

# EFS SERVANT LEADERSHIP NEWSLETTER

*"Our life is what our thoughts make it." Marcus Aurelius*

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**TOPIC THIS ISSUE:  
WHY PHYSICALLY WRITING THINGS DOWN UNLEASHES PRODUCTIVITY**



**What happened to the August issue of the newsletter?** I'm glad you asked that question. Pam and I have relocated to Naples, Florida. During the months of August and September we were in the process of closing on our home in Naples and selling and closing on our home in Cincinnati. Of course there was the move and the process of packing and unpacking, but we have settled in and overjoyed at the blessing of this new chapter of our lives.

## **UNLEASH PRODUCTIVITY WITH PAPER**

*Change the Way You take Notes and be a Catalyst for Creativity and Organization  
(Adapted from Delta Magazine September 2019)*



Look around in any meeting or presentation and what do you notice? Likely a sea of laptops, their owners frantically typing in notes (or are they frantically catching up on email and other projects?) Then there are the eyes

glued to smartphones and possibly even the occasional daydreamer

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lost in thought. Sometimes it's hard to feel if anyone is paying attention to the topic at hand. Of course electronic devices have their time and place—but in meetings, handwritten notes are a powerful tool that enable attendees to focus and boost productivity. **Here are three ways that using the right notebook at work can help unleash your full potential.**

### **1. Boost Brain Power**

What would you accomplish if you retained more of the information you heard? The simple habit of using a notebook can help spark a big boost in brainpower. Studies conducted at Princeton University and the University of California researchers suggest that taking notes by hand versus taking notes with a laptop can lead to improved educational outcomes – the reason being that handwriting requires the brain to synthesize and summarize the most important information. The organized notes you take are easy to reference later, and you can even scan or digitize them to share with your team or to keep as a backup.

### **2. Polish Your Professional Image**

While taking notes on your phone or tablet is better than not taking notes at all, tapping away on your screen throughout a meeting or presentation can be distracting for those around you. The temptation to do a “quick check” of email or social media apps also can be tough to resist. By setting your devices aside and recording information in a notebook, you'll project a professional image, stay on task and be noticed for your attention to detail – not disrupting a productivity session. Select a sleek leather bound version, a signature color or a funky design that reflects your passions. No matter which type you choose, writing in a notebook helps you keep your mind on the topic at hand.

### **3. Optimize Organization**

How do you organize your thoughts is up to you. Many of us stick with the tried-and-true outline method of note taking: a main subject accompanied by bullet points. (It worked in college, and it works not.) To experiment, try using printed templates or unlined notebooks that have plenty of blank space for mind mapping or visuals. Or try the Cornell method: Divide each page into three sections: notes, a column for questions, and a row across the bottom to summarize the topic.

**What professional superpowers will your notebook help reveal?**



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## 5 Reasons You Should Commit Your Goals to Writing

By: Michael Hyatt



Around the first of every year, you'll hear a lot of talk about New Year's resolutions. Network television, radio shows, podcasts, and blogs all run features on the topic. Then around the start of summer, the subject comes up again as people realize the year is half gone. Often, they realize their resolutions have been long forgotten.

The truth is, New Year's resolutions don't work. Get this:

- 25 percent of people abandon their New Year's resolutions after one week.
- 60 percent of people abandon them within six months. (The average person makes the same New Year's resolution ten separate times without success.)
- Only 5 percent of those who lose weight on a diet keep it off; 95 percent regain it. A significant percentage gain back more than they originally lost.
- Even after a heart attack, only 14 percent of patients makes any lasting changes around eating or exercise.

But while New Year's resolutions don't work, goals do. Surprised?

The research is conclusive. Dr. Gail Matthews, a psychology professor at Dominican University in California, did a [study](#) on goal setting with 267 participants. She found that you are 42 percent more likely to achieve your goals just by writing them down.

I have found this to be true in my own experience. Here are just a few goals I have written down over the last three decades:

- Marry a passionate, supportive wife who is committed to long-term marriage.
- Make \$100,000 a year doing what I love.
- Lose 25 pounds and get in the best shape of my life.
- Complete a half marathon.
- Write a New York Times best-selling book.
- Become the CEO of Thomas Nelson.

Of course, most people don't bother to write down their goals. Instead, they drift through life aimlessly, wondering why their life lacks purpose and significance. I am not saying that committing your goals to writing is the end game. It's not. But it is the beginning.

The secret to accomplishing what matters most to you is committing your goals to writing. **This is important for at least five reasons.**

**1. Because it will force you to clarify what you want.** Imagine setting out on a trip with no particular destination in mind. How do you pack? What roads do you take? How do you know when you have arrived? Instead, you start by picking a destination. The same is true with the milestones in your life. Writing down your goals forces you to select something specific and decide what you want.



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**2. Because it will motivate you to take action.** Writing your goals down is only the beginning. Articulating your intention is important, but it is not enough. (This is one place I disagree with Rhonda Byrne, author of [The Secret](#)). You must execute on your goals. You have to take action. I have found that writing down my goals and reviewing them regularly provokes me to take the next most important action.

**3. Because it will provide a filter for other opportunities.** The more successful you become, the more you will be deluged with opportunities. In fact, these new opportunities can quickly become distractions that pull you off course. The only antidote I know of is to maintain a list of written goals by which to evaluate these new opportunities.

**4. Because it will help you overcome resistance.** Every meaningful intention, dream, or goal encounters resistance. From the moment you set a goal, you will begin to feel it. But if you focus on the resistance, it will only get stronger. The way to overcome it is to focus on the goal—the thing I want. Steven Pressfield's book, [Do the Work](#), is must-reading on this topic.

**5. Because it will enable you to see—and celebrate—your progress.** Life is hard. It is particularly difficult when you aren't seeing progress. You feel like you are working yourself to death, going nowhere. But written goals are like mile markers on a highway. They enable you to see how far you have come and how far you need to go. They also provide an opportunity for celebration when you attain them.

You're much more likely to achieve your goals by doing this one simple thing: **write them down.**

## **Neuroscience Explains Why You Need to Write Down Your Goals If You Actually Want to Achieve Them**

**By: Mark Murphy**

I'm sure you've heard that if you want to achieve a goal, you need to write it down. I know it sounds a bit cliché, but it actually does work.

One of my studies, called ["The Gender Gap and Goal-Setting,"](#) found that both men and women need to do a much better job of writing down their goals (although men did perform a bit better than women on this issue). Study participants were asked to rate the question "My goal is so vividly described in written form (including pictures, photos, drawings, etc.) that I could literally show it to other people and they would know exactly what I'm trying to achieve." Sadly, fewer than 20% of people said that their goals were 'Always' written down this vividly.

Vividly describing your goals in written form is strongly associated with goal success, and **people who very vividly describe or picture their goals are anywhere from 1.2 to 1.4 times more likely to**

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**successfully accomplish their goals** than people who don't. That's a pretty big difference in goal achievement just from writing your goals on a piece of paper.

**So why does writing your goals help?** It's an important thing to know; after all, it might seem like a lot of extra work to write something down when you can just as easily store it in your brain, right?

**Writing things down happens on two levels: external storage and encoding.** External storage is easy to explain: *you're storing the information contained in your goal in a location (e.g. a piece of paper) that is very easy to access and review at any time.* You could post that paper in your office, on your refrigerator, etc. It doesn't take a neuroscientist to know you will remember something much better if you're staring at a visual cue (aka reminder) every single day.

But there's another deeper phenomenon happening: **encoding.** *Encoding is the biological process by which the things we perceive travel to our brain's hippocampus where they're analyzed.* From there, decisions are made about what gets stored in our long-term memory and, in turn, what gets discarded. Writing improves that encoding process. In other words, when you write it down it has a much greater chance of being remembered.

Neuropsychologists have identified the **"generation effect"** which *basically says individuals demonstrate better memory for material they've generated themselves than for material they've merely read.* It's a nice edge to have and, when you write down your goal, you get to access the "generation effect" twice: first, when you generate the goal (create a picture in your mind), and second, when you write it down because you're essentially reprocessing or regenerating that image. You have to rethink your mental picture, put it on the paper, place objects, scale them, think about their spatial relations, draw facial expressions, etc. There's a lot of cognitive processing taking place right there. In essence, you get a double whammy that really sears the goal into your brain.

Study after study shows you will remember things better when you write them down. Typically, subjects for these types of studies are students taking notes in class. However, one group of researchers looked at people conducting hiring interviews. When the interviewers took notes about their interviews with each of the candidates, they were able to recall about **23% more nuggets** of information from the interviews than people who didn't take notes. Parenthetically, if you're being interviewed for a job, and you want the interviewer to remember you, you better hope he or she is taking notes.

It's not just general recall that improves when you write things down. **Writing it down will also improve your recall of the really important information.** You know how when you're in a classroom setting there's some stuff the teacher says that's really important (i.e. it'll be on the test) and then there's the not so important (i.e. it won't be on the test)? Well, one study found that when people weren't taking notes in class, they remembered just as many unimportant facts as they did important facts (there's a recipe for a "C"). But when people were taking notes, they remembered many more important facts and many fewer unimportant facts (and that, my friends, is the secret of "A" students). Writing things down doesn't just help you remember; it makes your mind more efficient by helping you focus on the truly important stuff. **And your goals absolutely should qualify as truly important stuff.**