not mean being a perfectionist.

It is not necessary to do everything perfectly. Sometimes a little wild abandon can go a long way. If you're not sure of the difference between excellence and perfection, do some research or hire a coach.

#3: Achieving Inner Peace – How does striving for this make you a better person? Someone with inner peace has positive self-esteem. She takes one day at a time and lives life in harmony with her values.

Her actions are in alignment with her goals. She has integrity, courage and a quiet confidence. She is happy to be alive and therefore a joy to be around. She will not take credit for your work, tear a strip off the customer, talk about you behind your back or fail to keep promises.

There are many books on the subject of Inner Peace to help you to identify changes that you can make in your thinking and your behaviour.

No one is perfect; resolutions are all about striving to be better, but unfortunately most New Year's resolutions are not fulfilled, either because we are not committed passionately or we have not broken them down into specific steps. So if you choose Striving for Excellence, Developing People Savvy or Achieving Inner Peace as part of your overall goal of polishing yourself this year, make sure that your striving is backed by a deep desire and is grounded by a plan. Good luck in '08!

Hanna Dunn is a human resources professional and president of Dunn People Strategies Inc. She has been helping businesses in and around Mississauga to maximize employee engagement and corporate performance for over 20 years. You may reach her through www.dunnpeople.com

Aithent helps firms find soft solutions

Aithent Canada has opened its new offices at 6205 Airport Rd., in Mississauga. The company designs, develops and implements software solutions for customers world wide. On hand for the grand opening were (left to right): Nabarun Chaudhuri, president; Samprati Vishal, SVP Strategy; Ron Bray, sr. director, client solutions; and from the New York City office, Venu Gopal, CEO.

Photo by Stephen Uhraney



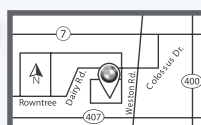
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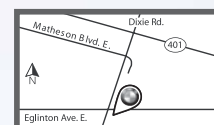


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