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Why I Hate SMART Goals but Love DREAM Goals

I hate SMART goals.

Don't get me wrong, they are well-intentioned and I believe there is a place for them, but we've taken them too far. When we rely on SMART goals, we forget to think big, to shoot for the moon, to dream.

Yesterday I asked: *Do you want to live a life of adventure?* I asked what a life of adventure would look like for you. I asked you to think ahead to the moment we all reach when you're looking back on the life you've lived. Do you want to say as Tom Preston-Werner, the founder of Github, says:

'Wow, that was an adventure,' not 'Wow, I sure felt safe.'

I do. And that is why I think SMART goals have gone too far.

SMART goals don't make history

Putting a man on the moon was not a SMART goal. It was crazy. It was daring and dangerous. And it was inspiring.

Stories abound of children from that generation who saw John F. Kennedy announce that goal and something lit up inside of them. It inspired a nation.

"Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall," was not a declaration based on a SMART goal. It was a dream. It was the announcement of the vision Ronald Reagan saw for Germany.

It sparked the fuse that reunited a nation.

The March on Washington 51 years ago almost to the day was not the result of a SMART goal. Martin Luther King had a crazy idea. And he made it happen.

He had a dream and he inspired others to dream with him.

SMART goals don't make history. Dreams do.

DREAM goals

Instead of SMART goals, what we need more of are DREAM goals. Goals that make history. Here's what a DREAM goal is:

D - Daring / Dangerous

These goals are not safe. Telling the Soviet Premier to tear down the Berlin Wall was not safe. Many in Reagan's own administration wanted him to take out that line. It was too risky, they said.

But good goals always dare us to do something. They are often dangerous and risky. They require us to stretch.

They require us to swallow that lump in our throats and stand up and say, "I'm willing to take this risk."

R - Rapt

The dictionary defines rapt as follows:

showing complete interest in something; lifted up and carried away; transported with emotion; wholly absorbed; engrossed

Isn't that what our goals should do?

Keep us completely interested in them. Lift us up and carry us away to a new world. Transport us with emotion. Wholly absorb and engross us.

When you set a DREAM goal, it should nearly consume you. Not at the expense of your family, friends, or health, don't misunderstand me. But it should keep you awake at night and wake you up in the morning.

A DREAM goal should hold your interest in the dark times. It should inspire you and everyone around you (even the world). You should be overcome with emotion every time you think about it.

Doesn't that sound exciting?

E - Energizing

A DREAM goal is energizing. The thought of your goal gets you excited. It sparks something inside of you.

When you talk about your goal, you talk faster, your hands flail, and your heartbeat quickens. When someone asks what you are working on, you should immediately burst into the same elevator speech you've given a hundred times before. But you never grow tired of talking about it.

When Mahatma Gandhi set out to set India free from British rule, he didn't set SMART goals. Instead, he energized an entire population. Prior to his involvement in the independence movement,

the masses were removed from the struggle. It was mostly elitists calling for small concessions from the British. In other words, the elitists were aiming for SMART goals.

Gandhi changed all that and made it into a mass movement. His goal of a free India inspired the nation.

A - Action-oriented

For all of their inspiration, daring, and excitement, DREAM goals still require specific actions.

This is the part where you put actions on paper. What are the specific actions you need to take to make your big goals happen?

If your ultimate goal is to complete the Ironman Triathlon, then how many miles are you going to run next week? How many times are you going to swim next month? How much money do you need to save for your bike?

This is the part where I think SMART goals can be useful. When Kennedy said we'd put a man on the moon, he broke it down to steps. There were specific actions that took place in the coming months and years.

What specific actions do you need to take?

M - Meaningful

DREAM goals are meaningful.

They have a purpose beyond yourself. They are a part of a higher calling. They change the world.

This is the part where you ask yourself, "what is my *why*?" Why is this your goal?

If your goal is to complete the Ironman, why is that? Just to get a medal? Or is it to get in better shape so that you can be healthier for your kids? Is it to inspire others? Those are the kind of things that will get you out of bed when your bones ache.

What is your why? This question is one reason I am so excited about my upcoming podcast, *The World Changer Show*. One of my first guests is Ridgely Goldsborough, author of *The Why Engine*, who will take us on an amazing journey of discovering our why. Seriously, the exercise he does will blow you away.

Your goal should have an important why behind it. It should have deep meaning.

The purpose of your goal should be something amazing. The result should be inspiring. The process should bring you life.

Remember to make your goals Daring/Dangerous, Rapt, Energizing, Action-Oriented, and Meaningful.

That is how you set goals that change the world. That is how you live the life of your dreams.

What is one DREAM goal that you can set and take action on in the next 72 hours?