

Tips for Starting 2025 Strong & Sustaining Career Momentum

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December 4, 2024



As December begins, we all have loose ends to tie up, and we should also begin looking ahead to 2025. It's quite possible you've begun to think about setting personal and professional resolutions. Perhaps you've received your annual corporate goals, too.

Goals, and our career paths, can cause anxiety in the New Year. The slate is wiped clean, which can be both an opportunity (new beginnings!) and a challenge (great — even higher targets this year!). And surely, there will be hurdles along the way.

With this in mind, we spoke to several career coaches about how to start 2025 strong as you work toward your goals in the context of elevating your *career*. Here's what they told us.

Using 2024 as a Launch Point

There are actions professionals can take right now to set up a fast start in 2025. Here are five tips:

Tip No. 1: Use December to consider what went well in 2024 — and what didn't. And be sure to write it down.

“This is a great time right now, as we wind down, to reflect,” said [Amber Rosenberg](#), a career, life, executive and working mothers’ coach. Rosenberg is a fan of creating a “RAG” sheet, where professionals benchmark themselves against the colors of the stoplight: red (off-target), yellow (in danger of missing target), green (on-target). But anything works if you do a self-assessment of some sort, on paper or on the screen.

“Don’t just have it in your head,” Rosenberg said. “Make it tangible.”

Tip No. 2: For personal goals: use the end of the year to level-set on the work it will take to get to where you want to go.

The career coaches we spoke to are proponents of setting and working toward goals, but we also heard quite a bit on the importance of weighing what it will take to achieve them — and what those goals ultimately mean to you.

One veteran career coach, who spoke to the CMA on condition of anonymity, suggested professionals start by asking a few simple questions before starting to make commitments.

“The broader question, if you want to zoom out, is, is this thing worth doing?” the coach said. “What’s the probability of success? Those might be things at sort of a higher level [to consider] before you actually nail down a goal.”

Tip No. 3: When it comes to getting your goals on paper, the “SMART” framework has many advantages.

There are many proponents of [“SMART” goals](#), which are goals made to be **specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound**.

“I do absolutely believe in SMART goals,” said Rosenberg, who runs the Pacific Life Coach consulting service. “The more specific and measurable and realistic you can be, the better.”

Career coaches agree SMART goals provide structure, which can be essential for some professionals to begin on the path toward goal achievement.

“[SMART goals] have the advantage of asking the question, is this thing even realistic? Is it specific?” said the career coach who spoke on condition of anonymity. “[It’s] very helpful if you can break it down in something that’s specific, behavioral, measurable.”

Tip No. 4: Set a timeframe for your goals but be reasonable in how long it will take to achieve them.

You might assume that this applies most to longer-term goals, but it’s also applicable to short-term goals, Rosenberg told us.

“What I’ve noticed is in the long term, people tend to underestimate what they can accomplish,” she said. “It’s the smaller, 0-3 month (goals) that people tend to overestimate [how long they take].”

Tip No. 5: Don’t be afraid to tell those close to you about your goals. The people in your circle can provide the motivation and guidance needed to keep you on track.

It’s likely that all of us, at some point, have been urged on by a supportive friend, or family member, or coworker, toward an achievement.

Rosenberg, for one, is a big believer in making someone else aware of your goals.

“Having an accountability partner always helps,” Rosenberg said, “whether its’s a friend, or a colleague, or a coach who helps hold you to the small goals along the way.”

Steps for Keeping Your 2025 Work & Career Goals on Track

Let’s flash forward.

It’s the cold of winter, but you’re warm with the “I got this!” feeling of having your goals on paper, as well as a plan of attack. You think you have a sense of the hurdles you might encounter. The rubber hits the road, and you are ready to go.

But before you know it, challenges arise. Those goals you had, and the dreams underlying them, seem buried under rote tasks, the same old things.

So how do you get back on track?

We asked our coaches, and here’s what they told us.

Tip No. 1: Your mind can work against you. Be aware of the cognitive biases we all face.

Each of our experts agreed that our minds can sometimes conspire against our best goal-achieving strategies.

The career coach who spoke to us on background suggested that professionals understand the various common cognitive biases and to get familiar with how they can affect our thinking.

Rosenberg, for her part, believes fear of failure — “our internal chatter of not making mistakes” — is a major reason goal setting goes off-track.

Procrastination is another barrier to goal achievement to be wary of, too.

Tip No. 2: Win the battle of your calendar. Find a time management strategy that works and apply it to your goals.

As Rosenberg sees it, time management is one of the major reasons goal achievement goes off-track. To get things back on-track, it may be something as simple as blocking time on your calendar to work toward your goals. The winning strategy for you is entirely up to you, but a little reflection and discipline might be all you need to find yourself back on the path you seek.

Tip No. 3: If you encounter internal resistance to your goals, you will need to determine whether diplomacy — or just avoidance — is the right path.

The veteran career coach whom we spoke on condition of anonymity is a firm believer in building a stakeholder map for your organization to assess whether co-workers are neutral, favorable, or unfavorable in your pursuit of your goal.

For those unfavorable to your goal, the coach suggested a campaign to win them could work. However, the coach also advised that it might be best to flat-out stay away from them. She suggested the work of Stanford professor Robert I. Sutton, who has penned a number of books on the topic of dealing with difficult people.

As avoidance could be challenging, or perhaps not feasible, discussing these hurdles with your manager, a mentor, or a career coach could be helpful in terms of clearing your path toward goal achievement. In a best-case scenario, you might end up with the internal champions you need to continue to push forward.