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The Liberation of Setting New Goals

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So I'll start with me: I've never been a goal-setter. I've never had a vision of where I want to be 6 months from now, let alone 5 years. My mom loved to tell everyone what an easy baby I was, because she'd sit me in the middle of the floor and surround me with toys. One by one, the toys would roll away, and I would never go after them. When finally there were no more toys, I'd just sit there perfectly content with absolutely nothing to do. I just didn't have the proactive gene.

Why am I telling you this? Because this year is different. This year, the economy's still on life support and the legal profession is in major reorganization. This year, no one's putting toys around me to play with. I need to decide if I'm going to get up and go after some of those toys that rolled away, or if I'm going to find new ones. In adult speak, I need to set goals.

And I know the same is true for many of you. Exactly how ARE you going to navigate the muddy waters ahead? Well, actually, I have some good news: it's a really exciting place to be! Think about it: how much did you REALLY like the toys you'd been given to play with? Now that they've rolled away, do you miss them? Maybe there are other toys out there that would be a whole lot more fun. So let's take a walk and see if we can find out way through this minefield. Here are the steps I came up with (with a little help from my incredible friends, of course).

1. Create a New Mindset. The way things used to be are no longer, and most probably never will be again. Get over it. In the words of Seth Godin, "*Smart businesspeople focus on the things they have the power to change, not whining about the things they don't.*" If you don't know Seth Godin, you need to. And if you never do, just remember that one sentence.
2. How to Set your Goal. Dream. Yes, I said dream. Because here is the gift of across-the-board economic instability: liberation. Since there are no guidelines to shape the path to success, you get to draw the picture of your own. So think: if you woke up tomorrow excited about the day ahead, what would you be doing? This will be a trial and error process at this stage, but stick with it. Focus on what would drive you to be enthusiastic about taking on your day. When you've defined that, you've set your goal. Write it down on a very large piece of paper and hang on your wall. Because confusion will throw you off course. When that happens, make sure that piece of paper is somewhere close by.
3. Network, network, network. Now decide whom you need to connect with in order to find the path to your goal. Find people who do what you want to do and learn how they got (and stay) there. If you lack certain necessary skills, find people who teach those skills or who can do them for you. And perhaps most importantly, find people who inspire you to keep reaching and moving forward. How do you find those people? The most courageous, break-the-mold, out-of-the-box thinkers are all online. Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Martindale-

Hubbell Connected. Find them, follow them, watch what they do. Engage them, tell them about your goals. You will get help, I promise.

4. Build Your Business Plan. OK, you've defined your goal and learned from your network what you need to do to get there. Now you need to put it on paper. Start by stating your goal, then specify every element of your action plan. For each element, list the tools you will use to execute it. This is your professional bible. Allow it to change as you become more knowledgeable about new and more effective methods. But you need to keep it tangible, front and center, or you'll get lost. There are several wonderful online sites to help you brainstorm through this process: flowchart.com, bubbl.us, text2mindmap.com, and timetoast.com.

5. Put Your Plan into Action: Spend 1 hour a week making a week-long agenda. Spend 15 minutes each day adjusting that agenda as necessary. And then, for every activity you engage in, ask yourself the most important question: "Is what I am doing right now an income producing or capacity building activity?" By capacity building activity, I mean: will this activity lead to income? In the world of social media and networking, the answer is sometimes elusive. Because the interactions you engage in may have the potential to lead to income, but you may not know for some time. Here, you need to follow your instincts. Now, remember the opposite of that question: "In the absence of clearly-defined goals, we remain focused on activity". (These quotes are compliments of my business coach, [Adrian Dayton](#), without whom I would have been in self-destruct by now.)

So this is what I offer you as we enter into a new year and a new decade: the possibility of (perhaps finally) shaping your own destiny. Grab hold, the chance may not last forever. Some day the economy may actually recover and the well-trodden paths will once-again beckon. For now, check out these [2010 law practice predictions](#) and enjoy your New Year's festivities with hope!