

# Plan to surprise yourself



By Mark Shraga



**In every respect I have either nailed my goals or knocked the ball out of the park**



Over the last 5 years I have set and achieved more goals than at any other time in my life. I have generally been a focused and driven person, but this last 5 years have been a whole other deal. It began with the final goal setting phase of my NLP Master Practitioner course wherein I laid out some key milestones, i.e. become an NLP Trainer, design trainings, get a degree, launch a new company, make enough money to keep going, get a Black Belt in Aikido and teach it, find the right significant other, become a published author to name a few.

All in all, I achieved, and in some cases exceeded, my goals. I started an awesome family (with exactly the right significant other) and achieved a Masters Degree in Applied Coaching along the way whilst designing my own integrated approach to coaching. My Telecoms company was listed amongst the fastest 50 growing UK Tech companies in the UK in 2015 (and in the fastest 500 in Europe, Middle East and Africa). My next grading in Aikido will be my Shodan (1st degree Black Belt) later this year. I had initially aimed for it to be in 2015, I did however achieve my instructor certification at the end of 2015 so my core aim to be able to teach was achieved in good time.

In every respect I have either nailed my goals or knocked the ball out of the park; I faced failure dropping out of an undergraduate degree in 2012, only to apply in 2013 for a Masters Degree. I honestly could not have achieved as much without first setting my goals out clearly, in a well formed fashion

and along my time line out to...well, right around now. I am in fact, for the first time in my life in fully uncharted territory, and in the process of setting out my next set of goals. It is an insanely exciting time.

However, I should return to the subject for this article – planning to surprise yourself. When I set out my goals I made them specific enough to focus my attention. Thus beginning the process of enlisting my unconscious mind to start marshalling the resources and connections that I would need along the way; adjusting my values and priorities in the process accordingly. I did not in fact plan to surprise myself. That I think it is a good idea is only afforded to me in hindsight.

Planning for surprises, at least to me, really means to allow room for how the lives, purposes and qualities of others will affect your own life plan. The most surprising factor in my own experience is that people will help you more than you expect if you respect them. For example my entry onto a Masters Degree programme was an unexpected opportunity that was offered by the same person that heavily criticised the design of a workshop I was putting together for the first time. Without respecting that person I highly doubt I would have even learnt of the opportunity (I think that was a classic example of curiosity saving the cat).

There are in fact people you will meet along the way who will directly and indirectly enrich your journey. Some will clearly support you and help you,

and others will hamper and delay, if not outright obstructing the road ahead. My key learning throughout has been that people must always be related to as having value (which is what I mean by respect), and never as being unnecessary hurdles to be negotiated with minimum delay. This kind of resistance on your journey to achieving your goals is the most common and is actually pretty straight forward to resolve.

Resistance in neuro-linguistic programming is a sign of a lack of rapport, and more importantly it means you are not accepting feedback. Over the last 5 years I have learnt that not accepting feedback can be fatal both metaphorically and even literally. It can also mean that you are not learning, and not learning means not taking responsibility for your own progression. I also learnt that whatever it is that you do not take responsibility for you will be reduced to time and time again until you do. This particular lesson has been a gift that keeps on giving.

I encourage you to take responsibility for meeting all kinds of new people and creating strong, deep value based relationships with them. Eventually integrating them with those already in your existing circle of relationships, and allowing yourself to be integrated into theirs. In my experience, all of the good things I have learnt, experienced and been enriched by were outside my comfort zone and there is nothing on this planet that will push your comfort zone to shift like other people. May you be pleasantly surprised...and often! ●