



# Be Ambitious With GOALS, Not Deadlines

I've always found that if you want to know how long something will take, ask someone who has already done it. Sounds obvious, but few people do it. When you're motivated, it's easy to think that somehow you can beat the odds and compress the years of work from someone else into a few months. Setting unrealistic deadlines is a recipe for stress. If you quit your job with the expectation that you can become a professional blogger in three months, you'll probably be living on the street. Motivation is good, blind overconfidence isn't. When I first got interested in the idea of owning my own online business, I was told that the average time it took to become financially independent was 3-5 years. At the time, this seemed ridiculously long. Clearly, I, with all my motivation and ideas could do it in less time.

One of my biggest mistakes I made a few years ago was to get frustrated when things wouldn't manifest as quickly as I'd like. I'd be working incredibly hard, and few results would come. So, I'd work even harder and results would still trickle in. I'd burn myself out trying to speed up a timeline that already had it's own pace.

I realized that my mistake was that I was trying to run a marathon as if it were a sprint. When you run a marathon, you need the motivation to get started and go the distance. But you need to have the patience to not burn yourself out early on. Sprinters won't last three miles, never mind the full twenty-six.

When I used to do software projects, I frequently heard the mantra, "Figure out how much time the project will take in the worst conditions. Now double that. That is your expected finishing time." The experts had the battle scars that come with trying to accelerate projects that needed more time.

My new rule for setting goals is to find someone who has accomplished what I want to do (or something similar). Then, I try to ask them to give me an estimate of how long it will take. That number will be far more accurate than any estimate I can make up.

If you can't enjoy the process leading up to a goal, it probably isn't worth starting. The time spent enjoying a win is far shorter than the work leading up to it. If reaching the end is your only motivation to keep going, you probably won't make it very far.

I enjoy writing. I enjoy going to the gym. I enjoy taking classes in school. I enjoy reading. If I don't enjoy something intrinsically, I can't push through more than a few weeks. I'm sure I'm not alone in this case.

**If you want to reach a goal, ask an expert. If they tell you 2, 4 or 10 years, ask yourself whether you can enjoy doing something for that long. Don't just reject the number because you feel you can do it faster. Find a way to enjoy it for that entire time, because it's the most realistic estimate you're going to get.**

Deepika Verma  
CS  
II year