

Setting Goals from the Inside Out: A Zen Approach to Business Ron Mann, Ph.D.

Conventional wisdom dictates that we must set clear goals and have a vision if we are to achieve great things. After all, how can we get to where we are going if we do not know where we want to go? Now I ask, who is setting the goals and who is creating the vision?

Too Zen? Where there is Zen, there may be Yen!

No joke, studies of Fortune 500 CEOs found that the top executives relied upon quiet time, moments of prolonged inner reflection, to help them make better decisions. The inner connection allowed them greater access to intuitive problem solving which resulted in clearer thinking and more effective decision making. This modern approach to business is founded upon ancient Eastern philosophy. Lao Tzu, in the Tao Te Ching advises,

*Without going outside, you may know the whole world,
Without looking through the window, you may see the ways of heaven.
The farther you go, the less you know.
Thus the sage knows without traveling;
He sees without looking;
He works without doing.*

This paradoxical advice speaks to a different level of our being, if we are willing and able to hear it. To "know without traveling," "see without looking," and "work without doing" is to be without effort. "The farther you go, the less you know," speaks to the great mystery of life that is beyond our personal comprehension.

The deeper aspect of ourselves, call it the soul if you like, exists in harmony and unity with all creation. A subtle, yet tangible force of energy, weaves a web that interpenetrates all life. Our thought, our consciousness can access this subtle realm to receive and to create, to learn and to impregnate. This subtle force is the terrain of the soul. You know you have found solid ground in this subtle realm when you feel peace, love, joy and bliss; not necessarily all at the same time.

Lao Tzu offers further advice, When nothing is done, nothing is left undone. How can this be? It can only be if the doer unites with the source of all being, then the less you do, the more space there is for the Great One to act. A lot of mystical mumbo jumbo perhaps? I suggest not. Sound practical advice for manifesting in the next Century!

Back to the issue at hand, setting personal goals. Of course you can use the old tried and proven method and use your mind to think about what you want and develop a game plan to achieve those goals. Effective, but not necessarily the most enlightened approach. One last thought from our old friend Lao Tzu,

*Knowing others is wisdom;
Knowing the self is enlightenment.*

I suggest that the next Century calls for enlightened action. This approach requires a deeper knowing of the self, which allows for clearer intuitive perception and the seemingly mystical manifestation of the highest synchronistic order. To state this a little more simply. We all have within our soul a deep knowing about our unique purpose in this life. When we take the time to introspect and ask for clarity about this purpose, we can more consciously become aligned with the highest forces of creation. The process of realizing our soul purpose also reveals the mystery of "being without doing." The soul functions at a level that is beyond and transcendent of our personal ego. The will and intention, tools of the soul, are actually powerful forces that can be used for manifestation. Our own material efforts and unfocused actions recede in the face of the soul's ability to intuitively perceive and manifest. Perhaps this personal story will provide some clarity.

A number of years ago I was very troubled about the nature of the world. The Cold War was raging and the possibility of a nuclear holocaust seemed all too possible. I was meditating and had the vision of a nuclear bombing exploding a few miles from my home and considered that reality in which I had a few seconds before I would be vaporized. I asked myself, "Had I done everything in my power to prevent this?" The answer was clearly, "No!" From a very deep and sacred place within me, I spoke to the Great Voice that often guides me and offered myself in anyway that might be found useful. A personal goal, if you like, to try and help keep the world from being blown up. This goal came from a very deep place, clearly not my mind, for indeed, how could I as one common citizen do anything to stop such a terrible deed. I conceived of this work as an experiment to see what God could do through one simple, available citizen. Perhaps an opportunity to "work without doing." I felt guided to create a nonprofit organization, which was called Projects for Planetary Peace. I was told that Soviets related to organization, not to individuals. This made sense to me so I created the organization in case I found something to do. Not long after Projects for Planetary Peace was created, I was invited to attend a conference in Colorado entitled Yoga for Peace. During the conference I met a woman who had just returned from the Soviet Union and had made arrangements with the Soviet Peace Committee to bring a group of Americans to the Soviet Union on a Citizen Diplomacy Mission. The goal was to bring normal citizens together and break the stereotypes that had been created by both governments that we were enemies and evil people. This woman had plans but no organization for such work. We agreed to become partners in this worthwhile adventure. I was then invited to go to the Soviet Union, free of charge, to help organize this work. Over the next two and a half years I made six trips to the Soviet Union and traveled extensively through that country. I help to bring Soviet Citizens to the United States and took American citizens to the Soviet Union. Spin off projects such as the "Entertainment Summit" held in Hollywood, California resulted from our exchanges. The Entertainment Summit brought filmmakers from the SovinFilm and Hollywood studios together with the result that they agreed to stop making films that portrayed each other as evil enemies that must be destroyed. Film makes took responsibility for the destructive and fear producing images that they were creating and generating in people's minds. This work, along with other Americans doing similar work did have a profound affect on international politics.

The success of this project resulted from many synchronistic events. For example, I wanted to take the Soviet group to the State Capital. I did not know anyone there but I help the thought and intention that someone would be made possible. A few weeks later I flew to Carmel on a small private flight only to find my travel companions to be John Geramendi and other state officials who were interested in the Soviet's visit. Time and time again, necessary resources and opportunities became available as the need arose. Of course, one cannot just sit around waiting for results to happen. Once the goal is clear, we must do all we can do to fulfill our mission. My point is that working from the inside out and consciously aligning ourselves with our deepest values allows for more enlightened action and ultimately greater success.

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