

2009: Year of No More Excuses

by Beverly Denver

Houston Woman Magazine has declared 2009 the Year of No More Excuses and challenged readers to make the next 12 months the best and most empowering time of their lives. We asked readers to tell us about their goals and good intentions.

Some of their comments are printed here. Others will be included in Houston Woman Magazine over the next 12 months.

Karen Blanchard says, "I am living the motto of "no more excuses" on all fronts: I have lost nine pounds and made exercise a part of daily life. I am actively participating in weekly Mass, rosary and teaching Sunday School. I am enrolled in two grad school courses. I will do a better job managing financials, reducing costs, expanding business, more proactively counseling clients and exploring franchise opportunity. I am helping my son achieve his Cub Scout and school goals for this year and earmarking more one-on-one conversation time with him."

Merrill Bonarrigo, owner of Messina Hof winery, is hoping "to be a better daughter, wife, mother, friend and partner. I also want to help our employees grow in wine knowledge and to get to my Lord better and to be prepared to serve."

Jacque Baly Chaumette, a member of the Sugar Land City Council, tells us, "In 2009, I will be kind and courteous to those who cross my path, and I will not speak ill of others. I will gather the courage to do what is right and take responsibility for my own actions. I will be happy. I will not dwell on negative thoughts. If my mind fills with clouds, I will chase them away, and fill it with sunshine.

Connie Cooke says, "My first and foremost goal for 2009 is to find an agent and get my second novel, Cayman Heat, published. I just sent it to a top agent in New York that requested the manuscript, so, hopefully, this will be the one!

PR pro Henry de la Garza writes, "My goals for this year are: Make more money, read a book a month and lower my golf handicap by five strokes."

Deborah A. Fiorito, president of 20K Group LLC, says, "This really is the year I will stop doing the unhealthy things I do that weigh me down (literally and figuratively) in my personal and business life. One of them: stop allowing electronic devices and communications to absorb my time from sunrise to sunset. I will build in time to slow down and think rather than assume that multitasking (what we women think is an asset) really is more efficient. Actually practicing that over the holidays made me realize it's possible to get every-thing done and build space and time for creative meditation. Maybe in the process, everything in my life will benefit."

Attorney Frost Haenchen writes, "I used to see goals as something one tended to use only in a distant or long-term application, and I still recognize the necessity to have mid-range and long-term goals for organizational success. But for 2009, I plan on improving my focus on the goals and tasks that are more closely attainable, as it seems that my day-to-day activities are changing more frequently and significantly than ever before in these challenging economic times. It is the 'Target of Opportunity' that I don't want to miss, and these seem to continue to arise more and more often in the New Year."

Judy Gulgan of Amerprise says, "My goal for 2009 is to embrace new technology. I just started with Facebook at the beginning of the year (transitioned from Plaxo to LinkedIn to Facebook) and just went wireless."

Another reader, Cynthia Hougardy, wife and stay-at-home mom of twins, tells us that she has already accomplished one of her goals. A goal many of us can relate to. She says, "Getting just one car in the garage was my goal, and I achieved it! In December our Church had a garage sale; I took everything in the path of one vehicle there and, voila, was able to park my van in there! Meanwhile our church, Metropolitan Baptist in Northwest Houston, took in about \$10k from the garage sale and is close to reaching a goal for its project, The Big Give."

Hougardy continues, "A personal goal was to get in shape for our February ski trip. Rather than the standard 'weight loss,' my goal was 21 straight days to the gym or an outdoor activity like rollerblading. I figured the 21 straight days would absolutely jump start the fitness aspect and would clear out my head for the 'best life' aspect...that's working. I have only had one Coke since Christmas, which I borrowed from a neighbor since I won't buy them anymore. I am feeling better and sleeping better!"

Michele Patrick of Mosaics by Michele tells us, "At the end of 2008 I made a list of all the professional goals I had accomplished. This was easy to do because I work with a coach, and after each session with her, she sends me notes that include the things I achieved that week. Then I made a list of goals to achieve in 2009. Even I broke down each goal into action steps (more detailed the better) and put them on my calendar."

Patrick adds, "Working with a coach helps keep me accountable for achieving those goals. I also bought a journal that I use each day to record my thoughts, dreams and ideas. I love this journal because the front of it says: Some people dream of success, while others wake up and work hard at it."

Mary Remar of Hillhouse Consulting comments, "No Excuses was the theme for my Business Development Work-shop in December. I handle the excuses of my clients by simply not listening to them and, more importantly, not judging them and, sometimes, even appreciating why the excuse would naturally be coming up for them. It's the 'Yeah, that's great, and when do you think you'll have that next sale' approach.' Or, the 'Can you see that after closing five new deals last month and managing the fulfillment of those deals, you would naturally be concerned about how much more business you can take on.' We look at what's happened in their businesses, and see what needs to happen to fulfill on the outcomes they're now concerned about taking on."

Remar continues, “I have my bizdevers set manifestation goals for six months on a calendar grid. They learn to write goals as if they’ve occurred. For example, in March under Business Development, a goal or intended outcome would be ‘two new \$1,000,000.00 contracts signed from my relationship with 10 new CEOs.’ Something like that. They write goals as if they will simply occur. The goals are layered in accomplishments, new relationships and new sales. And specificity is important. Ten new relationships and two new sales. Quality of life is also important. The outcomes and process of fulfilling on the goals my clients set have to add to their quality of life.”

Sara Selber comments, “I vow to use my experience in local not-for-profit management to grow build-clean.org, my latest venture. It will be a challenge — and a fulfilling one — to build national awareness of the fact that just being ‘green’ is not enough. My goal is to reach thousands of people via the web with the message that the materials and products we use in our homes can be dangerous to our health, and that today it’s possible to choose things like floors, carpets and paint that are free of VOCs (volatile organic compounds), lead or which carry the potential for breeding mold or bacteria. I owe it to myself and my family, and so do we all.”

Liane Soukup, M.D. Anderson Chair of the Junior League of Houston, says, “It is imperative to be adaptable and flexible in this ever-changing world. One wants to not merely survive, but thrive. I am committing my-self to making good, authentic choices on a daily basis — from the time I wake up to the time I lay my head on a pillow. It is all about choices. I am choosing to make more conscious and self-supporting decisions on what I eat and the amount of exercise I incorporate into my daily living. I want a life of abundance, and I believe this is achieved when one’s life is in proper balance ...What does it mean to be happy? It excites me to delve into this question and seek paths to wisdom about this simple, yet complex, question.”

Carolyn St. Clair tells us how she accomplishes her goals. “My secret is not original, but it works so easily. I write down the top five to 10 goals, commit to taking the steps to achieve them, and set a deadline date certain.

“I refer to them every single morning. I suggest emailing them to yourself, putting them in your Blackberry, texting them to your phone, posting them to your Facebook page. We should do whatever it takes to stay on track.”

Lori Schwartzberg Stutt sent us only a few words, but they are powerful ones. They are good reminders for many of us (care-giving) women. Stutt wrote, “I guess my biggest goal for 2009 is to start taking responsibility for my own happiness and not try to ‘fix’ everyone else. What’s my stuff is my stuff; what’s their stuff is their stuff.”

Pam Terry, regional director for Powerful Women Inter-national, has a lot of goals, and she shares some of them here. “I plan to create a wiki web site on what’s working in the world, as part of a leadership program I’m involved in. After the leadership program, I want to take the wiki site and turn it into a [viable] business, one that contributes to making the world a better place.”

Terry adds, "I also plan to clear out all the clutter in my house by the end of the year. It was a goal in 2008; I made a good start, but I did not complete it, so I am going to be more aggressive about it this year! I also intend to get physically fit and toned and be able to play a game of racquetball by May."

Terry also says, "Travel to New York City, Atlanta, Seattle, Los Angeles, San Francisco, St. Louis, Hawaii, Kansas City, Dallas, Austin and South Padre Island. Okay, North Carolina too. Maybe Colorado."