



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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Empowered and Powerful—How to Achieve Your Goals

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You have a career goal in mind. You know what is expected of you, what you have to do, what you need to do and what you should do. What's next? STOP. The track you are on will take you somewhere, but is it really where you want to go? On the way, will the effort be rewarding and, dare I say, fun? When the going gets tough, what will keep your momentum going?

As a coach, I don't provide the answers to these questions to my clients. They find those answers within themselves when I ask two very simple and empowering questions.

First, *what do you want?* Make sure you honestly answer that question. Often we pursue goals that we inherit from somewhere—or someone—else. Perhaps this inherited goal is a worthy one. Great! Adopt it. What will it take for you to make it your own? What moves it from being a “should” or “need to” to a “want to?” Make that realignment; then, it's your want. It gains a presence within you.

Be scrupulous with yourself. Are you saying “want” while really meaning “should” or “need to” or “have to?” Beware of deceiving yourself. Look for the camouflage—for the “should” in “want's” clothing.

For many high achievers in our society, expressing wants is uncomfortable at best. We have been trained to identify problems and be expeditious about resolving them. Wants are defined as unnecessary clutter. That is certainly valid in many situations. Not here. Go beyond this habit.

Expressing a want may make you feel vulnerable. You may ask questions like, “Will I seem needy?” “What if I cannot get my want; will I look like a failure?” Be aware that vulnerability is not always a bad thing. Think of the tightrope walker. If he doesn't feel vulnerable, he is more likely to lose his edge or break his concentration. The ensuing tumble is almost inevitable.

On the other hand, expressing a want may be empowering to you. You have reached a deeper level of self knowledge in the very mining for your want. You've been brave. In my experience, far from making me seem needy or weak, when I've articulated a want others see me as more powerful. In environments where the word “want” is rarely

used, its introduction shifts the dynamic. Empowered and powerful is a great place from which to achieve your goals.

Now, what will cause you to persevere in your effort when it gets difficult or boring? What will make the journey toward the achievement of your want fun? Try anchoring your goal—your want—to your essential personal values. Ask yourself the second big question, *What's important about that for me?* Get past the analytical. Get down to what matters in your life.

Here is an example. An actuary is considering a nontraditional career move. She is educated and skilled. She is prepared. She is enthused. And then things become difficult and scary. To prevent playing it safe and retreating from the dream, she asks, “Now, why did I decide to embark on this? What is so important about pursuing this objective?” Pay and advancement opportunity, while good things, aren't the energizing anchors she wants to turn to now. She considers that this opportunity will allow her to live in a place where she can be near family or ski or play with a noted orchestra or whatever it is that fulfills her. Having multiple stakes in the ground—some related to the career opportunity itself and some related to the rest of the person—will hold her firm in her resolve. 🚀

Try this approach with the tool kit below to get you started:

The Question

Making it Yours

What do I want?

Notice if it is truly a want, or is it a should, need to, or have to in camouflage. Say it to yourself. Say it to a person you trust.

What is important about that to me?

What other parts of my life does this desire support? How does this choice demonstrate who I am and my values?



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