



[DR. SHIRLEY SAYS...]

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# Renewing your focus and achieving success in 2007

“Excellence” is a term, a concept that is bantered around in many arenas. Yet, it is a concept that should be highly valued. One of the best definitions I’ve been exposed to was told to me by a colleague many years ago. He said, “Excellence is a result of striving, maintaining the highest standards, looking after the smallest details, and going the extra mile in everything you do.”

If you agree with these words and “striving for excellence” played a major role in your life last year, I congratulate you. Now, what about 2007? Are you going to continue the trend? Or perhaps some of us need a jump start to get on the “excellence” bandwagon? Whatever your situation, here are four steps that will enhance your ability to renew your focus and achieve success:

➤ Step 1 — Set goals. I realize this technique is as old as time, but it works. Goals give us a much needed sense of purpose. Goals give us a vision that keeps us pressing on.

More than 50 years ago, Florence Chadwick decided that she would become the first woman ever to swim the English Channel. For years she trained and disciplined herself to keep going long after her body cried out for relief. Finally, in 1952, the big day came. She set out full of hope, surrounded by well wishers in small boats. And, of course, there were the skeptics who doubted she would make it.

As she neared the coast of England, a heavy fog settled in and the waters became increasingly cold and choppy. Her mother encouraged her, “Come on Florence, you can

make it. It’s only a few more miles.”

Finally, exhausted, she asked to be pulled aboard the boat just a few hundred yards from her goal. She was defeated and heartbroken, especially when she discovered how close she had been to reaching her goal. Later, she told news reporters, “I’m not offering excuses, but I think I could have made it if I had been able to see my goal.”

Chadwick decided to try again. This time, she concentrated on developing a mental image of the coasts of England. She memorized every feature of the distant coast and fixed it clearly in her mind. On the appointed day, she encountered all of the choppy waters and fog that she had met before, but this time she made it.

Goals give you a vision that keeps you pressing on. I encourage you to set goals that are realistic and attainable, specific and measurable.

Write down your goals — it helps to crystallize them. Also, make a list of all of the benefits that will accrue when you accomplish your goals. Then, develop an action plan that will help launch your goals, and as the Nike commercials say, “Just do it.”

➤ Step 2 — Be committed. Commitment gives you new power. For no matter what comes your way, you never turn your eye from the goal. Commitment guarantees victory. It’s hard to keep committed people from success. Place stumbling blocks in their way, and they take them for stepping stones. If difficulties are thrust in front of achievers, they go around, under or through them.

To reach your goals, you must be totally committed, and do what it

takes to accomplish them. Keep in mind the adage, “If it’s to be, it’s up to me.”

➤ Step 3 — Be change oriented. Change-oriented professionals are curious, they’re innovative, and they’re constantly seeking ways to improve. When you think about it, change is inevitable. In the ’90s, change accelerated faster than ever before, and it will continue to gather speed in the 21st century.

Change helps us to refocus. Change gives us new opportunities. So, rather than being too resistive, too reactive and too closely tied to old habits — like you know we can be — get out of your comfort zone. Stretch. View change as an exciting challenge. View change as the beginning of taking new and bold steps to meeting greater challenges and achieving success.

➤ Step 4 — Think positively. A gentleman named Charles Swindoll wrote, “The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day.”

Personally, I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I respond to it. And so it is with you. You are in charge of your attitude. Make it work for you. Remember: Success is a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you expect to succeed, you will. Have a rewarding 2007.

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