



## Broken Promises

I have a question for you.

*Did you make a New Year's resolution this year?*

You may have answered with a resounding "yes". (But, I venture to say that, if you did, you're in the minority.) What's more likely is that your "yes" was a less-than-enthusiastic one, or the response was an eye-rolling "no", all because your experience with resolutions has been...let's just say, unsuccessful.

Coming up with resolutions is the easy part quite frankly. Following through is where people typically fall short. Sometimes that lack of results stems from the quality of the resolution itself. Other times, the finger is squarely pointed at what happened -- or probably what didn't happen -- after the ink dried.

Well, let's devote a little time in this edition of **EA Insights** to a few keys that will help to make your personal resolutions or, on a grander scale, your organizational plans more apt to be successful. With hope, these tips will encourage you to give that resolution-setting or planning effort another try!

All the best,

*June*

June Melvin Mickens  
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## 6 Keys to Planning that Yields Results

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Whether functioning as an individual, leading a family, or heading an organization, at some point, developing plans for the future becomes important. And, while carving out the time to sit down, alone or with others, to chart a course forward isn't always considered fun, the intent is to come out on the other side with a map for the future.



Unfortunately, plan-in-hand is exactly where the process often stops. The unanswered question is whether anything will come of the planning in the end. Will any headway be made toward those desired results?

Although it is impossible to guarantee the accomplishment of every goal, there are some steps that can improve the chances of making the anticipated progress. Here are six key points to help:

### Key 1: Plan Realistically.

It is difficult, at best, to carry out plans that were unrealistic at the core. That's one reason why single-session planning efforts may not work

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## "Quotes"

*"It really helps to know what success is before you get there, and if you know, then you can head right for it."*

~Gordon Bethune

*"Hard numbers tell an important story[.]"*

~Stewart Butterfield

*"You need to prioritize. If you can't get to everything..., that's okay."*

~Julie Chen

*"We need, first of all, for there to be accountability, for there to be somebody who is responsible for ... holding people's feet to the fire."*

~Jennifer Granholm

*"Planning defines the particular place you want to be and how you intend to get there. It's a responsibility rather than a technique."*

~Frances Hesselbein

*"[Y]ou live and die by your ability to prioritize. You must focus on the most important, mission-critical tasks each day and night,*

best. It's easy to build a plan impulsively in response to a problem, or get swept up in a wave of out-of-the box "what ifs". However, do those ideas look as good once the glare or glow has worn off? How implementable...really...are the objectives and strategies? What's the unintended or farther-reaching impact?

Building on a shaky foundation threatens everything that comes thereafter. Rather, ensuring that the underlying plan is solid and doable is critical to reaching results down the road.

### **Key 2: Prioritize.**

When everything is important, nothing is important. And, that's a planning disaster in the making. Void of direction, the overwhelmed either get none, or not enough, of the right things done.

Prioritization is essential to advancing a plan. Identify what is most critical in order to distinguish the essential from the optional or to differentiate immediate priorities from those with later time frames. Doing so helps to keep people focused on the activities that are most integral to the plan overall or those for completion at a particular period of time. Work on other items can fill in as time and energy allow, but first things have been called out and remain first.

### **Key 3: Build in Accountability.**

One reason many plans fall flat is that no one is responsible for doing the work. Accountability must be woven into planning for it to be effective. This entails determining the right person to "own" each plan area and identifying all others whose charge it is to collaborate with that individual on the task. Beyond creating a list of names, though, accountability means empowering each person on the list to perform the expected work and properly addressing any failure to follow through. Without setting clear expectations for ownership and cooperation and outcomes, the plan begins to resemble a hot potato -- everyone sees it coming, but no one wants to grab it.

### **Key 4: Allocate the Proper Resources.**

Under-resourcing is the death knell to planning. The planning process has to include an examination of the dollars, people, tools, equipment, or other resources needed in order to move forward. When resources are not considered at all, or are given short-shrift, it sends a message of unimportance. It also conveys disrespect to those responsible for implementation because they were not held in high-enough esteem to receive what is needed to function.

### **Key 5: Set Clear Success Measures.**

What does "done" look like? If success measures are incorporated at all, they frequently are anecdotal in nature. Now, there is a real value in the stories of success; however, many plans fail because the measurement stops at the one-off stories. What's missing is a quantitative measurement of the change that should occur over the plan period. Clear criteria provide objective standards for measuring completion and quality of the effort.

### **Key 6: Monitor Progress in Real Time.**

In a client meeting earlier today, several people intoned about being unaware of where they stood with results until it was almost, or it actually was, too late to make a difference. The eleventh-hour scrambling or dread of not meeting a goal is the byproduct of reactive follow-up. Reactive follow-up occurs when results are checked only at, or near, the end of the performance period. Results are likely to improve, however, when progress monitoring becomes a more natural part of the entire planning and execution process. Ongoing checking provides real-time information about status and, if outcomes are off, it allows for the reallocation of resources, an adjustment of priorities, or even a reconsideration of the plan in order to address the current situation appropriately and take the revised steps to meet a still-relevant goal.

Planning efforts, when approached strategically and implemented diligently, can yield results. How are you at following these six keys - drafting realistic plans, prioritizing, building in accountability, allocating resources, setting metrics, and engaging in real-time progress monitoring? Interested in ramping up your planning and the results? Call on us at [Executive Advantage](#). [Contact us today](#). Help to create and execute your planning more effectively is within reach.



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*and then share, delegate, delay or skip the rest."*  
~Jessica Jackley

*"Another goal is to look to the resources ... and to see how we could do better to plan, in a sense, for [what] we will need[.]"*  
~William C. Kirby

*"Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now."*  
~Alan Lakein

*"I have to be realistic about what I can and can't do."*  
~Queen Latifah

*"Part of the issue of achievement is to be able to set realistic goals, but that's one of the hardest things to do[.]"*  
~George Lucas

*"Productivity is never an accident. It is always the result of a commitment to excellence, intelligent planning, and focused effort."*  
~Paul J. Meyer

*"Set metrics for what needs to be achieved and measure against them to track progress along the way. If targets aren't being met, challenge your team to reassess and come back with a new strategy."*  
~Sandra E. Peterson

*"I think that the most important thing when it comes to achieving your dreams is just that you have to be realistic."*  
~Franchesca Ramsey

## About Executive Advantage

At [Executive Advantage](#), we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

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