



Performance and the parable of the gym member

You know what it's like – 28th December, after 5 days on the pop and plate, thoughts turn to our new year's resolutions. I am going to drop 10 Kilos, I will run more, and drink less; I will do that paperwork on my desk and keep it to a minimum all year. This is all excellent stuff and, and without question I am sure, all well intentioned.

Indeed in many cases the year starts well – gym three times in the first week (well at £80 per month it makes sense). We feel the returning tension to muscle groups we had forgotten about and yes, the endorphin surge is good. We have cleared the desk, and have said no to the third glass of wine on at least three occasions...

So what happens to make these resolutions so difficult come the end of February, or Easter at the latest? We are not different people, and in so many other ways we excel.

There is no problem setting goals – we all do it.....and should! It's keeping it going that matters, so what impedes the resolve in our new year's resolutions? The answers, I am sure, are many and varied. To my simple mind it appears we should not be seen as guilty of setting ambitious goals – as to be successful we need goals, and in so many ways they are highly achievable. However, without the interim goals, the less glamorous facilitating steps, the end goal can become a bit like trying to win the US Masters golf (step 10) with a handicap of 15 (step 1). Nothing is impossible, but without steps 2-9 I think we would all agree we would merely trusting to luck and talent.....

One of the most admirable traits I notice in the majority of people I work with is the sense of urgency they have. In all too many cases however, this urgency is matched by frustration (this is normally when I am invited to work with them) that things aren't happening fast enough. They just want it now; they know what it will mean to achieve it – both to the organisation and themselves, but in their determination – they have sometimes lost sight of what are they going to do first, tomorrow, and then the day after, to achieve the goal. I have also noticed this with a number of the excellent teams I have worked with – people, it is reassuring to see, are not alone in their passion, energy and urgency, though this can sometimes be the challenge – a clear appreciation of what they are aiming for, yet a collective unintentional blindness as to what they need to do, when, to get them there. Sometimes we work so closely together we can't see the wood for the trees.....

A wise man once told me “you can achieve almost anything you want in life – but you're unlikely to do it alone”. So, in wishing us all a very prosperous and healthy 2012, and whether we are parents, line managers, desk heads, or CEOs, I would invite us all to consider



one simple question every day, that could make a big difference to the outcome of this year..... for our kids, our direct reports, and even our organisations..... “what am I doing that will really help them succeed....?”

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