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Why we fail to achieve our new year Resolutions

Wednesday, December 27, 2017 17:36



As we gather with family to celebrate the end of a turbulent 2017 and usher in optimism for 2018, many of us will ponder New Year's resolutions in hopes of changing to become better people.

Thousands of us may decide to lose weight, become better bosses, harder workers, or read more often. Among our myriad of personal life goals, humans survive generally as positive and forward looking.

We implore ourselves to improve. We aim to advance. We strive to succeed. So why do so few of us achieve our annual determinations? Psychologist Joseph Luciani predicts that 80 per cent of New Year's resolutions will fail.

Unfortunately, some resolutions could become a matter between life and death such as eating healthy or driving slower or stop bribing traffic officials, and yet we do not achieve them. Nobel Laureate Richard Thaler delineated in his ground-breaking research on nudge behavioural theory that humans tend to compartmentalise their lives into different metaphorical boxes in their heads.

When making decisions, we tend to see costs and benefits only within the specific allotted section in our brain and do not look at the broader implications of decisions across our entire life.

Inasmuch, humans make fantastically irrational decisions on a regular basis. So, Stanford University psychologist BJ Fogg developed a behavioural modification model that we can undertake to root out our irrationality from harming our goal attainment.

First, set some overarching goals that you yearn to achieve. Often people use stretch goals where they set unrealistic unattainable targets. Reading 30 new books during 2018, as an example, does not represent a realistic goal for almost anyone.

However, an individual who sets out to read five new books would hold higher success probability.

Second, create micro changes in your daily routine. In order to read five new books in 2018, choose a specific time once per week to glance online at the New York Times best sellers list and decide on any new titles to read later.

Perhaps choose Mondays at 11:00am for two minutes or Wednesdays immediately after your morning tea for two minutes. Inasmuch, you create a weekly micro behaviour. However, micro changes work better if implemented daily. So, an individual with a reading goal might read two pages immediately after brushing his or her teeth in the evening.

Then regularly layer in more and more times to read for brief spurts following specific tasks in one's routine.

Micro changes work well for numerous desirable outcomes such as losing weight, becoming a more thankful person, meditating, exercising, eating more fresh fruits or vegetables, less procrastination in the office, showing appreciation for employees, etc.

In short, do not try to make massive monumental shifts in your New Year's resolutions.

If you do, you will likely fail to achieve the change you seek.

Try implementing many micro changes instead that take you closer to your goals.

As a manager, you can even utilise micro changes with performance improvement plans for your employees as you include them into your own life.

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