

Get a Jumpstart on Your New Year's Resolution to be a Better Leader

By Madeleine Niebauer, Founder & CEO, vChief Virtual Chief of Staff

After the holidays wind down, many of us think about the coming year and how we want to change and improve on ourselves. Of course, there are the old standards of losing weight and exercising more, or maybe a new favorite, taking up a mindfulness practice. As leaders, however, there are additional resolutions we can bring into our lives to make our work-lives more manageable and sustainable. Here are a handful of ideas that we've found to be effective.

Plan your own priorities for the year ahead

Our organizations wouldn't head into a new year without strategic goals laid out, and neither should we as leaders. Take time to lay out your [personal strategic priorities](#) for the new year. These should be the central things that you want to succeed with this year. Some of them may be aligned with your organizational goals, but others may be focused on specific areas where you personally can make the most impact. These don't have to stay fixed for the entire year. You can and should revisit them on a regular schedule, monthly or quarterly, and adjust to reflect your current reality.

Delegate, delegate, delegate

Think about what in your day-to-day work takes you away from your priorities. Are you in too many [irrelevant meetings](#)? Does your team require too much input from you to move meetings forward? Do you have tasks and projects piling up that you don't have time to accomplish? If so, it is time to [delegate](#). Make a list of all of the things you think are not the best use of your time. Don't worry, it might be a very long list. For each of those items, think about two things: (a) how easy it is to delegate to someone else? And (b) how much of your time will be freed up by delegating it? If it is easy to delegate and will free up a lot of your time, that's an obvious item to delegate. Identify who will take it over, and don't forget to check-in to make sure they are following through.

Create productivity rituals

Set [rituals](#) to help you be more productive and focused in your work. These can be weekly—like setting your intentions at the start of the week and identifying what you must accomplish to feel successful—or daily, like creating work blocks to tackle your biggest projects and building in time to make the most of each meeting on your calendar. You can turn off your notifications, hide your phone in a drawer, or vow to only check your email at fixed times. There are dozens of productivity hacks out there; figure out which ones will work best for you

Manage your energy

You can spend all day trying to manage your time well, but you can still get burnt out if you're not [managing your energy](#) well. It means knowing yourself and what brings you energy; this can include your mental, physical and emotional energy. What parts of your role get you excited and energized? How can you do more of those? What activities or ways of working drain you? How can you stop doing those or do them at times or in ways that don't pull you down? Think about what you're doing to sustain your mental and physical health. Cue those other resolutions about working out and meditating.

Help your team be its best

We've talked a lot here about how to manage yourself and your energy, to focus and achieve the best results. But of course, as leaders, we aren't going it alone. This year, resolve to [help your team be its best](#) as well. Encourage team members to set similar resolutions. Take time every day to build stronger connections with your team and offer them praise. HR experts will all tell you that people don't leave jobs, they leave managers. How can you be the manager your team members never want to leave?

The key to any New Year's resolution is [making your new practice stick](#). Some of the best ways to do this are to start small—pick just one or two new things to try at one. Then you can build on them. You can “habit stack”—build a new practice onto something you already do. For example, I wanted to floss daily, so I planned to do it every day while I waited the minute or two for the shower to warm up. I knew I'd be waiting around in the bathroom anyways, and it was a good mental trigger. You can also track your habits as you go along, to hold yourself accountable and celebrate your successes. There is even [an app](#) for that! Even if you only manage to adopt one or two new resolutions this year, you'll be on your way to becoming a better leader.

2

THE BRIDGESPAN GROUP

BOSTON 2 Copley Place, 7th Floor, Suite 3700B, Boston, MA 02116 USA. Tel: +1 617 572 2833

JOHANNESBURG Bridgespan Africa Initiative, 10 The High St., Melrose Arch, 2076, Johannesburg, South Africa. Tel: +27 11 012 9280

MUMBAI Bridgespan India Private Limited (registered address), 9th Floor, Platina, G Block, Plot C 59, Bandra Kurla Complex, Mumbai, 400051, India. Tel: +91 022 6628 9624

NEW YORK 333 Seventh Avenue, 11th Floor, New York, NY 10001 USA. Tel: +1 646 562 8900

SAN FRANCISCO 88 Kearny St., Ste. 200, San Francisco, CA 94108 USA. Tel: +1 415 627 4500



www.bridgespan.org

contact@bridgespan.org

contactindia@bridgespan.org