

# New Year Happy

Reflecting on life, work moves vision forward

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Photo by: Marcus Marter

It's not just a new year. This is the first year of the rest of your life.

Think about it that way, suggests Gary Brunson, of The Alternative Board (TAB) of Northern Indiana and Clear Focus LLC, and the next year and the rest of your life will more likely go according to plan.

To encourage you, take one more look back and realize how much happened in 2010.

"We all have a history and a current and a future," Brunson explains. "It's good to look at what happened over the past year and ask ourselves, 'What actually did we get accomplished over the last 12 months?'"

"We go through periods of time and we get so caught up in accomplishing the to-do list. Things keep going on our to-do list and we're so focused on getting one more thing done, we forget to look back and see how many things we actually got done."

Chances are, you'll be pleasantly surprised.

"When I asked people what they got done and they start listing all they've been able to accomplish in the past 12 months, they're amazed at how long the list is. Now they feel happy and not overwhelmed by all they have to do yet."

Then take a look at your present situation and start looking ahead.

"It's really helpful to look at several years out," he says. "Sometimes people don't look out because it's really overwhelming to do that. It's really good to set a timeline. Take a piece of paper and put on it 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, so there's some context that we have to look at."

"What do we want to accomplish in the next 12 months, the next 24 months, the next 36 months? Each thing we put there, it's helpful if we give it a time frame or a priority, usually established by when we want it done."

Without the deadline, the goal will keep sliding down the list.

"If we don't schedule it or calendar it or put it where there's a due date, it's going to ride and probably not going to get done," Brunson says. "Once we set a time frame on it, then we have a reason to plan the steps in order to get it done. That's true in everything in our lives."

The pressure of a deadline is good. It overcomes the frustration of failure to achieve vague hopes.

"That pressure is what causes them to plan how they're going to do it," he says. "A lot of reason people carry frustration around is they don't put a timeline on what they want to do."

In his counseling — applicable to both business and personal life — Brunson focuses on the authority and responsibility people have for the direction of their own lives.

"It is amazing to me how many of us walk around and we complain about this or that not being done as if we are a victim to forces that we give power over to," he says. "If something is to get done and I want it to get done in my life, I need to be the one to take hold of deciding that that is something I want to get done."

"The bottom line is I have to decide whether I really want to grow up and become an adult. I have to believe that I have the right to determine my own life and direction."

Brunson finds that many people underestimate how many years they have left when they imagine their life potential. A 50-year-old, for example, likely will live for 30 more years — as much as their adult life so far.

"Usually the amount of career that people have is far greater than they've already lived," he says, adding that he encourages them to imagine what epitaph of 20 to 40 words they want on their tombstone.

"What do you want on there that represents the essence of what your life has meant during the time you lived it? Once a person does that, then what are you going to do between now and the end that brings about a life that represents what you want your life to have represented by the time you get to the end?"

Clear Focus, a new corporation, owns the rights to the TAB franchise that brings business owners together as sounding boards and support for each other.

The combination of TAB and Clear Focus helps balance the relationship of business and life, Brunson explains: "I have a life and a part of that life is owning a business."

