

Our New Year's resolutions for work and life

By the ArchPoint Team

The Romans named the first month of the year after Janus, the god of doorways, most often depicted with two heads—one face looking forward toward the future and one face looking back toward the past. Even before the days of the Romans, people have resolved to perform simple acts of goodness at the beginning of a year or season. Long ago, the beginning of a new year marked the day to repay any debts or return any borrowed items.

These days more than 100 million Americans take a hard look at the past and resolve to change how they will live their lives in the future—on topics ranging from food to fitness to fiscal responsibility. While the number of those who make good on their resolutions is considerably less, successful resolution-makers employ strategies:

- They put time and energy into carefully constructing a resolution that is achievable.
- They write down the resolution.
- They tell others and even involve their team or family in the process of keeping the resolution.
- They track their progress along the way.

Self-efficacy plays a significant role in people's ability to keep resolutions—that according to research by John Norcross, Ph.D., at University of Scranton. Defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to exercise influence over events that affect their lives, to change engrained habits or create new ones, the concept of self-efficacy was developed by Albert Bandura, Ph.D., at Stanford University.

However, self-change never comes easy. According to 1997 University of Washington research, 47 percent of Americans who make resolutions give up on their goals after two months. Even more disheartening, recent research at the University of Minnesota shows that the number of short-term resolution keepers could have climbed as high as 80 percent in the last decade.

Lack of specificity likely plays a large role. Good, achievable resolutions are stated in simple, clearly defined language with a precise goal in mind.

In short, New Year's resolutions make for a great starting point to becoming the people—and company—we want to be. Recognizing that solutions are not accomplished in a single day but in the many steps along the way, ArchPoint partners decided to use January—the month designed to reflect on changes we want or need to make—and focus our energies throughout the coming year to doing just that. Toward that goal, ArchPoint partners submitted the following resolutions for 2011:

- Increase efficiency by eliminating unnecessary files and folders from my computer and my office.
- Identify two new contacts I would like to get to know better each month. Invite them to lunch, dinner, a round of golf—or come up with something less traditional to do like indoor rock climbing, mountain biking or tennis.
- Make staying in touch a sacred event—not over-riding my “touch-base” time with work.
- Embrace creative outlets by re-energizing my jewelry-making business and finally taking a series of cooking classes.

- Find one new way each month to give back to someone, some organization or my community. To track my progress, I'm challenging two of my business associates to do the same. Part of our agreement is that by the last day of each month, we'll e-mail our "give back" update to each other.
- Take significant steps to go paperless. I am fundamentally a paper person. I use and edit a real calendar, take notes by hand, enjoy turning the pages of books and prefer to edit hard copy. However, with the Kindle I got for Christmas and the de-cluttering project I am working, I will make progress this year on eliminating some of the paper I use.
- Create a long-term timeline for large internal projects and set deadlines/goals for work to be done along the way, involving my whole team in the exercise in order to hold ourselves more accountable and reach our goal on time.
- Read at least one book that expands my knowledge and captures interest in improving business performance each month.
- On the first day of each month, reach out to one person who made a positive difference—old teachers, professors, bosses or friends—and let them know I remember and appreciate what they taught me.
- Laugh more often in 2011 (especially at myself). Each evening, I plan to reflect on the day and find one humorous aspect of something I viewed as a problem earlier in the day.
- Branch out technically and improve my computer skills, specifically by researching technology upgrades and finding the best fit for what I need—being careful not to over-engineer.
- Create two new products with revenue-producing opportunity. My goal is to have one of the new products up and running by the end of June.
- Stay on top of monthly expenses. I've tried it both ways, processing several months at a time and doing it every month and the latter is so much easier.
- Strive for peace, which, according to the wisdom of an unknown author, "does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble or hard work. It means to be in the midst of all those things and still be calm in your heart."
- For at least three hours each week, take the time to capture knowledge gained in the practice, write it down and get it published.
- Find a way to merge the past with the future and embrace all the changes and challenges life brings, keeping hold of the foundations that built the past. Focus on the development of the team I work with, keeping in mind that ambitious people climb, but faithful people build.
- Spend time on Friday afternoons looking at and working on new ways to incorporate data gathering into our practice so results are more quantifiable.