



December 2011 + January 2012 — Goal Setting: From SMART to Brilliant



The end of the year always makes me think about goals.

Every December, I take stock of the previous year and ask myself: How well did I achieve what I set out to do? What was my biggest success? What would I like to do differently?

I also begin to look at the next year to fashion what I'd like to see happen in the next 12 months. I admit it. I am a goal-aholic. And in my 15 years as a business owner, I have come to learn that

goals should guide, but never dictate.

So, I never get rigid about achieving each goal that I put on my list. Without doubt, some goals that sound great in January end up pulling me off course by June. So I abandon those mid-year once I realize that they are flawed or unachievable.

Below, you'll find details about how you might want to go about this process of setting goals, sticking to the good ones, and letting go of the lemons.

At right, you'll find my Q&A with Amy Steindler, owner of InsightOut Life. A woman who spent most of her career in the financial world, she had a shift in her goals in 2008 and since then has become a life coach who inspires others to find what makes them happiest.

Not a bad way to end 2011. And as we do, I encourage you to celebrate your achievements from this year.

In today's hard-driving business environment, celebrations are few and far between. So connect with friends and colleagues, and cheer each other on. Then, create a wonderful set of brilliant goals to guide you and the gang through 2012. Next December, get together again to see what you have achieved.

May your holidays be full of warm fellowship, hearty friendships, and good health!

Warmly, *Alice Waagen, President*
[Workforce Learning](#)

Amy Steindler's InsightOut Life



A Q&A with Alice Waagen
[Workforce Learning](#)

When it comes to setting goals, no one is better at helping us all get on task than a life coach. I recently met Amy Steindler of Annapolis, whose company, [InsightOut Life](#), is helping dozens of professionals get on track so they can have the lives they want in 2012 and beyond.

We talked to her about how she came to become a life coach, how she sets goals, and how she helps others set and stick to theirs.

Alice Waagen: We understand that you came to Insight Coaching after 29 years in sales and management, working for big corporations and a Wall Street firm whose names we would recognize.

Amy Steindler: That's right. I was successful no matter what I did, which was a blessing AND a curse, making it harder to uncover what I really, truly, LOVED to do. I stumbled into my sales career without much consideration, going from job to job without a plan. Over time, I realized that my "career" felt hollow, but I had no idea what else to do.

In 2008, I took three of my four weeks of vacation all at once to see if time and distance would give me some perspective. After 17 days of quiet bliss, rafting the Colorado River

THE ART OF SETTING GOALS

By Alice Waagen, PhD

Over the years, my goals have provided focus and direction to my management training business.

For instance, last July, I wrote in my newsletter about attending Penland School of Crafts for a two-week drawing course. Entitled, [The Benefits of Taking a Break](#), it struck a chord with many of my colleagues, who called after reading it.

They were eager to learn how on earth I stumbled onto that experience—and how I was able to make the big decision to check out and go into the woods to draw for two weeks.

I told them that this trip was actually one of my goals—30 years ago when I was in graduate school and learned about these wonderful summer art schools.

Yes, I made a goal, more of a commitment to myself than a fixed goal, that someday I would attend one of these schools.

But amidst the years of working, raising a family, and starting my own company, it lay long dormant, until I attended a program at the Smithsonian American Art Museum last January that focused on Craft in America and featured a panel of experts talking about these schools.

What's more, I was at the Smithsonian that day because of another life goal—becoming more active in arts education. [Click here to read more about that experience.](#)

Obviously, goals provide me with decision-support tools.

When I am faced with a decision about choosing a new direction or action, I match each option against my goals and life commitments.

The decision then becomes very obvious and easy to make. I spend little time arguing which way is the best way. For me, the best way is the direction that gets me closer to goal achievement.

So what makes a good, or SMART, goal?

For a basic primer, click here to learn more about [SMART goal-setting](#). In a nutshell, this is a mnemonic used to set objectives, for project management, employee performance management, and personal development using Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Result-Driven, and Time-Specific criteria.

The first known uses of the term occur in the November 1981 issue of *Management Review*, by George T. Doran.



through the Grand Canyon in October, I emerged somewhat changed. Everything looked different. Little did I know that I had returned to a completely changed world.

Alice Waagen: Let me guess.

Amy Steindler: Yes, the market had fallen off a cliff that made the Grand Canyon look like a crack in the sidewalk. I went back to work, and was truly, madly, deeply miserable. I began to question why I was spending precious days stressed and unhappy. Once I noticed what I was feeling, I had an epiphany: I wasn't living authentically, I was going through the motions to bring home a comfortable paycheck. So I set some new goals for myself.

Alice Waagen: Tell us about the process. It must have been difficult.

Amy Steindler: It was difficult, but I knew I wanted to choose a life that allowed me to express my creativity and my true nature. I left my job in the worst economy since the Depression to honor a longtime dream to spend a month snowboarding. It was the first time I ever really allowed myself to fulfill a dream, and it felt amazing. But when the month was up, I was at a loss. I wanted that amazing dream-fulfillment feeling to be part of my day-to-day life, but I had no idea how to have that.

I interviewed with other financial firms, just to make sure I wasn't throwing away the career of a lifetime. As you can imagine, it still didn't feel good. It was a confusing and disorienting time, and I had no idea how to proceed. What I really needed to do was to allow myself time to dream about the things I loved to do.

That's when I discovered the work of [Martha Beck](#), whom you may know as a columnist for *O, The Oprah Magazine*, and the author of several books, including "Finding Your Own North Star."

I learned how to let go of my old beliefs about who I was supposed to be, and focused on my unique gift, which turned out to be life coaching. I set a goal to get my life-coaching certification, and here we are.

Alice Waagen: Tell us more about your practice. How do you help your clients set goals, or do you take another approach to helping

But since we are decades past the birth of the SMART tool, let me propose that rather than just making out goals "smart," we make them brilliant. Here's how.

2012 Goal-Setting Resolution:

1. Make your goals inspirational.

A good goal sticks in your mind, wanders around its corners, and pops out occasionally to bug you. You should get excited every time you achieve even small progress toward its completion. You should be happy to talk about it and share it with friends and colleagues. Goal achievement requires focus and motivation. If the goal does not inspire you, it will drift off the list. So pay attention to what sticks, and what evaporates.

2. Link them to long-term aspirations.

Annual goals should be part of a bigger life or career picture. Think of them like bricks. Nobody wants to collect a pile of them, but if you want to build a walkway or house, gathering bricks and putting them in sequential order makes sense. So create a walkable path to make your goals become your reality.

3. Make sure your goals are adjustable, and/or scalable.

Life throws us surprises that can make a rigidly drafted goal crumble. Scalable goals reflect your ability to shrink or expand the goal, as needed. Adjustable goals suggest that you can change their direction or focus. Following our brick analogy, make sure yours are made of soft plastic that can be molded, and re-molded, as you see fit.

4. Put a timeline around your goals.

Real-time commitments are helpful when it comes to setting goals. Although some goals won't be achieved for decades, be clear with yourself on which ones you are comfortable with putting off until you raise a family or have some money saved in the bank, and which ones need to be accomplished next week.

5. Make sure your goals are chunked out in bite-size pieces.

Nothing kills motivation quicker than goals that are beyond our reach. Chunk them out into manageable victories to keep your drive going. Then pat yourself on the back when you accomplish each part of the goal—and get back to work.

Questions?

Don't hesitate to contact me with thoughts and ideas. I'd love to learn what your goals are for 2012, and then hear how you accomplish them. Send me an email at alice@workforcelearning.com.

them find the life they yearn for?

Amy Steindler: The most important thing about setting goals is to make sure you're ridiculously excited about achieving them. Question any goal that doesn't feel absolutely delicious, and be aware of your body's reaction. If it makes your heart want to fly out of your chest on wings when you think about it, it's the right goal for you.

If you feel the distinct sensation of wearing shackles, and a pit of dread in your stomach, rethink it. My clients know that you can't set goals until you truly understand and embrace your life's purpose, which is deeply challenging and highly rewarding work, and often is what has led them to seek my help. After that, goal setting is a joyful process, rather than drudgery.

Alice Waagen: How has this new life changed your perspective on goal setting?

Amy Steindler: I no longer set goals that I think I'm supposed to achieve, but focus only on those that come from my essential self—that tiny, internal wise person who knows what's best for me. I can't become an expert in something unless I'm so interested in doing it that I lose track of time. That's one way to know—without a doubt—that you are on your true path.

Alice Waagen: Can you give us an example of the goals you are setting for 2012?

Amy Steindler: I'm wildly excited about combining life coaching with other creative disciplines to give clients multiple opportunities to discover and embrace their essential selves. I'm creating another Through Your Own Lens retreat, which uses photography as a tool for self-exploration. I'm also thrilled to be working with a ceramic artist to create a workshop where we use clay to give physical form to how our fears hold us back. I could go on, but I might burst into flames.

There's more! [Click here to continue reading Alice's interview with Amy.](#)