

Tips for improving gratification in the new year

By Robert J. Cerfolio

As we end the year, it's time to think about self-improvement for the New Year.

Habitual procrastination can really hurt you in the long run because waiting to take care of something that's obviously important to you – health, money, family matters – weighs on your subconscious.

Understanding one's personal "line of gratification" is the foundation for sticking to self-improvement goals.

There are many kinds of lines of gratification. For some, they're the number of zeroes in their bank statement; for others, the curves of their muscles after they leave the gym. It's good and healthy to look back on your hard work and admire what you have accomplished before moving on to the next task.

Here are tips on how to make those lines of gratification more impressive:

- **Be an early riser.** The main reason operating rooms hum into action at 7am is tied to human physiology; the bodies of patients are better able to handle the stress of surgery at that time.

People are generally better off getting work done early in the day when we're better prepared for stress and performance. And getting a job done early frees you up later in the day.

- **Love what you do.** Why wouldn't you want to take ownership, responsibility and pride in what you do for a living? When you treat a job as only a means to a paycheck, you are missing the

point. If your job isn't the one you'd really love to have, don't make it worse with a negative attitude. Instead, make it your own. Make it a point of personal integrity and principle to challenge yourself to achieve something every day. After all, 40 hours a week is a long time to stay anywhere.

- **Ask yourself: Did I really try my best?** "I tried my best" is a common refrain from those who haven't reached their goals. An honest response you can ask yourself is, "Am I sure?" This question is not about being overly critical. It's simply about realizing that if you had practiced or studied an extra 10 minutes each day, you would've been that much closer to your goals.

- **Set specific, measurable goals.** Results define goals. Every individual should have clear goals that are objective and measurable. Goals such as "to be happy," "to do well at work" or "to get along" are too nebulous. To be successful, you have to be able to define your goals by measurable results.

- **Find the high ground.** In anything you do, aspire to live up to the noblest, highest aspect of your job. Certain jobs – such as police work, firefighting, teaching or working in health care – are service oriented, so it's easier to feel good about your contributions. Look for the contributions you're making in your job and take pride in what you're doing to make the world a little better.

- **Be the go-to guy or girl.** This takes time, practice and the confidence necessary to want the ball in a critical situation. Being the go-to guy or girl means being willing to take responsibility and risk failing. A go-to person is also willing to speak up about problems or changes necessary in a business or organization, and suggest solutions.

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