

Turn goals from over-the-rainbow to achievable

**IN
DEPTH**

By Andrea Tortora
AND
Kristin Davenport

You might have heard that people with **written goals** — or a master plan for their life — are more likely to achieve long-term success. Many people create life plans for their professional and personal lives, and those **actionable plans** are much more realistic than keeping the ideas and dreams in their heads. Before building a plan, identify your values and discover your **strengths**, said Vivian Kist, chief learning officer and senior executive coach at Baker & Daboll LLC.

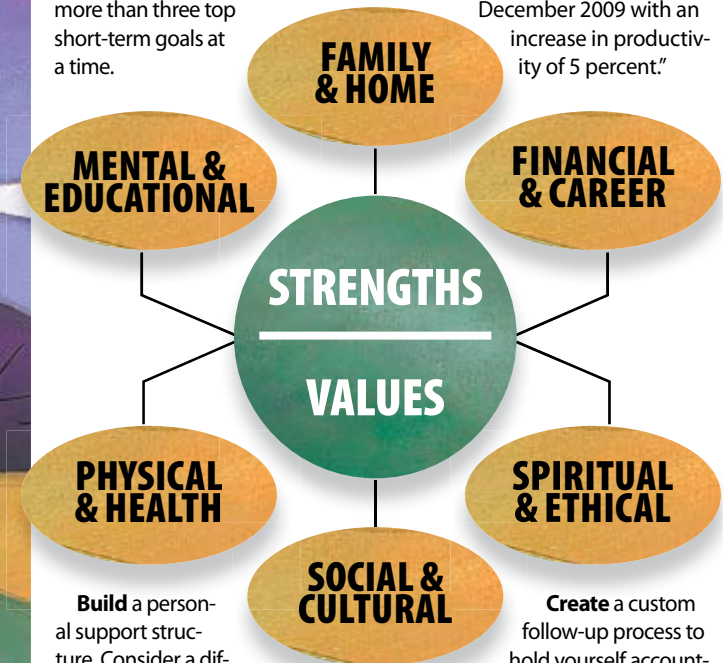
Values serve as guides to action. "Research has found that a person will fully commit to what they are doing if it aligns with their beliefs," Kist said. "Emotional reasons provide the real power to achieve." Knowing your strengths allows you to be realistic about what you can achieve.



CRITICAL STEPS

Prioritize areas most important to your success at this stage in your life. Set goals in all areas but determine if a short-term, mid-term or long-term goal is most appropriate. Identify no more than three top short-term goals at a time.

Write down goals; they should be performance-based and actionable — not outcome-focused. Not, "I want to be a CEO by 2012," but, "I will do a two-year overseas plant manager assignment by December 2009 with an increase in productivity of 5 percent."



Build a personal support structure. Consider a different structure for each goal and different times in your life. For your career, you might identify a personal board of directors — especially if you are preparing for a leadership role.

Create a custom follow-up process to hold yourself accountable. Consider your values and strengths; do not use a "one size fits all" approach. For example, the day planner might not work for everyone. Try a free Internet site such as www.goalforit.com.