**Goals**

**Align your goals with a plan and the commitment to achieve them.**

“First say to yourself what you would be, and then do what you have to do.”

- Epictetus, Greek philosopher, second century

**When a friend of author Dorothy Parker had a baby, Parker sent her this telegram:**

**“Dear Mary: Good work. We all knew you had it in you.”**

What have you got in you? You can’t control the winds that are buffeting publishing, but you can adjust your sails. You can point your craft in the right direction by having literary, publishing, and personal goals that are in harmony and keep you motivated.

On the island of Maui, they sell a T-shirt that says: “The unaimed arrow never misses.” One foolproof way to hit a target is to shoot and call whatever you hit the target.

In *The* *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey offers a better idea: “Begin with the end in mind.”

**(If you ever need a book idea, speaker Scott Friedman came up with a great title for a sequel: *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Nuns*.)**

Success is achieving your goals, so set your goals and create a plan to achieve them. List your short- and long-term personal, literary, and publishing goals, and how you will achieve them by answering these questions. When you can, start your answers with the word “I.”

**Literary Goals**

Your literary goals—what you want to accomplish as a writer--have to inspire you to get

to your keyboard every workday:

\* Why do you want to write?

\*What do you want to write: novels, nonfiction, children’s, middle grade, or

young adult books, poetry?

\* Who are you writing for?

\* What do you want to communicate?

\* What do you want your writing to achieve?

\* What are two recent, successful models for the books you want to write?

\* Do you want to write your book yourself, work with an editor, collaborate, or hire a ghostwriter?

\* How many books do you want to write a year?

\* What do you want your legacy as a writer to be?

**A Test to See If You Have Achieved Your Literary Goals**

Write the ideal review of your book by the ideal reviewer. Put it on the wall where you write to help keep you motivated. Include the review at the end of your work when you share it, and ask your community of early readers if your work deserves your review or what you can do so that it will.

**Publishing Goals**

You can sum up your commercial goals with the answers to these questions:

\* Do you want to self-publish, pay to be published, or be paid to be published?

\* Do you want to work with an agent?

\* Is there an author who is a model for the writer you want to become?

\* What size house do you want to publish your books?

\* How big an advance do you want for them?

\* How many copies do you want them to sell?

\* How much money a year do you want to earn as a writer?

**Personal Goals**

Consider how you will balance your writing and personal lives with these questions:

\* How will you support your writing until it can support you?

\*How, where, and with whom do you want to live?

\* How will you express your gratitude by giving back?

Your answers to these questions will be unique. But if they are in harmony and keep you going, they are the answers you need.

Choose whatever goals you wish and change them whenever you wish. But make them inspiring enough for you to stay motivated, to give you a sense of mission about doing what it takes to achieve them. Put your answers up where you write. Read them when you need a reminder.

Sue Grafton advised writers to have a five-year plan. Create a plan to achieve your goals. Give yourself benchmarks for your days, weeks, months, and years to assess your progress.

Join or start a writer’s group that you can share your goals with and that will help you keep track of your progress.

**See It to Be it**

Sally Ride, the first women astronaut, said: “You can’t be what you can’t see.” The more clearly you can see your goals, the more likely you are to achieve them.

Capture the essence of your goals by writing a mission statement. Mine is: ”My mission is helping writers achieve their goals by adding value to their readers’ lives.” What’s yours?

These suggestions on goals boil down to three steps:

\* Set literary and publishing goals.

\* Following your plan to achieve them.

\* Write books readers love.

When you reach your goals, draw on what you learn to set new ones that keep you

inspired.

**Pick a Number**

“I am interested in art as a means of living, not as a means of making a living.”

-Robert Henri, artist

“Money is applause.” – Jacqueline Susann,

author of *Valley of the Dolls*, which has sold more than 30 million copies

Writers have different reasons to take up their calling. Most want to write what they feel compelled to share. Those who also want to make money balance self-expression with readers’ interests.

**The comedian Jackie Mason said: “Money is not the most important thing in life. Love is. Fortunately, I love money.”**

How much money you want to earn a year from your writing is a goal that clarifies your other goals. It determines what you write, how you write, and how you promote it.

**Joan Rivers said: “They say money isn’t the key to happiness, but I always figured that if you had enough money, you could have a key made.”**

How much money do you need for the key to your happiness? Would you be happy earning no money, just writing for the pleasure of it? If so, that’s wonderful and liberating. You can write whatever you want. If you self-publish and your book is available online, you can let readers determine your success.

If you want to earn a million dollars a year, the only kind of book you can write is bestsellers. So find out what authors who write book like yours earn, pick a number, and do what it takes to reach that number.

**But if you want to earn a million dollars a year writing haiku, you’ve got a problem.**

**T Time**

T-table your way to your short-and long-term goals. Take Sue Grafton’s advice: Have a five-year plan. Draw a line across the top of a page and another one down the middle of it to form the letter T. On the top of the left side, write the word “Goals.” On the right side, write the word “Resources.”

If your goal is writing a book, list how much time and other resources you need for researching, writing, and getting feedback on it. Move deadlines if necessary. Use T lists for finding an agent and publisher, for promotion, or for self-publishing your books, and for tracking your short- and long-term goals.

**Commitment**

“Brick walls are there for a reason.

They give us a chance to show how badly we want something.”

- *The Last Lecture*, Randy Pausch with Jeffrey Zaslow

Let your love for writing, for serving your readers, and your faith in your work and yourself enable you to sustain the commitment you need to persevere, despite mistakes, rejections, failures, and obstacles. Commitment is essential for success:

\* Danielle Steel has written 179 books that have sold more than 650 million copies. At 71, she writes about 20 hours a day, turning out seven novels a year. She’s been writing like this since she was 19, living through two marriages and raising nine children. Steel said: “I want to go on forever, just writing.”

\* Stephen Hawking couldn’t talk or type, but a computer program enabled him to write his bestsellers fifteen words at a time.

**A *New Yorker* cartoon shows a couple sitting on a couch talking, and the man is saying: “Look, I’m not talking about a lifetime commitment, I’m talking about marriage.”**

Take the long view about developing your craft and your career. Make a lifetime commitment to doing what it takes for as long as it takes to achieve your goals.

**If you’re having a hard day, remember the sign in front of a church: “Moses was once a basket case.”**

Adapted from *Writing Success Guaranteed: How to Build a Career Doing What You Love* (in progress) by Michael Larsen, www.michaellarsenauthorcoaching.com, [larsenpoma@aol.com](mailto:larsenpoma@aol.com). Please write with questions.