

How Managers Start Into A New Year

The key questions for a focused start into the next year

by Michael Hirt

At the turn of the year, many successful managers are faced with a number of fundamental questions calling for clear answers rather than half-hearted New Year's resolutions.

Questions like: What areas should I focus my energy and management activities on in order to maximize leadership effectiveness and produce results that are truly meaningful for me and others? Where do I want to go in terms of my physical, mental, emotional and spiritual development?

In this article, I have put together a number of questions to help you reflect on the past year and plan for the next.

Generally speaking, one of the quieter days during holidays is ideal for taking time to think about these questions and the upcoming year in a focused and productive manner.

Looking back

- What significance has this year had for my life?
- What life lessons have I learned this year?
- In what ways have I improved this year?
- What challenges have been dealt with successfully? What has been accomplished?
- What goals have I achieved in the most important areas of my life (esp. career, family, friends, community, self-improvement)?
- Where am I standing in life? Am I happy with what I am doing? Do I feel satisfied with how life is going for me? Is my life turning out the way I envisioned it, or has it drifted off course?
- What challenges, old or new, remain unsolved?

- Why are these challenges still unsolved, and what can I do next year to make progress on addressing them?
- What am I grateful for? What has been particularly encouraging this year?
- Consciously wrap up the past year and move on.
- Some people give a spiritual dimension to this process, for instance by saying a prayer in thanksgiving for all the blessings of the past year.

Looking ahead

- In what ways would I like to improve next year?
- What contributions will I make next year? How will I be doing good to other people (family, friends, employees, clients), adding value to their lives?
- What goals do I hope to achieve in the most important areas of my life (esp. career, family, friends, community, self-improvement), and how do I intend to get there?
- What can I do to ensure my life will (continue to) turn out the way that I have in mind, that I consider important, that is in line with my inner compass?
- What relationships to people and what activities may be helpful in this context?
- What relationships to people and what activities may not be helpful in this context?
- What are the things I can leave behind in order to focus my time and energy on what really matters to me? Taking responsibility for your life also means that you need to decide with whom and what to spend your time and, even more importantly, with whom and what

- not to spend your time.
- What challenges do I want to overcome? Who or what can help me make it happen?
 - What could be my motto for the next year? What word or phrase best summarizes my top priorities in the coming year?

Some people give the beginning of the new year a spiritual dimension by making a conscious effort to start the year off with positive energy.

Writing things down helps make this New Year's ritual more effective.

It is important not to answer these questions as if they were items on a to-do list, but to engage in a process of reflection and careful consideration, to do some soul-searching and to listen to your inner voice and your inner compass.

In this context, you may find it helpful to choose a special place, e.g. one where you can enjoy the beauty of nature, for your New Year's ritual.

Some people go for a walk in nature or spend time at a place where they can contemplate in silence. However, you can also create an environment conducive to reflection and careful consideration at home, for instance by lighting a candle in a quiet room.

This ritual may help you refocus and start the new year with mindful awareness.

We step back to take stock, and in doing so we gain clarity and strength, allowing us to embrace the new year with confidence and the desire to shape our future.

I wish you all the best for your New Year!



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