

Planning to plan



By John Trent,
former NTCA board member

The road to hell is paved with good intentions. Stated another way, "Business goals not written are guaranteed not to take you anywhere."

I would like to share some advice I received many years ago that I believe to be some of the most useful I have ever received, though it's some of the most difficult for people to buy into.

Many years ago I was introduced to a family tradition that for me was one of those light bulb moments. It was called The New Year's Goal Journal.

As most of us know New Year's resolutions are generally viewed as empty thoughts – well-intentioned plans with poorly-executed maps and resolve. A simple name change provided a mental edge by giving the perception of a more specific benchmark. With this journal there is also an accountability that isn't found with resolutions.

Any type of journal will do, though my preference is a leather

journal. I like to believe these journals will serve us for many years and be viewed many times by multiple people. I imagine it will be quite the trip down memory lane in 25 years as we congregate for the holidays and re-read goals set during the various phases of our lives.

To begin – a definition of goals is needed and entered on the title page. Mine became "Goals are dreams with deadlines." This is followed with other goal motivating quotes I have found over the years.

Begin planning in November

Though the journal can be started at any time, our planning and discussion begins in November by talking about the upcoming New Year with all who are interested, but specifically with my kids. We discuss how we have achieved the goals set at the beginning of the year, where have we failed, why did we not accomplish certain goals, what could we have done differently. Not only does this bring the

current year's goals into refocus, it also sets the stage to begin thinking about the upcoming year and what we would like to achieve.

Around Thanksgiving, the journal is brought off the bookshelf and left for easy reading material for everyone around the house as well as all visitors during the holidays. Beginning on Christmas day the journal is available for everyone to begin entering their goals for the upcoming year.

Though most entries are from immediate family members, the journal is open to everyone who visits our house over the holidays, and visitors are encouraged to share their goals. It can be a very motivating poke in the right direction around the middle of the year to have Aunt Diane ask my daughter how her goal of maintaining a certain GPA is coming or have Grandpa remind my wife of her goal to quit smoking before summer. Having as many immediate family and friends in the know about specific goals we have each set gives an accountability that gets lost when resolutions are only written in our minds.

Applying this principle to the tile industry

What does this have to do with the tile industry? In our over-stimulated, overloaded, information-bombarded world, it becomes harder to stay focused on our dreams and plans of yesterday.

Those plans get lost when dealing with the everyday whirlwind of multi-tasking, fire-stomping and job-chasing we all do. Without a plan a business is almost certain to get sidetracked, repeat mistakes and generally work harder just to maintain. With a plan a business has the benchmarks needed to see how far it has come, how far there is yet to go and what steps must be taken in order to get there. Drifting along whichever path life blows you onto is certain to keep you in the whirlwind of chaos.

Do you have a clearly defined business plan? Do you have specific targets to hit or are you just working to put out the fires today?

The *NTCA Business Manual* will be unveiled next year and will be a great tool to help small businesses formulate their plans. Use it to stay on track toward your goals for this year. If you would like help in stopping the madness of the whirlwind, contact me for some specific ideas set to move you forward toward your goals.

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