

Reflections - Taking time to think about where you are

By Annette Richmond

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Annette Richmond
arichmond@career-intelligence.com

career-intelligence.com <http://www.career-intelligence.com>

If New Year's is a time of fresh starts, then year's end is a time for reflection. A time to applaud your accomplishments. And think about what you've learned. Time to consider where you are today and where you'd like to be by the end of next year.

Whether we're single or attached, business owners or on staff, with kids of two- or four-legged kind, there is one thing we have in common: We're all trying to be successful. While our definition of success is likely to be quite different, our desire to become whatever we deem to be successful is the same.

One of the keys to success is having a plan. But, before you begin planning for next year, take a little time to reflect on where you are today. Think about what's been working. And, maybe more importantly, what has not. Here are a few areas to get you started.

Appearance - Is your appearance helping or hindering you? Whether you're trying to find a new job, move into management or take on new clients looking professional is a business necessity. Take an honest look at yourself. Is it time to upgrade your wardrobe, get a fresh haircut or drop a few pounds? Sometimes small changes make a big difference. The tremendous boost in your self-confidence will be an added benefit.

Brain Food - Did you learn anything new? Consider how much time you've spent studying your industry or developing a new skill. Make a list of everything that can help you find that new job, get ahead at the office or build your business. If you're not happy with the results maybe it's time to take a class or pick up a few books.

Connections - Have you expanded your network? Whatever you're doing, you can do it better with "a little help from your friends." Think about the relationships you've nourished over the last year. And those you let slip away. The holidays are a great time to reach out to people you've lost touch with, for no other reason than to wish them well.

Goal Setting - Did you set goals? Think about how often you write down your goals. This means everything from making tomorrow's "to do" list to creating your master plan. Setting concrete, measurable long-term goals will help you keep your eye on the prize. Keeping your short-term goals realistic will help you stay motivated along the way

Renewal - What about "you" time? When was the last the last time you did something just for you? Whether that means getting a manicure or going to the movies (without the kids.) every now and

then you need to forget about your responsibilities. If only for a few hours. Work and family are important, but so are you. It's essential to set aside the time you need to renew.

Be careful not to let reflecting become an exercise in self-bashing. Everyone's life is filled with satisfactions as well as disappointments. Make sure to recognize your successes along with your letdowns. Think about what you've learned from each.

If you're honest, evaluating yourself can help you move forward. After all, it's easier to get to where you're going if you know where you are.

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