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2018 – Could This Be My Greatest Year?

Short answer – be the best version of you more often! That’s it.

January finds you in the midst of waves of “Resolution this” Resolution that” all well-intentioned often leaving you with a sense of already being behind the pack. The unconscious reaction to making lists; starting well; masterfully focusing etc is a feeling of, and reluctant acceptance of not being good enough.

My encouragement to all clients for many years now is that if a motivational message or idea doesn’t resonate and leaves no motivational effect- let it pass, it’s not for you. Each of us are wired in our own special way and have experienced life’s challenges and events on our timeline, the chances of an idea from another being perfect for us at this particular moment is slim.

The point I am at risk of labouring here is that your growth; your success; your greatest year, is massively more likely to come to pass if you go about it on your terms!

Before I reveal Simon’s Magic Great Year Formula (note: there isn’t one) the ultimate coaching question deserves some thought:

“What do you want?”

What do you want more of, less of? Talk to 4 or 5 close trusted colleagues (good friends, your accountant, your mentors or peers) and garner their views.

Having reflected on your own thoughts and those of your team, distil your year’s intentions in short sentences. Write them down and put them to one side.

That’s it, now it is simply your job to be you for the year ahead, but in a much purer way than perhaps years before. Your greatest year can only have a chance of taking shape if the greatest version of you turns up more often than not.

Often when I meet a team, a client or participants at an event I ask how much of their time they are at their best; how effective do they consider themselves to be at this moment? Then I hear the stories about the volume of work, meetings; miss-matched projects to skills; insufficient resources etc. that gets in the way of operating at their peak.

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After years of client work, and noticing where good things happen and where clients get stuck, I coined my 3-4-3 Strategy which simply splits out what you are up to; who you are being at any one time. It works like this.

Think about everything involved in being you in the year ahead; all the aspects of your job role. Everything!

Top 3

30% of what you do or get involved in is what makes you go 'ooh'. You are great at it; time seems to slip past when you're involved in the act of it; no-one else could ever do it quite to your standards; when you've completed these things you actually feel better; it may take time, but it certainly doesn't seem to take effort. These are the things that if you spent all your time doing and not the other stuff you would be an unstoppable machine! If I was to ask your colleagues about you, they would likely quote your top three in glowing terms... it's what makes you, you!

It feels good.

Bottom 3

At the other end of the 3-4-3 ratio are 30% of the things that you are poor at; you probably put them off till they build up and shout at you; when you are working on them you feel drained and uninspired; you look for and take any distraction going; you're inefficient at these things and they take a mind-numbingly disproportionate length of time. When you are involved in these Bottom three things your mood changes, this is the worst aspect of you. If I was to speak to colleagues about your bad days, without them knowing what you are up to, it will be this!

It feels bad.

Middle 4

In the middle you've got the rest, 40% of the what you are involved in are okay; part of the job; expected and known; you know they've got to be done and you get them done; this is the growing new version of you, about which you are not yet sure; you may or not may not be neutral in attitude terms but you will be open to more information and cautious about your approach to them. Personal growth may sit in this category, as long as your attitude is open and ready.

It feels okay.

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The no-brainer here is that living your greatest year, bringing those considered and written intentions to be is in correlation with the time you spend in your Top Three!

My observations over the years are that life and work seems to pepper our days with a range of tasks, requests, personal and attitudinal demands that are constantly shuffling our 3-4-3. Leaving it to chance that we will be spending enough time being our Top Three self is a fools-errand.

Bottom Three activities accumulate and cause stress just by being there. Your lack of joy at getting on with them means they drag on longer too. I have met many people and their teams who get caught in this gritty low-enjoyment state of having to finding new ways to motivate and reward more and more effort to work through this category. Whilst they may become proficient at ticking off items and completing, they cannot understand why it doesn't feel any better after completion, and progress remains annoyingly slow.

Middle Four activities often don't get the attention or attitude they deserve, and the personal development opportunities within get missed. We may want to be instantly good at them and feel great when in the act of them.

And the most dangerous observation of all, where my noticing has been a seemingly magical transition for some, is that the sacred Top Three version of ourselves is lost to the jumbled up everyday life or the overwhelmingly long list of Bottom Three activities. People just aren't being the best version of themselves.

Make 2018 your deliberate approach to being at your best more often.

The juicy opportunity for you is to get to a point where you know what the Top Three (or 30%) and the Bottom Three (or 30%) are and simply know it from this point on! Make an active decision to spend more time being and doing your Top Three – don't put them off, waiting until you've suffered and worked through the nasty things. Maybe consider a compromise agreement and do one of the Middle Four for every one of the Top Three. (*note*: be aware that the attitude required for success in the Middle Four may need to shift).

Next make an active decision to spend less time on the Bottom Three (and kidding yourself that these are your penance and everything will be fine when they're done). Look to outsource them; delegate them; swap them; ask a friend to help and get them done or even pay someone. Because, and this is the magic bit, the items in your Bottom Three could be in someone else's Top Three!

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The Art of Successful Delegating

Many people in business know they need to delegate and haven't yet cracked how to make it work for them or the delegated helper. The 3-4-3 Strategy is made for you. It is highly likely that up till now, in order to free up time the activities you have delegated have come from their Top Three or Middle Four, simply because you cannot believe anyone would want to do you Bottom Three things. And the person to whom you have delegated is unlikely to go about the tasks to your standard and expectations or with the essence and spice that you would give, so you spend your time looking over their shoulder and even end up taking the damn thing back!

But there, deep in your Bottom Three, are tasks that you feel nothing towards that someone else (if you chose them correctly) will do well, faster and with less pain because it falls within their top or middle categories.

Go Back to 3-4-3!

During the year ahead schedule a quarterly 3-4-3 review. With more rigour than your first pass, return to the theory and dissect what now falls within the categories.

If the balance still looks slanted to the bottom end (stuff you don't like or are not particularly good at) then an important question arises:

Am you in the right role – it's a heavy question but if it hurts that much then something has got to change, and eventually you will realise it's not you!

Emergency Category Addition (3-4-3-1)

Consider adding one more category at the bottom (Simon Tyler's emergency category!)

– DON'T DO IT!

Whilst this is extreme it will certainly identify the real importance of a recurring task. If others notice and are even slightly concerned over its non-completion or if it impacts on other tasks (yours or someone else's) then it does not fit in this category. But it is a useful challenge. Many of us are completing acts that, in truth, serve little or no purpose in our job or our lives and are completed out of 'duty' or 'repetition' or 'tradition' (it's always been done this way).

Is There Another Way?

Here's a chance for you to get creative.

If your lower categories are full with stuff that cannot be passed on and have to sit with you, then pick one item a week and find 3 new ways of completing the task.

Perhaps take 10 minutes at the start of each week and decide which item is going through your creative department and sit quietly with a new sheet of paper and go for it. Be as

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creative and bizarre as you can and brainstorm a list of ways the task could be done differently. You may even be able to bring someone else into your creative team to help here.

Consider making it the first thing you do on your appointed day, as often the longer you leave these tasks undone the worse they appear to be.

Special Times – Special Tasks

Having taken the time to review all the things you have to do I assume you now hold a sharpened view on what they are, what needs to happen and approximately how long they require?

Now look at your week ahead for the busy periods and also think about how you operate in a day. Are there times in the day you feel better and more productive?

Consider loosely allocating time chunks to get the lower category stuff done. And when they are done – reward yourself, take a coffee break, eat your favourite treat, and turn immediately to 20 minutes of your favourite task (that you've been putting off).

You get the gist, become aware and make your move!

And as Dale Carnegie said: “You never achieve real success unless you really like what you are doing”

And if in doubt... Keep it simple

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