

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

Robert: Hello, this is Robert Middleton of Action Plan Marketing and the Action Plan Marketing Club. Today I'm interviewing Gary Slavin.

Hi, Gary, how are you doing?

Gary: I'm great, Robert. Thanks for having me here. I appreciate it.

Robert: I'm excited to have you on this call. Our topic is "Aligning Your Goals to Create Life-Work Balance." Goals are really important, especially at the beginning of the year. This is perfect for this particular interview.

Before we get into the interview, let me go over a little information about Gary.

Gary Slavin, author of *Plan Your Success: Turn Your Dreams Into Reality*, has been working with successful organizations as an independent consultant since 1986, assisting them in determining the best methods for taking their companies to the next level, launching new products and services, or finding unique ways to put life back into and maximize profits for existing product lines. He works with management in developing and implementing business plans, marketing and sales strategies, and then conducts training seminars to ensure that staff members in all departments have the necessary skills to accomplish corporate goals.

Gary has presented seminars to all types of professionals at varying skill levels. Participants attending these seminars have called him a training powerhouse who exhibits endless energy and enthusiasm. His

understanding and love of the subject matter enables him to deliver the best training seminars in the business.

Let's get started, Gary. When did you first become aware of the importance of aligning business and personal goals to achieve success?

Gary: That's an interesting question. I almost wish I could say that it was somewhere within my consulting career, but it was actually within my own career.

I spent 17 years working for other companies. I got to a certain level of success on my own, but I never really got the sense that I was successful. Even though, I'm sure you probably share this, to me success is a journey, not a destination, so you never really get there. You're always getting better.

But I was never really totally satisfied with what I was accomplishing. I kind of actually took a step back and thought, "What am I trying to accomplish in my life and why aren't I doing it in my business?"

It brought me back to when I was in college. I told myself I was going to work for two years and start my own business. One of my personal goals was to always have my own business. I actually lost sight of that. Seventeen years isn't two years!

Robert: You'd been working for other companies for 17 years.

Gary: Before starting my own business.

Robert: Even though you had success, it wasn't in alignment with your bigger goal to be on your own.

Gary: Exactly, when I finally woke up to that, it was when I was a marketing director for another company. I found that I was very successful for this company.

What I really wanted to accomplish was to be able to do this for more than just one organization. The only way to do that was to start my own business. I started out as a marketing consultant.

That was when I first got the sense of, you know, you don't really feel successful. You're not really satisfied with what you're accomplishing unless you both can balance what you want to accomplish in life and what you're doing toward accomplishing that in life with what you're doing with your business.

Then one of my first clients hired me to assess where they were and to take them to the next level of success, which was kind of what I was doing as a business consultant when I first got started.

Robert: Right.

Gary: They had a training company that was very closely held. It was two partners. The company had been successful, and when I first met with them they discussed, "We've been stuck at this same level for years." Neither individual really seemed to be satisfied with where they were.

But when I took at a look at assessing their organization, they were a successful company. So what I asked them to do was explain to me in our first meeting, "What are your goals in life? How are you trying to accomplish what it is you want to accomplish in your personal life with your business?"

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

That's when it really exploded my realization of the life-work balance. Because as we dug deeper to determine what it was that was driving each individual, their personal goals and what they both wanted kind of really differed from what the business was achieving. Neither individual was happy, yet they had a successful business.

Robert: That's interesting because that's where they are, but they weren't necessarily communicating that, right?

Gary: Correct.

Robert: They were assuming, "Here's our business. We're working in our business." But you brought out the unspoken goals of where they wanted to go.

Gary: They were both very good friends, but they found out that their directions in their personal lives were totally opposed.

Robert: Both of them?

Gary: Yes. Each of them was trying to accomplish something with the business, and actually you could see where the business was kind of at that fork in the road.

They were tugging at each other, and they didn't recognize that until we actually sat down and I asked them to take a step back and put down their personal goals. What is it you're trying to accomplish in life that you want the business to be able to fulfill for you?

Robert: Right.

Gary: That really brought the light on for me. Ever since then, that's one of the first things I do when I sit down with

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

independent professionals. I ask them, “What are your personal goals? What is that you want to accomplish in life, and how are you anticipating that your business can fulfill that for you?”

Robert: Or fit into or align with it in some way, right?

Gary: Yes.

Robert: For instance, you could have a goal, “I really want to travel around the world, but my business doesn’t allow that,” so that could be an issue, right?

Gary: Exactly.

Robert: It could be anything as far as their personal goals. That’s interesting. Did you come up with a process from there? How did you develop this, and how do you work with clients with this?

Gary: I did, and actually my first process I came up with was strictly just a strategic planning process. What I realized when I came up with a strategic planning process that really just focused on the business. As I started working with more and more independent professionals, that really wasn’t accomplishing what they totally needed to accomplish.

As I mentioned, when the light went on I realized if they don’t accomplish the life-work balance, they’re unhappy in their personal life. Even if their business is going well, they don’t look forward to going to work every day.

Robert: Right.

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

Gary: It really just becomes more and more drudgery. That's what I found fascinating.

What really brought me to realize the importance of aligning your goals to create that life-work balance is this. I really try to select companies that are already successful and looking at how to get to that next level of success. So I know I had individuals that had successful businesses, and yet they weren't happy coming to work every day.

Robert: Right. What's the good of that?

Gary: Exactly.

Robert: Can you give me an example or two? I think this is very interesting and very relevant to everybody here.

Gary: It might have been my very first client. How do I explain it? This was back when we had twin floppies and PCs with twin floppies. He was a Dyson floppy salesman on the side.

It became very successful. He was a trainer and he had to leave the training business to focus 100% of his time on the Dyson business. He actually became an AT&T master VAR.

I don't know if you remember. It was back in the mid to late 1980s when AT&T was selling PCs. It was a multimillion dollar business and still struggling to come to work every day.

We sat down. He brought me in to put together a business plan for him. One of the first things I said was, "George, what I want to do before we put together a business plan for your corporation is to find out what is it that George

wants to accomplish in life that he's utilizing the business to help him achieve."

What I came up with then was not only the planning process, which is a four-step process. Part of the first step in the process is to take your dreams or aspirations and write them out as goals. What are your personal goals?

The next step then is to come up with the business goals. The third step is to then align your business and personal goals. If they're not aligned, as I mentioned, you may have a successful business, but you're not going to be happy with it, and you're not going to be happy in your personal life.

You have to make sure that they're aligned. And once you've done that, you can then expand both plans. Did that answer your question?

Robert: Yeah, it does. That's it. I kind of see this on two levels. Level 1 is, "I need to be clear on my personal goals as well as my business goals, or I'm going to stop the forward progress in my business." That seems to be something that you observed in a lot of your clients, right?

Gary: You almost sense that what they've done is hit a brick wall. They start getting this feeling of, "Why am I doing this?" It's strange to hear this from successful, independent professionals.

Robert: Yeah, they're making a lot of money. They're doing okay, but there is no satisfaction.

Gary: Exactly! There's no sense of, "Why am I going through all this effort? I'm going home at night with headaches. I'm

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

unhappy and I don't want to come to work. What's the problem?"

Robert: It's interesting because you hit on something that is very deep and yet your approach to it, in a way, is very simple. Okay, let's look at the personal and let's look at the business and align them. Can you give me an idea of exactly how you align them?

Gary: I'll give you an actual case study of a friend of mine who was in dental school. One of the reasons I use this example is I come from a family of dentists, so I have a very good appreciation of what it takes to run a dental practice. It's a lot of time.

This friend of mine, while he was still in dental school, realized that one of his life goals was to have a family and enjoy his family life.

This is reflecting back. It was before either one of us actually got into business. And so maybe subconsciously I had already had this idea of the importance of life-work balance, or maybe I got it from my friend who was in dental school.

He actually turned to me and said, "You've got a whole family of dentists. I realize how much work is involved in setting up a practice, and how is that going to align with my wanting to spend quality time with my family?"

He knew my father had put in a lot of hours and wasn't home a lot, but that worked for us. It wasn't going to work for him.

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

To make a long story short, what he finally decided was that there were a couple options. You could walk into a dental practice that already exists. It's already started up, and you can just put in X number of hours that you want to put in and start building your practice.

Or you could work for an association or administration. He decided to work for the Veterans Administration, where he worked 9-to-5.

Robert: Really? As a dentist?

Gary: As a dentist he worked 9-to-5. He had a set salary. That's one of the things too you've got to look at. How does the monetary aspect tie into your life? What do you want to earn to reach some of your life goals and how much do you need?

He was very satisfied with having, first of all, a set salary. But he also had a pension, which was something that tied into one of his life goals. He wanted to be able to retire at an early age. My father did not, as an independent. Sometimes you can. Sometimes you can't.

What he took a look at was, "One of the things I want do is be able to retire early. But at the same time, I want to be able to spend quality time with my family. Yet I know I want to be a dentist."

Just looking at that on the surface, they didn't seem to match. What did he do? He went to try and find something on the business side, a business goal that would align with his life goals, which was to work for the Veteran's Administration.

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

Robert: That's very interesting. Of course, that was his solution. There could have been other solutions for other people. It's really finding that right match, and he was able to do it.

Gary: Yes. Another solution, using that same example, was my cousin, who joined my father's practice. His startup time and his hours were whatever he wanted them to be because it was already a going practice there.

Robert: Of course, there is something in business that we kind of think automatically, "More is better. More clients are always better. More money in the door is always better."

Something I've realized is that is not true, so how I constructed my business was to work with a very, very limited number of clients at a higher end. I work less hours, but I make very good money, instead of just working my tail off 24 hours a day. I couldn't do that. I had to find a structure in my business where I was helping a limited number of people in a very deep way.

There are a lot of ways to structure this because, like you said, I want free time. I want family time. I want time to do things other than just business.

Gary: Exactly. There are people where business is all that drives them, and all they want to do is work. That's fine. Maybe you don't get married. Maybe I shouldn't bring names into it, but look at Donald Trump, who, in my estimation, is a workaholic. How many times has he been married?

Robert: Three or four.

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

Gary: He can't get those to work. Gee, maybe I should have him call me and work on his life-work balance!

Robert: Oh yeah, Donald listens in on all these calls. He really needs this! Maybe he does.

Is there anything else that differentiates this process from other planning methodologies? Tell me a bit more about that.

Gary: The goal alignment is definitely the major differentiation. I did a lot of research when I came up with this process to come up with, as you said, a very simple process. And it is very simple.

Not to go too far back in my life, but in high school and college people always called me "the master of the obvious." There's nothing wrong with that, but sometimes people don't see what's right in front of them.

Alignment was one of the critical ones. I didn't see that in any of the research that I've done. It's something that I've gotten a lot of attention in the last couple years with from not only life-balance but within corporations, department-to-department alignment and aligning goals in the corporation so that everyone is walking down the same path.

That's probably the key one, but there are basically three others. I'll mention all three. And then, if you want, I can go into detail on all of them. But, it's an outline. It's the strategic plan we put together, the business plan or your life plan. That is an outline. It's not a bunch of prose.

Second is the goal alignment, then implementation. When you look at most strategic planning procedures and you talk to most of these purists in planning, planning is one process and implementation is another. I think that's kind of crazy.

Robert: They really have to all fit together is what you're saying.

Gary: Absolutely. If you don't implement, all the great plans just sit on shelves. If you don't implement them, what good is it? I made up that part of my process.

A key element in that is the fourth differentiation. It's what I call a "war board." You can call it a task chart or a master to-do list, which is something you did.

You discussed it in this week's ezine. It's another method for time management. You talked about a very good method in the December ezine.

Robert: We actually did a coaching call on this. You list all your projects and really see the balance between all your projects. It's not just one list of things. It's sometimes 10 lists of things for various projects.

Gary: Backing up a little bit, the outline is nothing more than your goals, and then you break down your goals into objectives. The objectives then break down into the strategies that you need to accomplish those objectives. Then every strategy has to have a set of tactics so you can accomplish those strategies.

The tactics then become your war board. They become your daily, weekly, monthly, or however you want to set it up, to-do list. One of the things I talk about with my

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

clients doesn't differentiate the plan. But the war board, the tactics check, really does eliminate headaches.

One of the things I always ask my clients is, "Do you have a business plan? Do you have a marketing strategy?" They all say, "Yes, I do," and I say, "Can I see it?" "It's in my head."

Robert: Yeah, right! (laughter)

Gary: I kind of chuckle at that, but one of the things I do in trying to obtain them as clients is I say, "I tell you what, I really do believe you. It's probably an excellent plan.

But one of the things I want you to think about for me is the first time you get a call from one of your clients or a vendor and they either cancel an order or cancel a shipment. Let me know how bad your headache is when you're driving home and reorganizing that entire plan in your head."

It's interesting, Robert, 80% of the time I'll get a call back. They'll go, "What, do you have ESP or something?" I'll say, "What do you mean?"

"You know the day we talked about that, such-and-such called and they actually canceled an order. I was distraught initially, but driving home trying to reorg my entire plan for the week, the month," whatever they said, "I really did have a headache. When can you come in and explain to me how we can document this plan?"

Robert: It's a great maxim. Plans inside your head will create headaches.

Gary: Absolutely.

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

Robert: As opposed to writing them down on paper, having them definite, being able to share them with everybody and all that stuff.

Most of the people on this call are independent professionals. We run our own projects. We're not huge businesses, but we still have a lot of things we need to do.

Can you tell me a little more about this breakdown you talked about, which is goals, and define your terms a bit more as far as goals, objectives, strategies and tactics?

Gary: Goals have to be SMART goals, right? Specific.

Robert: Measurable.

Gary: Right.

Robert: I'd say A is attainable.

Gary: It's SMART, attainable, realistic and there has to be a timeframe. One caveat that I'll say is if you really do an excellent job at putting together SMART goals, and they're focused SMART goals, you could actually skip "objectives."

Most times what happens is you'll have a goal and even though it's a SMART goal, it's still very broad.

Robert: Yes.

Gary: If it's broad, what you want to do is then break it down into more measurable objectives. Your objectives are still measurable. They're not totally SMART, but they're more when it needs to be accomplished, how you'll measure that it actually took place and when. You've got the

measurement and time portion of that goal. You break down your goals.

The strategies then are strictly, “What is it that we’re going to do to ensure that these objectives are met?” A strategy could be a weekly ezine or, “I’ll put out two press releases every month.”

Robert: Or it could be networking, etc. For the people listening to this, if you’re in the Club, you just go to the Fast Track program. We have a whole section on action planning.

You’re pretty much aligning with the action planning process. Sometimes the words are a little different but essentially, “What do you want to do? What’s your big purpose? What are your other objectives?” and then, “What’s your approach to it?”

As you said, it’s networking or speaking or whatever. Then that breaks down into the steps or tactics you’ll actually do in the next week or two to make it happen.

Gary: Absolutely! You know people have a very difficult time when I talk about the strategies. They kind of look at me like, “Those are my tactics.”

They’re not. You really do then break those strategies down as you just mentioned. It’s every day, “What is it that I need to do?”

When it’s on the business side, you even want the tactic to have individual responsible for getting it done, when it’s going to be done and a budget assignment, if there is a budget to it.

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

Then when you've got this war board, it makes the execution that much easier. I actually suggest to a lot of my clients, "Put it up on the wall of your office, so every day when you walk in the office, these are the tasks that we know we need to accomplish today."

It's really a chart where you have the objectives on the left-hand side, the tasks across the top and then each cell is the date that it's got to be accomplished by.

Robert: That's great. I wish I could do that in my office. I have zero wall space! I always wanted to do some kind of a board, and I just can't, so I do paper charts. There are various ways to do that.

Gary: The task chart really takes the tension out of having so many tasks to complete. What it does is relate everything back. You actually know, without having to look back, that every task relates back to a strategy, which relates back to an objective, which is going to accomplish your goals.

Robert: Where I see people making the mistake here is that they put a goal or objective on their daily to-do list. That's like, as they say, putting an elephant on their list. You can't do that today. You have to break it down.

For instance, if your plan is to do a series of teleclasses, if you put "teleclasses" on your list for the day, there's no entry point because there are no tasks.

Gary: Correct.

Robert: But you might have "Write opt-in or sales page for teleclass. Write confirmation page for teleclass," or "Write

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

email confirmation for teleclass. Gather names to send the email to,” etc., etc.

It ends up that you have five, six or seven items for that particular thing. Then you’re off and running and none of them are so big that you can’t handle them.

Gary: Exactly. It really does eliminate the headache and what you said about prioritizing. It’s time management. It really relieves you of this awesome big picture. You don’t have to look at that elephant. You just now have these little mice that you need to accomplish.

Robert: We’ve really emphasized in the Club, and we’ll emphasize more, this whole thing of time management and project management, etc.

Now, I want to get back to more about the life-work balance because it’s interesting. When you really set the big direction, it makes it easier for you to work on the smaller things.

Gary: Correct.

Robert: You’re more motivated. You’re more excited. It’s more a game. What advice would you give to people on this call that are struggling to obtain that balance?

They’re working too hard. They’re working way too long hours. They feel like they’re spinning their wheels. They’re not spending enough time with their family. They’re not getting exercise. They’re not eating well. It’s all of these things. Where do you start with that?

Gary: Being the master of the obvious, it’s almost a classic, “Take a step back and look at the forest first and not the

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

trees.” They’re stuck in the woods and, as you put it, there are a lot of things. They’re working hard and, to use the old phrase, “Not smart.”

I always like to draw the analogy of marketing. That’s both of our expertise. To me, marketing is common sense. Everyone knows the right things to do. It’s doing them correctly that counts. You don’t just run out and do a press release or a news letter. Why are you doing it?

It goes back to your life as well. You take a step back and try and determine, “Why am I doing these things?” Once you get a sense for why you’re doing them, first of all, it slows you down and gives you a really good look at the big picture.

Then, when you get down to the day-to-day, you’re only doing those things that you absolutely need to do to accomplish the goals that you want to accomplish in life and in your business. If that answered your questions, I don’t know if it did.

Robert:

I think so, but let’s get into this more deeply. I often say that independent professionals, because I know them best, but I’m sure it’s true for other people as well, get into what I call an “activity trap.” That’s like being lost in the forest.

They’re doing a lot of stuff, but is it leading anywhere? The other thing is that we’re very reactive, not proactive. We come into our office. We see what the emails are, what the mail is, what the calls are and then we’re just reacting to everything that’s coming at us, point blank. No wonder we’re frustrated.

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

Gary: Absolutely. Like I said, to what purpose? I think that's where people get lost. That's why I was saying to step back to your earlier questions.

When I'm looking at people that are running successful businesses and yet they're unhappy, it's because they're going, "To what purpose am I doing all this?" That's when you need to take a step back and figure out, "What are my goals? Why am I doing these things?"

Robert: Do you find that you have people in business that really love that business but somehow, just because of what their business has become, the love and passion have gotten lost in the shuffle?

Gary: Absolutely.

Robert: How does that turn around?

Gary: They're frustrated. Here's a perfect example. I have a CEO right now who is very frustrated. Part of the problem is this individual doesn't have a life.

Robert: She only has a business life.

Gary: Exactly, because all she has is the business it becomes very frustrating every day. One of the things they have to do is learn to delegate a lot better. That's what helps you get a better life-work balance. You can't do everything.

That's one of things. I try to get them to take a step back and ask, "What else in life do you want to accomplish?" When they set those out, I say, "How are you going to do that?" They look at me and say, "I don't have the time."

What we then have to do is take a look at what they're doing in business to get into alignment and set up that life-work balance. Most times what happens is you have to let go of some of the daily tasks that you're trying to accomplish in your business.

You've got to run the business and get a hold of your life. Maybe it's bringing in a chief operating officer. Maybe it's bringing in a marketing director. What tasks are you involved with in the business that you shouldn't be?

Robert: Gary, I wish I could bring in a chief operating officer! But I understand it's for bigger companies. For the independent professionals we're addressing, I think this is a very big issue.

I've probably said this on more than one teleclass, but I am the poster boy for doing it myself. Right now I'm doing a project to redesign the structure of the Club.

Before, I would have done it myself, but I actually found someone to delegate it to. He's doing all this technical stuff that I don't understand. That's a big breakthrough for me because basically I love to just do it all myself.

Gary: If we looked at it as a smaller picture, couldn't you call that individual your chief operating officer for this project?

Robert: Yeah, that's a way of looking at it, absolutely. I declared a direction for this year in my business. I probably am just saying it here to reinforce it for myself. That's for it to be the year of collaboration.

Gary: Is it 2010?

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

Robert: Yes. Perhaps it's also the year of delegation. If I want to do other workshops, take on other projects or do whatever, I've always put it in the context of, "I have to find time to do this all myself," instead of saying things like, "Who could help me do this? Who could be a partner? What could I delegate to my virtual assistant?"

For some people it's just taking the first step of finding a virtual assistant that you can offload some things to. Freeing up some time is what you're talking about here, so that you can have some breathing space.

Gary: Correct. Did that answer the question?

Robert: It did answer the question. I'm sort of trying to answer it for myself and give an example here.

Gary: I think you're a perfect example.

Robert: I am!

Gary: You had to find someone to collaborate with. "Here are the things that I, Robert, want to accomplish in 2010. I can't do that much anymore. I need to find someone to help me do that." Like you said, it's like the COO of that project. Excellent choice!

Robert: Instead of spending 10 hours on something, I'm spending one hour working with him and doing some coordinating. Of course, I'm spending some money, but if I'm more efficient I'm making more money and putting time into things that only I can do.

Gary: Yes.

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

Robert: I don't know how many people on this call can relate to this whole issue, but I think it comes down to, "What do I want my life to be like? How do I start to balance things?"

Gary: As you mentioned, it's sometimes very difficult for independent professionals. Most independent professionals went into it on their own because they wanted to do it on their own. It's very difficult to let go with some of those tasks.

Robert: It seems to be built into the job description of independent professional. First of all, we have the word "independent."

Gary: I'm going to do it myself!

Robert: I'm independent, so I will do it myself. We don't work for other people because we think everyone else is a dummy and we're smart, in some cases. We're kind of arrogant about our abilities, and we're just very "Whatever!"

It's not an easy thing to break through that, unlike some entrepreneurs. The very first thing is they find people to delegate to and do things immediately. I look at these people and wonder, "Holy cow, how do they do that?" It's a very different mindset.

Gary: Who's the gentleman who wrote the book *The 4-Hour Workweek*?

Robert: Right. It's all about that. Some of it is a bit of a fantasy I think, but it's got some interesting ideas.

Gary: But I could never do that. How do you measure success? What is going to make you happy? Part of that is I actually like to do everything myself.

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

Robert: Yes. I don't want to delegate or build a company where a bunch of other people work with clients and I manage. That would be taking away the core of my business. I want to work with people. I want to work with clients. I want to develop material and so do you, right?

Gary: Exactly.

Robert: Yet we have to determine those things which we could, in fact, start to delegate. We're sort of dancing around this. I think there are a lot of ways to think of this.

What's the saying? "If you do your own books, how much would you hire a bookkeeper for?" "Well, \$25 to \$50 an hour." "What's your hourly rate?" "\$150." "Would you hire someone for \$150 to do your books?" "No, I guess not." It's going to be a lot cheaper and more efficient to hire somebody than doing it yourself.

There happen to be more things like that than you can imagine once you start looking at it.

Gary: Is it a monetary thing? I've been using an accountant for the 23 years I've been in business. The reason I did it was I didn't even look at the monetary aspect. I didn't look at it that way. I don't want to sweat, come tax time, about if I'm doing the right thing.

You take a look at life-work balance. In my life, I wanted to alleviate that stress. So, within my business, I hired an accountant.

Robert: Something that people should let go if they're an independent professional, especially around marketing, is

don't try to design your own website. It's a ridiculous time sucker.

Maybe find a way that you can easily update little things on your website. More and more of the platforms these days allow you to do it. I've seen people put hundreds of hours into developing a site, and it doesn't even look that good because they're not a good designer.

Gary: I was going to say that it looks like they've developed it themselves.

Robert: Exactly, it looks like a homemade site. It's getting back to your core competency and what you love to do. It's trying to focus on that, and then integrating that with everything else.

The people I interview usually give me questions, and I use that as a guide. We talked about this thing of how people are committed to making a difference. I've written a lot of ezines about that. In fact, my theme last year was "Making a Contribution." I was really focused on that.

How can using your process benefit professionals who are really committed to making a difference?

Gary: Boy, that's really an excellent question. Again, that's one of their goals, and so you turn that goal into a very specific goal.

You have to put it into terms where they want to make a difference. I know this may be difficult but, "How do I measure that I'm making a difference? Specifically, what is that I want to accomplish? How do I want to make a difference?"

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

Robert: I just have to stop you there. Nobody thinks like that, and that's really brilliant. What did you say? How do I measure –?

Gary: Measure that I've actually made a difference.

Robert: How would you actually know? That's brilliant.

Gary: Thank you, but that's part of a SMART goal.

Robert: Gary really is the master of the obvious. How could you master that? We talk about making a difference and making a contribution.

At the end of the year, how do you know what that actually is so you can look back, pat yourself on the back and say, "Hey, I did pretty good. In fact, maybe I even exceeded my goals"?

Gary: If I don't set those criteria, I'll never know.

Robert: Yes. You're really big on setting goals for everything in all kinds of areas of your life.

Gary: Absolutely. That's where you come to the life-work balance. A good example is I've always wanted to write a book – for years.

Robert: Yeah, so have I, Gary. I wrote an online bestseller. I haven't written a hard copy, publishable book yet.

Gary: In your defense, I started three of them. They never went anywhere.

Robert: I've started 20 in my head, if that counts.

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

Gary: I actually started them on pencil and paper. What was missing was I never planned them out. That's what really got me passionate about the whole planning process.

Robert: Right.

Gray: I planned out this last book, and I followed the plan. And strangely enough, it came to fruition.

Robert: The damn thing actually worked.

Gary: Even within my timeframe.

Robert: Yeah.

Gary: I don't know that I'll share it with the people on this call, but I actually have my criteria for measuring whether or not this book will be successful in 2010. It was just published in October.

I set measurements for 2010 to determine whether or not the book is going to be successful. It's not just in book sales because there were other things I wanted to accomplish within my life and my business by publishing this book.

Robert: I know what you mean.

Gary: So I set out those goals.

Robert: That can help. It can help you grow your business, help you obtain bigger clients perhaps and create more visibility and speaking engagements.

Gary: Exactly.

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

Robert: A book is a fantastic leverage point for a lot of things that nothing else will give you. As my friend, John Eggen, says all the time, “A book is the number one measure of authority.”

Gary: Strangely enough, that’s a whole other topic, but you’re absolutely right. I think what really gave me the motivation to finally complete the book was I’ve been a public speaker for years.

Getting speaking engagements is not an easy thing and without getting names into it, I’ve sent out several proposals and for one organization I sent out a proposal and it wasn’t accepted, but I went to their conference.

In going to the presentations, I noted that 80% of the speakers there were authors. That was it. That was finally it. I said, “I’ve got to put a plan in place. I’ve got to get this book done,” so motivation helps as well.

Robert: Absolutely. Things change, and things evolve. Sometimes you’re just ripe for starting it, but nevertheless you have to have clear goals.

Another thing is people often have a goal for a particular activity to do something, but they really don’t have a follow-through. It’s sort of like, we went to Iraq, but what was the goal that we wanted to have happen in Iraq? Now we’ve been in Iraq for God knows how many years.

It’s the same with a book. You had the goal to publish a book, but maybe you’ve self-published, and you have 5,000 books in your basement. That doesn’t do you any good at all, so you have to have yet another goal in order

to market it, leverage it, use it for whatever else and make it happen.

Gary: Absolutely.

Robert: Since we're on the subject of goals, the thing that I see over and over is people simply don't achieve their goals, they forget their goals or they get off track from their goals. It's been kind of a lifelong obsession for me to figure out how to stick with my goals.

The time management and the whole thing about the goals, objectives, strategies and tactics are very important. But what have you found in working with your clients that makes the difference in whether a goal is achieved or not?

Gary: The tactics.

Robert: Really?

Gary: And having the war board because now you have a daily list of activities that need to be accomplished to accomplish those goals.

To back it all the way up, you have those tactics that are there to complete the strategies. Those strategies meet those objectives, and the objectives, if they're met, achieve the goal. It backs all the way up into it.

One of the things that I always recommend is you've got to select a timeframe that you're going to review that tactic board. You take a look at, say we're into March of 2010 and there was a tactic that needed to be completed in February. You look on the war board and it's still there, not completed.

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

So now you've got to take a look at how that's affected your entire plan. You back it up to, "There's obviously a strategy that hasn't been met, so the date for that objective needs to be changed."

You back all the way up, and you are now taking a look at the original goal. You know plans have to be flexible; you can't really put them in cement. Maybe the goal has to be modified. Maybe you still have a chance to meet the goal, but you have to change the objective.

The daily tactics, or the weekly or whatever you set up as a timeframe, all tie back to those goals. So if you really focus on that war board, you're going to accomplish your goals. You'll never get off track.

Robert: Wow, you make it sound so simple!

Gary: If you follow it, it is. But you know what? Life gets in the way.

Robert: Yeah.

Gary: There's always going to be things that need to be changed, but if you constantly review that tactic board, it does become very simple. As I said, it does really tie into the priorities that you set. You could do it that way.

Robert: I like the sound of your system. It's similar to mine, except what I do is create various project lists. Then I have a weekly list of tactics, and that filters in to my daily list of tactics.

Gary: It's very similar.

Robert: Yeah, so on any given day I have four or five major things that I want to get done. If they don't happen to get done, I forward them to the next day. But I'm not always thinking of the hundred things I have to do (and I'm sure I have more than 100), I'm thinking of the three or four that I must get done today.

Gary: Or even the project. You know it ties back to the project, but you don't have to think about that project if it's a massive project.

Robert: Exactly.

Gary: What you can do is the project becomes a goal, if you want to tie it into my system. They're almost identical.

Robert: Yes. It's a goal unto itself to get that project done, which is part of a bigger picture, etc. What's the name of your book, Gary?

Gary: The name of the book is *Plan Your Success, Turn Your Dreams Into Reality*.

Robert: That's great. The first course I ever led in 1984 was called "Dreams Into Reality." It's interesting that I'm coming back to the same subject 25 years later.

Do you outline this whole process we're talking about in your book?

Gary: Absolutely.

Robert: It sounds like people ought to get this book. It sounds like a really good support to this whole conversation. I'm going to get it.

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

Gary: Thanks. It's very concise, which, I know, in this conversation it's hard to believe I can be concise! I guess I don't write the way I speak. I'm not a big reader.

We have so much information overload now. I thought, "How could I just get to the point, so people could just pick something up and probably read it in two or three hours?" There are work pages on the back. That's where all the work comes in.

Robert: Right. There's a whole system right there that you can work to apply. As they say, the system that works is the one that works for you. Sometimes you'll take a few ideas from this and adapt it to whatever you have, but ultimately you've got to find a system and stick with that system.

Gary: Right, if I could though for just a second, going back to one of your ezines. I know I always say it wrong. How do you say it?

Robert: Ezine, as in "magazine."

Gary: You had one on "Building Marketing Mansions," which really triggered me. I've been reading your ezines for years now. They're always great, but this one really hit me. And one of the things you talked about was, again, you can't keep a plan in your head.

It made me think of a quote from Dwight Eisenhower. He said, "Plans are useless, but planning is indispensable."

If we can tell the listeners anything at all about today's conversation, just going through the planning process is invaluable. That's one thing that if you do it in your head,

it doesn't work as well. Writing it out and seeing it in black and white really gives you a chance to look at what makes sense and what doesn't make sense.

I just love that quote, "Plans are useless, but planning is indispensable."

Robert: That's very interesting. There are a lot of pithy truths out there if we only apply them.

Gary: Right, which I thought tied in very big to your building marketing mansions. That's one of the things you talked about. You've got to get it written down.

Robert: Yeah, or it's not real to you. I used to say this in talks, "It's not very inspiring to wake up in the morning when your only goal is to just make the rent for that month."

Gary: That's a good point.

Robert: That's a piece of it. You've got to make the rent each month. But that's not a great reason for working, and that can definitely lead to burnout.

Let's get back to goals and alignment for a minute. Do you have examples of goals that aren't aligned, and what do you do to get on track?

Gary: One of the really good ones I have ties back to a client of mine who was very, very big into fishing. One of his goals was he was going to purchase a boat and spend weekends fishing. This was the individual that started the Dyson floppy diskettes company.

He was spending seven days a week working his business. He never bought the boat, and he never went fishing. He

had this goal that he wanted to go fishing, but he also had this goal that he wanted to build this business.

Robert: It was more of a dream than a goal.

Gary: Exactly. That's all it was at that point. It was a dream. When I did meet with him, I said, "Okay, let's write them out as goals. How do we accomplish them?"

What I was able to accomplish for this individual — what he accomplished was this:

He said, "Yes, this is a very important dream of mine. I want to get this boat." So he came up with dates, the price of the boat, what dates he wanted to spend to go fishing, because he wanted to spend more than just the weekends to go fishing, and he took a look at his business.

He was driving the entire business. He had specific goals in that business that he still wanted to meet. One of the goals that we added was, getting back to the COO, to hire a COO and to hire other individuals to take over certain tasks for his business.

And it really does get back to goals because one of his goals was to own, operate, run and eventually sell this business on his own, which was not possible if, before that business was sold he also wanted to spend the weekends with his family, fishing, and one day a week. It wasn't going to happen.

He wasn't going to modify the "I'm buying the fishing boat." That had to stay. We had to take a look at how to change his business goals, and so he did. He started to hire more people, which cut into his profits, but not

enough that he still couldn't afford that boat. Again, we had to make sure that they aligned.

If hiring those people and cutting into the profits of the corporation didn't allow him to afford a boat, then we would really have a big problem. Then how do you get them to align? But we did get them to align.

To make a really long story short, he ended up selling the business. This was back in 1987 for \$6 million. Back then, this was big time.

Robert: That's big time now! That's not bad.

Gary: In the meantime, before selling the business, he got the boat and he was out fishing.

Robert: You know I wouldn't be surprised if when he was out fishing he came back more renewed with better ideas for his business.

Gary: Strange that you would mention that. One of the first planning sessions that we had, we rented a canoe and went out on the Des Plaines River, and that's where we planned it out. That's where we came out with it in fact.

Robert: He paid you for that!

Gary: Not only did he pay me for that, his testimonial is on the back of my book. He's still using the process.

Robert: Gary, that is really brilliant. I'm starting to get a bigger picture of that. I hope everyone else is as well.

It's not just about delegating and working more efficiently. It's about achieving your dreams and really

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

having it all in balance. That's a great example of the fishing boat and being out there doing stuff.

Someone told me once that people who intentionally take off more time from work than the average person make more money.

Gary: Interesting.

Robert: I don't know the empirical statistics for that. But, if we take it that it may in fact be true, when you force yourself to take that time off, things change. Something happens and chemically changes in your body, practically.

You have to be more efficient and effective. You have to delegate more. Then you're more rested, and you come back more fresh to your business. Then you have more creative ideas.

That's just the opposite of what we do. We think, "If I work hard, then someday I'll be able to relax." For many people that "someday" never comes.

Gary: It's interesting that you would say that. I kept hemming and hawing when you asked about examples of aligning goals and if I had any good ones. I was reluctant to use myself.

Robert: Go ahead.

Gary: I wanted to give some client examples, but you bring up one that really ties in to what I was able to accomplish over the last two years.

I struggled with, as I said, writing a book. Part of my plan was I had to take time away from the business to write

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

this book or it wasn't going to happen. I'm one of these strange people where I need to sleep! Sometimes when I see all the things that you do, I wonder if you ever sleep.

Robert: I wonder sometimes, too.

Gary: But I need to sleep. I figured it out. I thought, "I can't do all three things, write the book, keep the business going and sleep."

What I thought I would do was take some time away from the business in 2009 to finish the book. I was able to take time away from the business in 2009 to finish the book, but I still had as good a year in 2009 as I did in 2008. As a matter of fact, this was a better year.

Robert: Amazing.

Gary: That's right to the example. Don't ask me how that happened, but it just does. I think I was more focused and I had the goals set up. I had my plans in place, and as you said, it's just that simple. It worked. I worked the plan and it worked.

Robert: But Gary, that's impossible. We're in the middle of a recession... and yet!

Gary: Don't say anything. Some things still needed to get done. I still had those same clients.

Robert: This isn't really part of why I was going to interview you, but I can't help but bring this up.

Gary: Why do I get the sense I'm in trouble, suddenly?

Robert: I don't think so. I mean here we are in economic times where jobs are really down. Businesses are cutting back.

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

Things aren't going as well as they have in the past economically, if we look at the actual figures and measurements. And yet, some businesses are doing very well. I had as good or better year this year than last year, as well.

I wonder, for people that are more goal, project and intention-oriented and really focused on balance, what have you seen in your clients with this kind of process? Are they making better money? Are they doing well? Are they bucking the trends in the economy as a whole?

Gary: You know it's interesting that you'd say that. It's very intuitive. I have a mixed bag. I have those clients, that I am still struggling with to accept and adopt my processes, that struggled this year. Those that really grabbed onto it, if they didn't stay ahead of the game, they stayed even. And staying even in this economy is doing very well.

Robert: Yeah, really.

Gary: Those are the ones that grabbed on to the process. They're aligning their goals and have a plan in place and work the plan. It's those that really struggled with that that I still can't get to back out of the forest.

Robert: It's still, "I don't have enough time and everything's not going well," blah, blah, blah.

Gary: "We've got to do this. We've got to do it this way." Why? "We just do." That's my point earlier about taking a step back. Trying to get them to take a step back and ask, "Why are you doing it?" When they take a look at why they're doing it, what is their goal?

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

I love this and you would as well. When you get the deer-in-the-headlights look on their face and you say, “Why are you doing this?” they look at you like, “That’s an excellent question. I don’t have a clue.”

If they can’t tie it into a goal, if there isn’t a reason for doing this, we have to stop doing it. Then they still get nervous about it, “But I have to!”

Robert: It’s habitual. Habits let us live inside our comfort zone, and we want to be comfortable. But comfortable is not the same as being balanced, effective and happy. Once you get out of the comfort zone, there’s another level of comfort zone that you can live in that’s much better.

Gary: Those are the few clients I had this year that struggled a bit, which, and I probably shouldn’t say it within this conference, but...

Robert: Go ahead.

Gary: I’m drooling for next year. I’ve already got some strategies for these companies for next year. They’re going to look at me and say, “Wow! That’s what we need to solve our problem.”

It’s, again, just the master of the obvious. I saw why they’re struggling this year, and it does lead into the processes. And it’s actually measurement.

I want them to start doing some research studies to determine the return on some of these things. There isn’t any, or there is. And if there isn’t any, let’s stop doing it.

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

Robert: Right, and then move on to the next thing. A quote popped up for me as we were talking here. It's a saying that says, "Environment is stronger than will."

Another way of saying that is when you set up the structures, the goals and the context of things, you're going to get better results than just through pure brute force of will and working hard.

I think a lot of people that are independent professionals have a will. They have a direction, and they have a drive. But without the context of support, collaboration, goals, coaching and all of that, it's pretty darn hard.

It's like climbing up Mount Everest alone. If you try to climb up Mount Everest alone, you will probably die.

Gary: That's right. That's very well put.

Robert: But, if you have the Sherpas, a guide and, ideally, teamwork, you can get up Everest relatively easily, comparatively.

It's the same in a tough economy. We're climbing Mount Everest. The mountain just got steeper in the last couple years, but that doesn't mean we all have to die on the mountain.

We will die on the mountain if we just stick to our brute force will, doing it our way all the time and not stepping back and creating new systems, processes, approaches and goals, etc.

Gary: That's an excellent point.

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

Robert: My sense always is that the presence of “you” with your clients makes the difference. Before conversation they have certain attitude. After conversation they have a new view, a new attitude and a new possibility.

Can people hire you Gary?

Gary: Absolutely!

Robert: We’ll give you a link to the site. Gary might be someone who can actually support you in achieving some of your goals.

Gary: I would love to be able to have that opportunity.

Robert: In my life, I’ve found with my clients, and also I have coaches and people that work with me, that it makes all the difference.

It creates that environment and space in which I focus on the tactics, get the plan done, look at the big picture and try to work on alignment. It’s so easy to let all that stuff slip, isn’t it?

Gary: It’s the about the cobbler’s children’s shoes.

Robert: Right.

Gary: Sometimes, I’m at fault for not planning enough.

Robert: Sure.

Gary: It really is. As I said, you get caught in life. Life always seems to get in the way, “I’ve got to do this.” But what I try to do myself is, before I do it, I ask myself why. “Why am I doing this?” If I can’t back it up into a goal, I shouldn’t be doing it.

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

Robert: That's the theme that you keep coming up with, "Why the heck am I doing this?"

Gary: Absolutely. The other thing that I will say that's kind of a warning is this. You and I both agree that this is a very simple process, but don't let that fool you. It's a simple process, but there's hard work behind it.

Robert: Sure, definitely.

Gary: I tell you that if you put the work in, your daily activities become much easier.

Robert: Yeah and something that I noticed is that sometimes you have a day where you forgot to plan or maybe you were bombarded by a whole bunch of emergencies and God knows what. You've been thrown off center.

I find myself muddling through my day, realizing I'm not going anywhere, and I don't feel good. I don't feel energized. I don't feel on top of things.

But if I take a few minutes to focus, look at my list, look at all the stuff I have, see what's important and take a breath, if I take one thing at a time and look at all these things that I have to do a little more consciously, I can get back on track and have a great day.

I wouldn't be surprised. People have bad days, day after day after day because they're just kind of drifting. This is a kind of an anti-drift formula, right?

Gary: Absolutely.

Robert: I'm giving you marketing phrases you can keep using in your business, Gary!

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

Gary: You always do!

Robert: “The anti-drift philosophy.”

Gary: I like that. That’s good!

Robert: What about workaholism? A lot of us as independent professionals are workaholics, and we just love to work and work to work. We’re always working. Do you have some ideas around that?

Gary: Yes, and not to dance around it, but the answer really does depend on the individual. Some people are quite happy with work as their major focus. There’s nothing wrong with that as long as you bring some balance to your life.

I’ve met with several that were strict workaholics. As I’ve mentioned before, I always recommend taking a step back and giving some thought to those things they’ve always wanted to do or accomplish that they just never really got around to that aren’t work related.

Not to be a pest, but I say, “Aren’t there some things you want to do that aren’t work related?” Even though they’re workaholics, there’s got to be something they’ve wanted to do in their life that’s not work related. Sometimes it’s like pulling teeth to get it out of them, but there’s this great revelation.

They say, “Yeah, I really always did want to go to Europe, but I don’t have time.” “Why don’t you have time?” “I’ve got to work.”

Robert: That’s an endless loop, isn’t it?

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

Gary: Yes. Let's figure out some way that we can restructure your working life to make room for these things, as I said, unless they really don't want to.

I haven't in my lifetime, but maybe you have met someone, even though they're a workaholic, that didn't have some things they wanted to do outside of work.

Robert: Yeah, and yet we don't let ourselves. It's funny. One of my sisters travels all the time. She takes vacations and has been to a lot of places in the world. Another of my sisters works all the time. She hardly takes her vacation pay, and if she does, she stays at home. She doesn't go anywhere.

I'm not saying that's bad, but it's interesting how we set up our lives. One sister is now retired and still traveling. The other one is still working. It seems like a bit of a shame.

Gary: I'm a bit of a workaholic, so again I might be a good example. One of the things that I did, there are years when I'm on the road maybe 26 weeks. This isn't much if you look at some people.

Robert: Really? To clients?

Gary: Yes.

Robert: You've got to get more local clients, Gary!

Gary: That was a goal I had one year, but you know what? What I tried to figure out was I was traveling a lot and not enjoying it. So one of the things I did early on was I suggested that my wife quit her job and come with me.

Robert: Really?

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

Gary: Yeah. This goes back to the late 1980s. I was going to Washington DC probably three or four times a year. I'd never been to the Smithsonian. I never went to the Mall. I didn't do anything.

You get on a plane and get off the plane.

Robert: I was in so-called Washington DC. It was a meeting room at the airport. What's that?

Gary: Exactly. I was a classic workaholic, and I was happy with that. That's all I was doing. I said, "This is crazy."

Robert: It gets old after a while though.

Gary: I brought my wife with, and we would spend the weekends wherever I was. She would spend the time I was working as the tour guide and figure out where we were going. Then she'd grab me by the ear on the weekends, and we'd see everything.

That was one way to do it and get a little more life-work balance. It really did become more enjoyable. That's one example.

I don't know if that would work for everyone, but as I said, I have yet to come across a person who wasn't receptive to, "Yes, I would love to take some time away from work."

Robert: It's interesting that the thing that pops in so often is, "I don't have time." I have a saying, "If you say you don't have time, you're lying to yourself." It isn't true. There's something else happening here. It's just an excuse, and it's an excuse that most people buy.

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

“Sure, you don’t have time. I understand. Everybody’s busy, blah, blah, blah.” But would you rather have a balanced life or keep saying that excuse, “I have no time,”?

If you really look at it, you can make the time. You can find the time. As you said, you can readjust things. You can plan. You can, all of a sudden, discover that you took two vacations.

I do have one person in my business called my travel director and also called my wife. (laughter)

Gary: That sounds familiar.

Robert: My wife is the travel director for our life. She loves to take vacations, so she’s always planning them. I say, “As long as it doesn’t overlap with major things I’m doing, no problem.” I find a way to do it.

Gary: As you said earlier, there are always ways to avoid it as well. I think that’s one of the problems with a workaholic. They’re figuring out ways to avoid things in life because they’d rather work. They’re more comfortable in that environment.

I think what they haven’t exposed themselves to is how much fun there can be outside of work.

Robert: Yes. It’s a point that’s hard to express unless you’ve done it. You bring that back to your work in a renewed way. It’s not that you’re escaping from work. It’s that you’re renewing yourself for work.

It could be a lot of things. It could be going to a seminar. Going to a business seminar that’s good is a real break

from ordinary day-to-day work, and you can come back with great ideas.

We did a home tour some place. I forget where it was. We saw all these different houses, and we got some great ideas of how to remodel our house.

You go to Europe and see how people are much more relaxed. They're having coffee at the cafes in Paris and stuff like that. You say, "That might be nice to go out for coffee a bit more."

It gives you a richer life.

Gary: One of the things I try to get workaholics to do is turn off their cell phone once in a while. They almost go into withdrawal. "How can I do that? That's my link to my life."

That's where in *The 4-Hour Workweek* and some of those things in there are nice to read. And you can take just a grain of that, and don't take it to the extent that he took it to.

Turn off your cell phone at 6:00 p.m., and see what it's like to spend some time with your family instead of worrying about when your cell phone is going to ring.

Robert: How about the Great Satan, television?

Gary: It could work.

Robert: You've given us a lot of things to look at, and you say it's pretty simple. It's simple but nevertheless hard work, but fun work. When I'm planning and stuff, I really feel like

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

I'm doing something productive. I'm moving forward. I'm oriented and focused.

Gary: It's really rewarding.

Robert: I'm playing the game. It feels rewarding then if I have a good week or a good day, which has been my experience. For instance, December, especially, has just been a great month for me.

Now I can take a week off for Christmas and I don't feel guilty. I'm all caught up. Everything is done. It's a great feeling, and I can have balance.

Gary: It's a plan.

Robert: It is a plan.

Gary: I can't move in the morning without my daily to-do list, which all comes off of my plan. I look at it and I know what my day has got. I know basically how much time it's going to take to do those certain things. I can let life get in the way without getting very nervous about it. Although I say that, sometimes I still do.

A lot of times, you don't realize how little time those tasks will take you. You look at those tasks and go, "How am I going to accomplish all this?" When you just get down and start doing it, it just gets done. If you don't plan it out, it will never get done.

Robert: The thing I've found most valuable about this whole conversation with you, Gary, is this. There are business goals, efficiency and trying to accomplish all of it, which is very important, but it's about the planning of the personal

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

things and really trying to align that with your business goals.

I think a lot of people have a hard time with that. It's a really big thing that is not only making you more efficient and more money. It's changing the quality of your life.

Gary:

Absolutely. I would take American business as guilty for not letting us focus on that. All the focus has always been on a business plan, strategic plan and a corporate plan. What are we doing with the business?

It's never, "Why am I doing this?" Whether you're working for a company or if you're an independent professional, what you really have to ask yourself is, "Why am I in business in the first place?"

If it's strictly just to build a successful business, that's great. But there is usually something in your life that you're trying to accomplish, and that's why you started the business. That's all I really ask people to do. Take a step back and determine what it is?

It's very interesting, Robert, how many clients I have that have never really taken the time to figure out what they want to accomplish in their personal life with the business.

Robert:

That's very powerful. I also think this has given some people, whether they're consultants or coaches, a bit of a tool that they can start using with some of their clients. I was impressed by some of the breakthroughs you had when you started to talk about personal goals and balance.

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

Whereas they were sort of stuck in a stagnant kind of place, just trying to work harder and harder. They had to get off that treadmill and go in a different way. That was revealed to them by working on their personal goals and desires. It's like the guy who got the boat and ended up selling his company for \$6 million.

Gary: He's had four companies since.

Robert: Really?

Gary: He has used the process. He calls himself a buyer and seller.

Robert: Interesting, so he gets a business and gets it working. Is he still using his boat?

Gary: Yes, I've got pictures on Facebook to prove it. He's out there fishing.

Robert: You're painting a picture of a much more balanced, happy, fulfilling lifestyle. It all starts with this focus of these goals and being balanced.

Gary: Again, another personal example is one of the personal goals I had was to write a book. Whether it was going to be a novel or a business book, I didn't care.

It's done, and I can't tell you how many times I just sit back and smile and enjoy whatever I'm doing more because I realize I have fulfilled a personal goal. It's very powerful to be able to turn your dreams into reality. It really is powerful. It helps every day.

Robert: This has been a fun conversation.

Robert Middleton Interviews Gary Slavin

Gary: I've enjoyed it tremendously. I hope that it's helped everybody that's been part of the call.

Robert: I hope so. You have some things to do from this call, writing those goals, thinking of your balance. Your best friends are pen and paper to get those ideas out of your head and start to turn them into reality. It really starts with that.

Gary: I couldn't agree more. It really does. You look at it in black and white, and it really gives you an idea of it. It's almost validation. "Does this even make sense?" and you read it back to yourself, "How could I have thought of that?"

You start modifying your goals and plans. It's really tough to modify. How did you put it? You phrased it a lot better than I did. Planning in your head is a reason for a headache?

Robert: It creates headaches.

Gary: It does.

Robert: If you plan it on paper, it's literally transferring part of your brain to paper. It's all that memory stuff. You don't have to have it all in your brain.

We could make side comments on this all day. There are so many little subtleties, realizations and understanding. We'll leave it to everyone that's been on the call to get to work. Start planning for your year and make it the best year you possibly can.

Don't let yourself be sucked into this whole conversation about the bad economy. Plan and create your way out of

it. Work your way out of it, and have fun with it. I hope, in the Club, we can be part of supporting you in that.

Gary, I really want to thank you. I appreciate the time you took and the difference you're making.

Gary: My pleasure. Thank you very much.

Robert: Thank you! Have a happy holiday and happy New Year!

Gary: Thank you, same to you!