



Creating great places to work & exponential results!



The Language of Hope:

Set Your Intentions for Success

By Libby Wagner, Founder and President

Perhaps your in-box is flooded with well-wishers encouraging you to make this next, new year a bigger success than ever before? And why not? What's the alternative?! Perhaps you are on the verge of a business reinvention?

Last year in January, I set aside four full days to set my intentions for the year 2010. This was much more than a goal-setting journey or even a visioning process. I absolutely devoted this time to getting really clear about what I wanted, what my heart's desire was for my life, my work, my self. I examined eight areas of my life, spent time in contemplation, meditation and discussion. I thought I might share here some of the processes I used to create my best year yet!

Step One: Identify Your Intentions

As a former writing teacher, I believe in the transformative power of writing. I do believe that "writing teaches us our

mysteries,"¹ and so it is the tool that I use when I need to gain clarity in my thinking and expression.

So, the first step for me in setting my intentions for my future is to write. I like writing in a journal, although I'm a very fast typist and I could do this process via a keyboard. You choose what works for you. I also use Natalie Goldberg's "rules for writing" which suggest that you write for a timed period, do not stop even if you get stuck, and to tell the truth—go for the jugular. What's very important in setting intentions, which is not the same as setting a goal or adopting an initiative², is that you must give yourself permission to be utterly honest. You allow yourself the real freedom of expression and promise that most vulnerable part of you that you don't ever have to share your writing/ thinking; it's just for you.

¹ Marie de L'Incarnation, 1599-1672

² Identifying initiatives and setting goals comes later.

Then, I use some questions, or prompts, as a jumping-off spot. Here are some that I like:

1.If money were no object, and I could do anything . . .

2.What I really want to do is . . .

3.This is how I envision the best version of me . . .

Any sort of statement or question like these can work. The idea is that you prompt yourself to do a little dreaming, a little visioning, and pay attention to what resonates there for you.

From this exercise, you can select what really stands out strongly for you. I like threes (because that's a do-able number), so generally, I recommend selecting your top 3 ideas to create your intentions. Of course these intentions can touch every area of your life, and of course you will want and need to include your work in there—it's a significant investment of you, so it should definitely be intentional rather than accidental!

Here were three intentions that were important to me this year:

- Move into a beautiful, functional office space.
- My book is written, published, selling and promoting itself (i.e. I'm speaking).
- Commit totally to "ease."

Step Two: Make It Welcome

I know that sometimes in my life I have set goals or created resolutions at the beginning of a new year and I have not accomplished them. In essence, I failed at

following through or making it happen. I am working to adopt a new approach, and that is of making my life welcome to receive these great intentions that I'm setting. Even that subtle shift creates a different mindset, and often a tough one from a confirmed do-er devoted to busy-ness. Sure, I can look at the intentions and break them down into smaller pieces, chunks or tasks on a list, and I do, but one thing that I've found really important is that all the lists and task organizers in the world will not help move me toward my intentions if I'm not making my life welcome to actually receiving what I want. For example, I might set the intention of being a sought-after speaker and presenter, but if I don't update my website or tell people I'm a speaker, I'm not welcoming that good stuff that could be coming my way. Just as in your personal life, if you would like to meet your true love (or strengthen the love you've got), if you're not making your life welcome to receive it (i.e. taking time together or meeting new people), you're just at odds with your intentions, rather than supporting them. The other trap we can fall into is that we do not have to have a six pound Franklin-Covey planner and Gantt chart wall paper to make our intentions a reality: you just need to take the first step. The very next, first step toward making your life welcome to get what you want. As David Whyte says,

*Start close in,
don't take the second step
or the third,
start with the first
thing
the step you don't want to take.*³

³ From the poem, "Start Close In."

In organizations, especially, we can get really bogged down in the details and forget to take the first step to making our intentions a reality. Don't make the mistake, as I tell many of my mentoree clients, to spend your time "getting ready to get started to get going . . ." Make the first, next action.

Step Three: Adopt a Vocabulary of Hope

Hope is the belief in the good yet to come. Again, the alternative—hopelessness—is just not an acceptable option. I think it's important to distinguish between what I like to call "wishing language" versus a vocabulary of hope. "I wish I . . ." or "I wish they . . ." is not very strong language and doesn't create any external or internal conviction. A vocabulary of hope is different: it's full of possibility, creativity, a sense of optimism and expectation. A vocabulary of hope in an organization is energizing and empowering; wishing language is hesitant and submissive. Consider adopting this mindset:

"Are you not, then, like one who has started on a journey to a beautiful city which he knows exists?"⁴

Pay close attention to the language you use as you move forward into the work of setting goals, assigning or delegating tasks, identifying roles and responsibilities. And when considering your own intentions increase your awareness of how you are talking to yourself about what's happening (or not happening) and how you are continually taking that next step to make it a welcoming space for your intentions to flourish and grow.

I love reinvention. I LOVE reinvention. I love the questions, "what if?" and "what next?" and "I wonder . . .?" Here, at the beginning of the next phase in your success, in your life, give yourself the space and place to dream

big and set intentions that are resonant with who you are and how you're making your corner of the world better:

⁴ Ernest Homes.

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