

10 Steps Towards a Better, More Productive You in 2015

Will you simply go through 2015, or will you grow as a person and a leader in the new year?

By Shawn Parr

If you don't have your dreams and goals mapped out, you'll never achieve them. And while the act of writing them down doesn't guarantee that they'll happen, it helps you to stay laser focused on the things that matter and prevents you from drifting from year-to-year hoping that things might change.

Here are 10 "uncommon sense" principles for the year ahead that I hope inspire you to think about how you'll grow throughout 2015.

1. Start Strong, Finish Strong

Start your new year by designing a meaningful event to kick it off both at home and at work. Celebrate the beginning of this exciting new chapter that you can fill with opportunities, new experiences, and people who will add richly to your life. Start the year off with renewed energy, passion, and intentionality.

2. Build Your Own Advisory Board

Who do you go to for candid feedback and advice? Who are you accountable to? It's time to form your own board of advisors and let them hold you accountable. Identify three or four people who you respect in different facets of your life and invite them onto your board. Set expectations and let them know you need them on your journey through the year.

3. Create a Performance Survey

You grow through life when you live it consciously and are aware of the impact you have on others around you. A great way to know how to grow is to know where to focus. Create a performance survey and ask two or three people in different aspects of your life to evaluate you, helping you to become consciously aware of your most important relationships.

4. Make a Stop and Start List

Seeking simplicity in life is one way to create the margin of time, but daily life seems to get more complex every year, and time can slip through our hands like sand. One simple exercise is to list the things that you need to stop doing in the year ahead. List the distractions, the time-wasters, and the headache-inducers with the reasons why you need to stop them. Then list all of the things you need to do that you're not that will help you drive towards your goals.

5. Find the Meaning in Everything

Designing your actions with purpose and intentionality is an opportunity to inject more satisfaction into your days (and nights). If you can answer the questions "Why am I here?" and "Why am I spending my time doing this?" you'll waste less of your valuable time in the year ahead. Design your days with intentionality.

6. Make Small Gestures

It's the everyday, run-of-the-mill, important but sometimes mundane acts that show you understand other people's needs and that you care about what they need from you. Make a point of asking and understanding what's really important to the people you live with and work with.

7. Shut Up and Listen

As human beings we waste so much time talking about meaningless crap, because we're not really engaged in a two-way conversation or more, we're in our own monologue and think that being heard is more important than listening. Try being the quiet one in the room and listening a whole lot more than you talk. Ask more pointed questions and see what reactions you get and the impact that approach has on your own productivity.

8. Be Bold

Define and cement your purpose and what you want to get done in 2015 by mapping a clear and bold strategy for the most important initiatives you'll embark upon. Communicate successes, failures, rockstar moments, and misses. Do this often, celebrate the small wins, and share the losses. Remember, actions speak louder than words.

9. Adore Your People

Make sure to put people at the center of everything you do. It's not about you, it's not about profits, and it's not about products. Passionate, engaged people move mountains. Enough said. Understand them. Know them. Thank them. Communicate with them and involve them often.

10. Pay It Forward

They say it's easier to smile than to frown and easier to be kind than mean-spirited. My friend Bob Goff wrote a bestselling book entitled Love Does that's filled with stories of spontaneous love and laughter. Be deliberate about designing acts of kindness for the people you care about. Buy a stranger a cup of coffee in the line at Starbucks. Say thank you more often. Give love a go.

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