



January 2024 – Goal Setting

Has anyone ever heard the saying “A goal without a plan is just a wish?” Well, I believe it to be true. But how do lawyers, who are tasked with accomplishing their clients’ goals, set and plan for their own goals? The answer, a yearly plan.

When I started at Spencer Fane, I had the privilege of collaborating with fellow attorney [Dave Seitter](#) about goal setting and plan implementation. Those lessons have stuck with me for the past 12 years. The last week of every December, when email traffic is low and I can catch my breath, I commit to setting my next year’s goals and mapping out a plan to achieve those goals.

I start by breaking up my goals into categories. My categories generally look like this:

- Business Development
- Professional Advancement
- Personal Growth
- Family Investment

Yes, as a busy lawyer who can get easily sucked into the daily grind of work, it is critical that I set personal and family goals. When I was in law school, I attended a panel about work life balance. One of the speakers said something that has stuck with me throughout my entire career. She explained that “balance is a verb, not a noun.” For me, that means that some years I set ambitious work goals and more easily achievable personal and family goals. Some years, like this one where I am getting married, the personal and family goals are lofty.

After setting my categories, I use the SMART goal model (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound) to set my specific goals. Historically, I have set goals based on revenue generation, number of clients served, number of new contacts made, commitments to speak or write at certain intervals, hours spent

mentoring, family trips planned, and self-care intentions. For each goal, I ask myself “how will I know if I have achieved this goal?” Goals like, “meditate more” or “use LinkedIn regularly” don’t work for me. Goals like, “meditate five days a week” or “post 12 times on LinkedIn” do.

Last but not least, I map out my plan. I tend to organize my plan by month. I commit to the things I will do each month that will help ensure I meet my yearly goal. So, for meditation, I literally write “meditation” with a box I can check five times each week on my day planner. For LinkedIn, I sketch out the substance of 12 posts and assign one post to each month (again in my day planner). Breaking my goals down into easily achievable steps and planning them a year out sets me up for success.

Goal setting and creating thoughtful plans have helped me turn my dreams into a reality. Wishing is great, but achieving is so much better.

This blog post was drafted by [Jamie Cotter](#), an attorney in the Spencer Fane Denver office. For more information visit www.spencerfane.com.