

EQ4PM *Emotional Intelligence for Project Managers* Monthly Newsletter

Need Motivation? Start 2008 with a BHAG!

The end of year is a great time for reflection on the previous year as well as looking forward to the next. While some people choose this time to set New Years resolutions, I like to use this time to think about the goals that I would like to accomplish in the coming year. In fact, I have been thinking a lot about goal setting lately and how my goals serve to motivate me through the course of the year.

Motivation is a key part of emotional intelligence. In fact, motivation was included in Daniel Goleman's original framework for emotional intelligence. He described motivation as having the drive to achieve, commitment to goals and outcomes, taking initiative, and staying optimistic. I like to think of motivation as the fuel that drives us to accomplish things. Without motivation, we would probably not be successful. We would not persist when things get tough for us.

Do you ever think about what motivates you? Are you like me and find that your goals motivate you? I have been setting goals for as long as I can remember. I accomplish many of the goals I have set and usually find the ones that I don't accomplish is because I have given up on them. Lately I have learned that it is better to set really big goals rather than more modest ones. The big goals I have accomplished include getting my book written and published, and qualifying for and running the Boston Marathon.

Another key thing I learned about goals was how critical it is to write goals down. Congratulations if you in the minority of people who write their goals down. Studies have shown that the individuals who have written goals are ten times more likely to achieve those goals than those who do not write down their goals. It is as if the act of writing them down does something magical to help us move toward those goals.

Reflect back on your own performance when it comes to setting and achieving your goals. How effective have you been? What letter grade would you give yourself in terms of goal setting and accomplishment in previous years?

Last year, my coach and mentor Rich Blue taught me about

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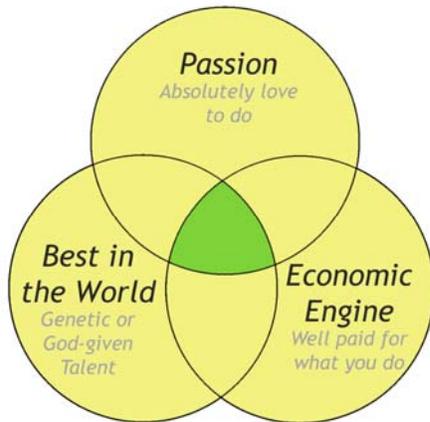
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the importance of BHAGs. A BHAG is a big, hairy, audacious goal. The concept comes from the principal that Jim Collins and his team developed and documented in his books *Good to Great* and *Built to Last*. Companies that were great would often pursue goals that were huge and frequently a huge stretch for the organization.



You can think of the BHAG as the point where three key elements intersect (see the green area in the diagram above). The first element is passion. For each of us, we need to discover the things we are passionate about doing. The second element is best in the world. What are the talents that we have that we can bring that will make us the best in the world? And the third and final element is the economic engine, or, those things that you will be well paid to do.

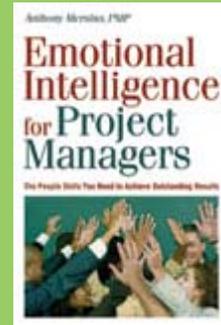
BHAGs motivate us. Like huge celestial bodies, their size is like gravity that pulls us toward them. They create momentum; they excite us.

The BHAG principle can be applied at a company, team, or personal level. I consider the writing and publishing of my emotional intelligence book as a BHAG as well as the running of the Boston Marathon. When I set the goal of writing and publishing a book, it seemed quite distant to me. I was encouraged though by meeting and getting to know two other published authors who encouraged me.

When I set the goal of qualifying for the Boston Marathon back in December of 2005, my best marathon to date had been 4:02. I needed to improve by 32 minutes or about 1.25 minutes/mile. That was a stretch goal for me since I was only a casual runner at the time I set the goal.

I would like to encourage you to use the BHAG concept to spur you on and motivate you to success in 2008. Here are 10 tips for using goals and the BHAG principle to make 2008 a

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whopper year for you.

Ten Tips for Applying the BHAG Principles to Your Goals

1. You are only limited by your beliefs about yourself -

This may sound trite but we are truly only limited by what we believe to be true about ourselves. If you change your beliefs about yourself, you can alter what you can achieve. When I was trying to qualify for the Boston Marathon, I would train with a local running team coached by Pat Savage. Coach Savage used to say, "when you think you have given it your all, you still have 50% left". I don't know whether he was right or not but that kind of thinking works. When I would run as fast as I could and feel like I couldn't run another lap, I would think of Coach's words and find the strength to run another one. Henry Ford is credited with saying, "Whether you believe you can do a thing or not, you are right."

Do Now: If you lack self-confidence, surround yourself with people who think you can do it, even when you don't.

2. Big goals are often more achievable than small goals

- When I think back on my experience leading up to the Boston Marathon experience, I recognize how much more motivating it was to have a big goal rather than a small one. I ran my first marathon to "just finish" which is a great goal for a first timer. For my second marathon, I knew I would finish and I just ran it with my wife to support her. Because I wasn't stretching for anything, I hardly trained. It wasn't until I decided that I really wanted to qualify and run in Boston that I began taking the goal seriously and going for it.

The reality is, big goals are much more motivating, just like big changes are much more likely to succeed than small incremental ones. This research was cited in the 2005 FastCompany article, "Change or Die" and has since been documented in a book of the same name by Alan Deutschman.

3. BHAGs are Powerful - The BHAG provides a powerful approach to achieving goals at a company, team, or even a personal level. I encourage you to leverage this concept to achieve some monster goals in the coming years.

For a personal BHAG, you need to ask yourself some questions. The first question is about determining the things that you are passionate about. Do you know what your passions are? If there are activities that you would do for fun, even if you never got paid, that would be a good indicator. Or if you have activities that put you into a state of flow where

you don't notice that time is passing.

The second question is about what you can be best in the world at. This is driven by your God-given talents.

The third question is about what things you can make money at. Be creative - your BHAG may not necessarily be related in any way to what you are doing right now.

Do Now: Think about each of these questions, ask others for their input, and stake out some preliminary ideas for BHAGs. This is not something that can be done quickly, however, I do think you can play with the concept and get a tentative BHAG or two you can begin to think about.

4. Use Symbols to Motivate You - I believe in the power of visual symbols as motivators. Back in 2001 I decided I wanted to be a professional speaker, even though at that time I had never made a speech. I created a small montage of photos of the professional speakers that I knew at that time; Tom Peters, Jim Collins, and others. And I put a large photo of me in the center and have had this hanging in my office the last 6 years.

I credit that symbol with making the progress I did over the last 6 years. I went from no speaking experience in 2001 to countless hours of classroom training since. In addition, in 2007 I gave 10 speeches, presentations, and webinars.

Another symbol that was helpful to me was a mockup of my finished book. I created the mockup early on in the process of writing the manuscript so that I had a visual idea of what the finished product was going to look like.

5. Use Daily inch-pebble goals - Inch pebble goals are often used in Xtreme Programming. The concept of the inch-pebble goal is to break things down into small tasks. Each task should be achievable in one or two days and are either done or not done. This makes it really simple to know what we planned to achieve in a day and determine if we met it or not. The point of the inch-pebble goals is to know what we need to get done each day. They also help us to keep goal on our mind and in our subconscious.

I used the inch-pebble concept to achieve both my running and writing goals. Many runners use a marathon training schedule that shows the miles that need to be run each week. I used the training schedule to log all the daily workouts I needed to do. When I accomplished my training goal for the day, I used a green smiley face. If I failed, I used a red unhappy face. It was a quick and easy way to stay on top of

ramp up our game! Find someone who is doing something similar and make it your goal to beat them. Or, create a friendly wager that will spur you both on.



One little-known secret behind my success in qualifying for the Boston Marathon was that my wife Norma qualified in October 2006. I felt like she was walking around the house, gloating, with a t-shirt on that said she qualified! It really got to me when she began making travel arrangements to go to Boston for the race without me. The thought of her going to Boston without me spurred me on. I was sad and angry and I didn't want to get left behind and that was the push I needed to qualify. I ran in Las Vegas in December of 2006 and missed my qualifying time by 12 minutes. I was ready to give up when I thought about her and that shirt. I signed up for the New Orleans Marathon and ran that at the end of February 2007, and made my time with only 90 seconds to spare!

Do Now: Figure out how to set up healthy competition for yourself or for your team. Who do you really want to beat?

8. Get Support - This is probably the most important element of achieving your goals and BHAGs. Little can be accomplished alone; we need others to help us. Who do you have on your support team for your goals? Who should you have?

As I have mentioned, I have a coach and a mentor. I also

meet each week with a group of men who are leaders in their lives and support me as a Dad, Husband, and business owner. When it came to running marathons, I joined two different running clubs. I also hired a sports masseuse and a running coach. Besides my wife, I had two running buddies who ran my long runs with me each weekend through the grueling winter months.

When it came to writing my book, I reached out to two published authors. One was an author I read about online and didn't even know. Both gave me valuable advice about landing a book contract. Once I had signed a contract with AMACOM, my editor became a valuable support person to navigate the manuscript process.

Do Now: Determine who would be the best support person for you for each of your goals. Be creative and find the best person, even if you do not know them personally right now.

9. Anticipate Setbacks - In our projects, we often think of risks and devise mitigation or contingency plans. Unfortunately, we don't always apply that same approach to our goals. When we get resistance or encounter a setback, we may find ourselves giving up our goals.

Setbacks along the way are inevitable; we should be expecting them and planning for them. I encountered the worst setback of my Boston quest when I went to Las Vegas. My friend Tim and his wife flew out there to support me as did my own wife. My brother Scott and his wife came out to cheer me on. And because of my training and the race day conditions, I came up short and did not achieve my goal. It was something I had not anticipated and I was embarrassed, ashamed, and very depressed! I moped around for about a week about what a waste it was to go to Vegas, the time I had wasted on training. Fortunately for me, about a week later I realized how unproductive that thinking was and I set my sites on running another race and still qualifying for the 2007 Boston marathon.

I wouldn't have lost that week if I had thought ahead about the potential race day conditions and the strong possibility that I would not achieve my goal on that day. By having a back up plan ready, I would have saved myself the negative thinking I did.

10. Enjoy the journey - I know that it sounds trite but it really is true that you need to enjoy the journey, not just the destination. When I look back on my 18 month quest to qualify and run the Boston Marathon, the Marathon itself was a very small part of that quest. In fact, it was a miserable day when we ran the marathon with strong winds, rain, and low

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temperatures. What I remember most, now that it is nearly a year later, is not the marathon itself but the commitment to the training schedule, the injuries, and the setback experienced in the Las Vegas marathon. My greatest memory was when I ran fast and strong enough in the New Orleans Marathon to qualify for Boston. Without those low lows and high highs that I experienced during the quest, achieving the goal would not have really felt like much to me.

The point is to make sure that you celebrate the journey and the milestones along the way. And most important, be sure you include others in that celebration, especially those that are supporting you.

I hope these tips for setting and achieving goals encourages you to achieve some monster goals in 2008. Happy New Year!



Anthony Mersino

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