



CM Feature Article By CMs for CMs

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The Final Resolution: To Live Your Leadership Seasons

The FranklinCovey® organization has been releasing its New Year's Resolutions' Survey since 2005. In 2008, the Covey organization found that the top three New Year's resolutions or goals were to (1) get out of debt or save money, (2) lose weight, and (3) develop a healthy habit like exercise or nutritious eating. The survey went on to list all ten of this year's resolutions as: (listed in order of rank) get organized, develop a new skill or talent, spend more time with family and friends, other (a large variety of things), work less and play more, break an unhealthy habit (e.g., smoking, alcohol, or overeating) and finally, change employment.

The unfortunate side of making these New Year's resolutions reported by Covey and others is that most are never fulfilled.

Resolutions fade in time. We intend to do things, but as Brian Tracy notes, "The Law of Diminishing Intent" sets in. We intend to do things; we just never get to it the further away we move from the voiced commitment.

Covey and others remind us again and again it is about beginning with the end in mind. When we know the reason or purpose for why we want to accomplish these things, they are more likely to become realities in the course of time.

Leadership is like that too. It is my experience that we really want to be good leaders, but the further we get away from what we voice about our intent, the easier it is to get lost in the hurried pace of life.

The Challenge

As the new year begins, let me challenge you to consider living purposefully for the coming 52 weeks. If you are willing to commit to just four principles during the coming weeks, I guarantee they will change your life! I don't say that lightly, but do say it with the support of hundreds of students' and seminar attendees' testimonials I have received over the past 20 years. If you resolve to live the four leadership seasons, you will see the fruit of this change now and in the many years ahead.

The first Season to live (January through March) is that of determining your mission and purpose in life. What!? That is too much, you might contend. Well, it is. But, if it is done during

this season, it will set the stage for all that follows. Working hard during this season will set your course over the remaining seasons of the year.

Determining one's mission is the essential ingredient for leadership and an effective life. It is a process which should be fine tuned and sharpened over time, but in the end, knowing what we are called to do will bring immense satisfaction to one's life and leadership. So, resolution one is to write out your personal mission or life purpose. Go to the web link <http://staffweb.anderson.edu/~dlneidert/personal%20mission.htm> and do the work. Spend time here and you will never need to make a new year's resolution again. As one of my students recently told me after completing this assignment, "Be careful what you write, because it will become true as you work on it."

The second Season is about learning and growing. I would encourage you to spend time learning about leadership. Returning to Covey, he once wrote that a person who reads just 15 books on any subject (and then applies what they learn from the reading) becomes an expert. I know, it sounds too easy. Yet most people will never take the time to learn the skill sets for the things they really want to live out daily.

I love bookstores and from the looks of the crowds there over Christmas, others do to. I will go to a bookstore with a pad of paper and a pen just to write down all the books I find interesting to read, from classic literature, philosophy, and world history to leadership. In my most recent visit, I found a good number of books on discipline and focus in the leadership section. Why? Because these authors are writing in 280 pages what the preceding paragraph notes. If you learn and grow by reading and study, and then apply (the key concept here) what you learn through disciplined behavior, you have the greatest chance of becoming the leader (or expert) you intend. Again, if you want a reading list to help you select books I find useful, go to the web link: <http://staffweb.anderson.edu/~dlneidert/Leadership%20Bibliography.htm>

The third Season is about character. Character should be a natural part of being a leader, but it is sad to note from regular newspaper headlines and other media that many leaders do not practice it very well. Character and effective leadership are intertwined. They are glued together by how we behave, keeping our promises and building trust. Honesty and integrity are at the core of character. Living this one season alone would have a powerful impact on our businesses, communities, and families, more than any other factor. My graduate work is in ancient history. I am constantly reminded in my study that character has been on the collective mind of humankind for nearly 5,000 years of world literature. Seems we should take notice of a topic on the world stage for such a long time.

The fourth Season for developing effective leadership covers many of the topics presented annually through the Leadership Academy of Madison County. Collaboration, consensus, teambuilding, communication skills, diversity understanding, and more are at the heart of effective leadership. This is where leadership theory is crafted and honed as one practices in daily engagements, whether at work, home, or in the community. While leadership often turns to hierarchy and power to influence or get results, learning and implementing the tools taught by the academy will capture and engage the heart of those we lead.

The Secret to Success

On January 5, 2009, Dr. Phil aired his “five powerful secrets to success in making your New Year’s resolutions a reality.” As I close, I want to let you in on a secret. There is no secret. The only avenue to purposeful life and leadership is to undertake the work required in these four seasons with determination, discipline, energy, and focus. Make your final resolution ever to live these leadership seasons during the next twelve months. If you discipline yourself during the coming 365 days to actually develop a mission, learn about leadership, live with integrity, and work diligently at practicing leadership and creating effective relationships, 2009 will be the best year of your life.

Article by David Neidert, CM. David is a graduate of the LAMC Class of '87, a leadership speaker and instructor at Anderson University in Anderson, Indiana. He has taught internationally on leadership in Mexico and India. His book, [Four Seasons of Leadership](#), explores the personal journey of leadership. David is a Certified Manager and former member and officer of the ICPM Board of Regents, 1996-2004.