

#relosolutions

The Definition of Insanity

Insanity:

“Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.”

- Unknown

While often ascribed to Albert Einstein, there is no actual evidence that he said this. Regardless, this “definition of insanity” has been used so many times by so many people as to be considered just plain common sense. Why then do so many of us seem to exhibit the symptoms of insanity? How many diets have failed because we didn’t actually change our behavior? Whether it was to go to the gym more or to consume less, months go by with no weight loss, yet we seldom recognize that it was not the plan that failed, but it was our execution of that plan. I never did go to the gym (I did pay the membership fee though, does that count?)

Business strategies fall to the same fate. Meetings are held, ideas formulated, plans laid and then... nothing. Most business strategies fail not through a lack of planning, but through a lack of execution. Once out of the annual strategy session we go back to doing the same thing every day that we did before. Caught in the whirlwind of the day-to-day, we forget whatever it was we said we were going to do differently.

How do we stop the madness and make this year different? Two techniques can help:

Set lead measures

Lead measures are metrics that allow us to track our behavior. If my goal is to lose 20 pounds, weighing myself daily will not help me get there. Instead, I would need to set a plan on how I will lose weight. Going to the gym for example. My lead measure would be how many times I went to the gym each week. Tracking lead measures allows us to see if we are really executing on our plan. If, at the end of the month, I’ve never gone to the gym, I can see that from my lead measures. Or, if I went to the gym every day but lost no weight, I can conclude that I need to change my strategy.

It is important to keep your metrics simple and easy to track. Sometimes just a pad and a pencil are all that is required. A paper calendar is a great way to track lead measures.

Get an accountability partner

Even with lead metrics in place, we still won't reach our goal unless we actually do what we say we are going to do. That is where your accountability partner comes in. Pick a partner who shares your desire to improve. They can be from your team, some other part of the company or even a friend or significant other. They do not need to have the same goals as you. Meet daily or at least weekly. Each meeting should be just a few minutes. At each meeting, both partners report what they did since the previous meeting to drive their lead measures and commit to additional actions for the next meeting. The simple act of making and reporting commitments to another person is a big motivator.

Change is hard. Changing our behavior to reach our goals is even harder. Follow these simple steps and you will soon see the change you desire.