

I've Made a Mistake – What Now?

This week I was asked to present to high school students as part of a program entitled “Pittsburghers That Make a Difference.” My topic was Goal Setting. When first asked to do this all I could think about was how boring a topic this would be to teenagers. It was even boring to me. And then when I found out that one of the other presenters was the veterinarian from the National Aviary who was bringing the Froot Loops bird I knew I was in trouble. So I decided to focus my talk on something kids and many adults tend not to think about – failure.

What happens when you set a goal, are working toward it and realize the goal was a mistake?

Forty-four percent of college graduates change their major between the second semester of their freshman year and graduation day. Eighty-three percent of the 2001 graduating class of Duke University were working for a different organization within five years of graduation and 43 % had changed careers at least once.

Setting goals and readjusting them is an ongoing part of life.

Remember two things with respect to setting goals:

- #1. Begin with the end in mind – Know where you ultimately want to be.
- #2. It is important to fail early – Don't be afraid to take calculated risks.

If you have made a bad career choice, define your transferable skills and start researching other opportunities. If you are in school and majoring in something you feel will ultimately not make you happy, diversify your course selection and change majors or minor is something new if it is too close to graduation.

Your job, your ongoing education, your relationships, your outside activities – they are like a boat at a dock. You will get one. You will get in it. Your boat will start to pull away from the pier. If you have a set of oars, you will drive the boat. If you don't the boat will drive you. You probably won't sink – unless there is a terrible storm where faith and self worth will come strongly into play. But you will more likely find yourself in the same inlet circling the same waters over and over never being able to pull out of the harbor and into the sea toward a destination.

Think about people whom you have heard repeatedly say, “I hate my job.” They haven't taken hold of the oars.

Goals are specific, measurable and time framed. “I am trying” is not a goal.

“I will do it within this amount of time” is.

So ask yourself, if circling the inlet good enough for you? Who is driving your boat?

In the words of Christopher Columbus, “You can never cross the ocean unless you have the courage to lose sight of the shore.”

Got to www.StartingOverNow.com to get the FREE Worksheet “Set SMART Five and Ten Year Goals.”

Mary Lee Gannon went from being a stay-at-home mother with four children to divorce, devastating poverty and then on to become a newspaper reporter, trade association executive director, public relations consultant, and ultimately a hospital foundation president and CEO. View Mary Lee’s free career tips, worksheets and Blog on her website at www.startingovernow.com. Contact Mary Lee at info@startingovernow.com.