

Soar With Slogans

*Is your vision cloudy and your mission grounded?
Jettison those weighty statements and take off!*

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As a team member, leader, and facilitator, I've wordsmithed my share of vision and mission statements. The formula? Describe lofty thoughts in run-on sentences, and sprinkle liberally with multi-syllabic words, chosen carefully to include all and offend none. Once feedback was collected from all concerned, these weighty and unwieldy paragraphs would get refined, finalized and distributed—blown up poster-size for display in the hallowed corporate halls, as well as shrunken down and laminated for each employee's wallet or planner.

And then M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, in Houston's famed Texas Medical Center, unveiled their brilliant three-word declaration: *Making Cancer History*. With a red line scratched through the word "cancer". A mission, a vision, a slogan—it worked on so many levels.

I was immediately inspired to trash my long-standing concept of what an effective corporate mission/vision statement needed to look like. And instead of clinging to the same tired model in the crafting of my own personal mission/vision statements, I opted to adopt a yearly slogan.

My slogan, or motto, is simply a word or phrase that succinctly captures

what I'm "up to"—what the primary focus of my year will be. It must be so simple that it does not require me to write it down. It must inspire me and be memorable to others. It must serve as a template as I choose when, where, and with whom to invest my energy, time, and talents.

In 1998, my slogan was "*Clear the Deck and Reconnect*". The "*Clear the Deck*" part was about making room. I was transitioning from a corporate position to my own business and I had to make room—physically and mentally—for all the new learning and activities I was about to undertake. "*Reconnect*" was about tending to valued relationships I had allowed to go dormant. It was about being a better daughter, sister, and friend. It meant initiating phone calls, answering e-mails, remembering birthdays—and actually sending a card! I committed to being more appreciative of and more available to friends and family. Eleven years later, I am amazed at how that focus set the stage for the life and work I now enjoy.

Seven years ago, my slogan was "*Think Less, Move More*". It worked on several levels for me—it helped remind me to quit reading about exercise and actually walk a mile or two! It helped me catch myself when

I was over-analyzing a situation and take action. As a result, I became more iterative, more willing to make a mistake.

This year, I am toying with "24"...I want to read 24 books, travel to 24 cities, lose 24 pounds. It links to my personal and professional goals. So, how about *"24 Will Bring Me More"*? Or shall I go with *"24 Places, 24 Pounds, 24 Pundits"*?

Your slogan can be borrowed from a song, like *"Get Over It"* by the Eagles, which my former boss and mentor has adopted. You can creatively swipe from the advertising industry—Nike's

famous *"Just Do It"* has inspired many. Or maybe there's a memorable line from a movie that can be your beacon this year. *"Go the Distance"* from *Field of Dreams* is an example of an encouraging, transformative message.

Whether you create your own unique mantra for 2009, or creatively swipe one from popular culture, make sure it moves you to action. It can be inspirational or operational—or both. To quote the decades old "Life" cereal commercial, *"Try it...You'll Like It!"*