

**Jeff:** Welcome, and happy 2017, everybody. I hope it's been a great year for you so far and I hope you had a wonderful holiday season. It has been lovely here. It was joyful, created lots of memories, and ready for a fantastic 2017. I am standing across from Jennifer Owen-O'Quill today, so Jennifer, do you want to say hi real quick?

**Jennifer:** Happy New Year, everyone! Welcome to 2017.

**Jeff:** Absolutely. Nice shout-out to my wife, Beth. She got a standing desk for Christmas so we're doing it a little different today. We're standing and looking at each other and the studio is ready to go. Again, thanks for joining us.

I get notes each week from around the world from our blog, from notes about our radio show, and greatly appreciate it. So really, folks anywhere from China to Australia to the UAE—you don't know how much it means to hear about what's going on in different parts of the world. And we're always open to incorporating your ideas into the show.

So to reach us, you can e-mail us at [Jeff@VoltageLeadership.com](mailto:Jeff@VoltageLeadership.com). If you'd like more information about Voltage, find us on the website at [www.voltageleadership.com](http://www.voltageleadership.com). What Jennifer and I are talking about today is really goal setting. If you want to go out and see the blog that I wrote to get you to launch for the year, check it out on our website.

You can like us on Facebook at Voltage Leadership and then you can connect with me at Jeff Smith, Voltage Leadership Consulting or Jennifer Owen-O'Quill, Voltage Leadership Consulting.

Finally, you can follow me on Twitter at @JMUJeff and I promise this will be the last week that you will have to go through the JMU stuff on my Twitter account. We are playing the National Championship of the game this upcoming Saturday so my Twitter followers are getting a heavy dose of JMU. But please know we're very excited.

Phil, my thirteen-year-old son and I, will be flying out to Texas so we're looking forward to watching National Championship games. That will achieve one of my goals early in the year, is to spend quality time with each child. So to get a trip out of the way, I'm very excited about it.

So Jennifer, what have you been up to? How were your holidays and things like that?

**Jennifer:** I had a great holiday, Jeff. It was great to be home and have the thinking time that I love to have to get myself focused on what I want to accomplish in the coming year and to really take a moment to pause and think, not just what I want to accomplish, but what do I hope for in 2017? What is it that I really hope when I get to the end of the year, has come true?

So I sat down and did that with my family on New Year's Day and had my son send his list of hopes for our family to me via paper airplane.

**Jeff:** I like it. So you hear the voice of Jennifer Owen-O'Quill. Jennifer works with me at Voltage Leadership and is an outstanding facilitator, coach, and what we want to talk to you about today is how do we hit our goals? How do I make 2017 the best year that we can possibly make it?

Each year has sort of its own theme and its own pacing and things like that so right here at the outset, we know lots of the set resolutions and they generally say that somewhere on the order of 50-60% of the resolutions are dead by my birthday. My birthday is January 31<sup>st</sup>. So normally, they're dead by then. So we want to just give you our best practices and tips and suggestions.

Even within that, you said, your hopes—your hope is not really a strategy. It's just a hope. So what's your strategy for these hopes to come true? What are your couple best practices, Jennifer?

**Jennifer:** First thing you have to do is you have to wedge your hopes to a plan of action. Those three things. Wedge your hopes to a plan of action. And if you put those three things together, you will arrive at your destination. Without determining to actually get into the car, step behind the wheel, and drive somewhere, you won't actually arrive.

**Jeff:** Yeah, I like that. We'll certainly build on that throughout the show. For me, I think we're saying a lot of the same things. It's about intentions. If you don't set a clear intention, it kind of meanders throughout the course of the year.

So we all have those sort of ingrained intentions from time to time where you're sort of like, 'oh, I'd really like to do such and such'. As long as you kind of leave it at that, there's really no plan there. There's no real hope that that's going to happen. It's just a nice thought. And thoughts are great but thoughts don't get you to actually be able to perform better.

One thing I encourage, and we'll talk about this a little bit in the blog, is the wheel of life has a nice place to start. It's an exercise where you assess various

aspects of your life from your personal growth, career, and relationships in your family. We do it on a zero to ten scale. Again, it's in the blog this week so if you just check that out—but what I wanted to say about that is, take a look at it. How do you feel about the course of the year?

It was interesting. Our kids went to school yesterday but I had the day off so we kind of cleaned up the office here and got it there. I reset goals, launched some new goals. There was a couple that I missed and I was letting that weigh a little bit on my mind a little too much, quite honestly. When I looked at the goals I set for last year, I achieved five out of seven.

The sixth one, I had a knee injury and that kept me from running a half-marathon that I wanted to run. So that's okay. It'll get done. And the seventh one, it really was a relatively minor goal but it was nagging in my brain so I didn't feel like I had nearly as successful a year as I did.

I also say, go and look at your data first and really make sure—did you critically assess '16 and say, how did it go? Well, I looked at it and I was six for seven, and the half-marathon I missed, I gave myself credit for because I did run other races. I had run plenty of 13-mile runs throughout the course of the year.

It was a much better year than I thought. So go back and really critically assess '16 before you launch into '17. What do you think, Jennifer?

**Jennifer:** I think that's really important. You have to know where you've been and to give yourself a chance to celebrate. I do find that when you take a moment to stop and look at what you've actually done, it's really incredible how much you actually accomplished.

But we're so busy moving to the next thing and we often don't take the opportunity to do the thing that gives us momentum, which is that sense of achievement.

**Jeff:** Yeah, and that built up my ability to dream a little bigger for '17, too, as well, quite honestly. When I looked at it and said, gosh, we launched this radio show, we wrote over 50 blogs over the course of the year, we were able to bring on a bunch of new customers, travel the world, was able to have dates with each of my children, have some fun, and outside of missing the marathon—I would have liked to have lost maybe five more pounds, it feels like a heck of a year!

**Jennifer:** Where, Jeff?

**Jeff:** If I'm going to get ready for these races, I've got to lose five pounds. But my story in my head wasn't quite as good. So once I really sat down, I was like, wow. This was a really great year! '16 was a great year. Go ahead.

**Jennifer:** I want to say something about achievers. Just to remind about achievers. Achievers are people who are never satisfied. So it's more important than ever, I think, to take that moment to really stop and notice what you have accomplished and then to acknowledge that and celebrate that with your team.

If you're a very successful leader, the discipline of pause and celebrate is so important to energizing your team around you and to allowing them to really savor the victories and the mountaintop moments. That's a piece of feedback I've gotten over the course of my career. Why don't you ever stop to celebrate? So I'm glad you did that. You took the time to really enjoy where you've been.

**Jeff:** Cool, thank you. And Jennifer, just so you know, had a record year for herself. So congratulations, Jenn.

**Jennifer:** You just take the time, awesome.

**Jeff:** You did a fantastic job. So if I sat down and looked at '17, it really was coming from a place of strength. Maybe not all of you may be in that place, but there's lots that you want to do with it. A new career or maybe its weight loss or it's starting some new habits.

What I want you to think about, though, is really write sort of your story on December 31<sup>st</sup> of 2017—what would be your outcome? When you sat down and review 2017 and you're getting ready for the New Year's Eve party or time with your family, whatever it is, what would be the things that you want to celebrate around that dinner table or that's a Happy Hour, whatever it is. Get really crystal clear and the more clear that you can be on that, the better it is.

So running a half-marathon? Great. Maybe setting a time goal or maybe it's crossing the finish line with a friend. So coincidentally, one of my friends, Matthew Scott, asked if I would run the Monument 10K in Richmond, Virginia, with him. And I put that down on my list. So I don't care about the time. I'm a faster runner than Matthew. So my image is going to be a couple races this year of crossing with best friends. Who cares about the time?

I'm almost 50 years old. I'm not going to be as fast as I was at 18. What I can be, though, is I have a hard time spending enough time with friends, so I changed the goal. Instead of it being a time goal, what's the feeling that I'm going to have when I cross the finish line with Matthew Scott or maybe it's

David Daire or Chris Stewart Peterson later in the year—that's a little different for me. But the crystal clear vision that you can put some words around feeling, will help you achieve your goal. Jennifer, what are your feelings?

**Jennifer:** I have a great example of that. In 2016, I had an intention at the beginning of the year. It was my tenth anniversary. I had this vision in my mind. I was going to renew my vows. I was going to have a second honeymoon with my husband, and I was going to be able to renew my vows in my wedding gown. All right? So it's our ten-year anniversary. It's a big goal. I actually did that on my fifth anniversary, which was fun.

So I spent a lot of time at the beginning of the year in the gym, working out really pretty hard, and by the time I actually pulled up to that anniversary, I had done something else. I had this idea in my mind that I'd also run across a dress that was a lot like that wedding gown. And I had gone ahead and bought that dress and I put it in the closet. My thought was, regardless, the picture in my mind was going to happen one way or another. It came to that day and I put on the wedding gown and it was a really hot day. The gown was very heavy and it wouldn't zip.

And I had this other dress and I just looked at it and I thought, oh well, I'm going to put on this other dress and it was beautiful and lightweight and I looked the same, right? But the vision is still actually fulfilled. So just because it doesn't come out exactly the way you had in mind, that set of intentions—I put the whole first half of my year on a particular course and I got to exactly where I wanted with my son, renewing our vows, up at The Star here in Roanoke, which is a lovely setting, and we had a great time sailing for a week. And it was a fantastic time. Did the dress really matter? No. It was just to help picture it in my mind, to motivate me to get where I wanted to be.

**Jeff:** I'm sure you looked marvelous in either dress. Marvelous, marvelous, marvelous. Well, I think that's a great lesson right there. With a desired outcome, there's more than one possibility. And similar for me, the one with the running a half-marathon, the training was great. I did lots of right things. Unfortunately, a knee injury happened.

But it didn't change that all along the year, I had really good runs with friends. I stayed in shape. I was able to get there. It wasn't exactly the way I wanted to finish, no. But there were some great lessons learned about resiliency for me. And so in saying, hey, I'm going to miss a goal—am I okay with that? So I'd also talked to you about, you're going to set some goals.

I had one of my clients say to me, his goals for the year were probably 40-50 goals and it's just so overwhelming. I was like, wow, some of these are cascading goals within each other. But it's still so much to follow. What I want you to be thinking about is really the top two or three goals. It's hard to change lots. So just by starting and maybe picking one and getting started.

So for me, folks who know me well, I like my Diet Pepsi. And I'd done very well getting it out of my diet last year and then it just slipped back in, a little hard stretch. So one of the goals is, be healthier. I'm not going to promise myself that I won't have any Diet Pepsis. But can I get it back to one a day with most days being none? And so, starting small—instead of okay, there's sixteen things I want to do with my diet, let's start small. What's one thing?

So, I encourage you. Don't make it the perfect goal. Just start with one and see what we've got and let's get started. So what we're going to do is, after the break, we're going to come back and we're going to start to talk about some of the best practices and some of the best guidelines that we would have for folks around setting goals. Thanks for being with us today and we look forward to talking to you in two minutes.

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**Jeff:** Welcome back, and again, we're talking about 2017. How do we make it the best year possible for you? I'm here with Jennifer Owen-O'Quill from Voltage and we're having a conversation about goals and how do you set them?

The blog that I posted was resolutions are hard, so how about some desired outcomes? Part of the reason that resolutions are so hard is they stay so vague. There's always this like, "I want to be a better person" or I heard someone say that they're going to try to be more positive. Well, that's a struggle, right? There's just things missing from that.

So one of the things that I work with for folks that take it from resolution to an actual goal is something called the SMART model. How many of you are familiar with this? This is not rocket science. This is just reminding you—sharpening the saw, as Steven Covey would say—about let's go back to some of our best practices.

So SMART, the one I'm going to use, is Specific: setting a clear and specific goal.

Making it Measurable, whether it's a revenue target for your area or a certain number of launch products by a certain date. Is it a time goal in a race? It

should be measurable so that you can have a sense of whether you can achieve it or not.

That brings us to the next one: Achievable. It can be great that I set a goal of running a four-minute mile. That is not achievable. It is specific and it's measurable, but it's not achievable. So is the goal that you're setting also achievable by you, your team, your organization? You want to stretch but it should be achievable and not such a stretch that it's a demotivator.

Similarly, Realistic. And so given the constraints of all the things that we're trying to work on, is it realistic that we can achieve this this year? So when I had Amy [inaudible][18:04] on a few weeks ago, they originally when they were setting goals said it was just too many. And it was probably achievable for any of the goals we set but it wasn't realistic to use six or seven of them in that year. So Realistic is, yes, it's achievable—is it realistic in the circumstances that we're facing in 2017?

Finally, Timely. What's the time period? When are you going to hit it? By when—we can make sure that we're holding ourselves accountable. So that's a SMART goal. And again, it's not probably setting 20 SMART goals. It might be three to five, would be sort of best practices. Jennifer, what do you think about SMART goals and take us where you'd like to go next?

**Jennifer:** Well, when I think about SMART goals, I think it's about analyzing where you are, taking a look at the life pie earlier today, looking at the whole of your life. But if you were to slice your business into slices of people and leadership and competition and marketplace, needs, and all of the various things that need to go into what it takes to lead a business, the other piece to consider beyond all of this elements is the capacity.

That's where you get the realistic. Is it realistic? How many of these can I do? I do think it's very important in the motivation factor to build on success and to set something that is going to be a challenge but not eight things that are going to be a challenge. So you want to strive to great purpose but you don't want to strive to a sense of deflation and failure.

So you learn from failure, that's true. But to build on some success is a little bit easier way to benchmark. And then you can analyze if you've gone too easy on yourself, if you've hit it by the first quarter, then maybe you need to set tougher goals.

**Jeff:** Let's talk about that a little bit because I am curious. What's your guideline for a stretch? We're kind of aiming to stretch ourselves and push, but do you have a target number used or a mindset when you're working with our clients around stretch goals?

**Jennifer:** I look at the interaction between capacity and ability plus time. Do you have the ability and the talent and the resources, the financial resources? The talent and the financial resources and then the time to actually accomplish that and if you are pushing it at the limit already, how much more are you asking?

I'll give you an example. There's an organization we work with and the organization has been in a financially challenging cycle and so they have reduced their workforce but they haven't reduced the scope of the expectations and those folks were already pushing the calendar—at 50 or over 50 hours. So to not regroup and reset the expectations inside of the business and what can be accomplished, what that means is that in the face of priorities, people are throwing darts into the wind, or blindfolded darts. Let's use that.

They don't know which priorities to take because they're overwhelmed. And so if you don't pause when there is a change in capacity and really reset the expectations to what really is the most important thing to allow people to hit that, then that's just a deflating experience and you don't get a strategic result.

**Jeff:** I just want to be clear, she said 'darts in the wind'. Not anything that rhymes with that. We have young boys so I hear some of our audiences saying, what did she say? Maybe one of our goals for this year is that we only have one improper use of the English language in a show. I don't know if that's achievable or not but we'll let you guys be the judge of that.

**Jennifer:** I got that one this time.

**Jeff:** I like this idea of this ability plus the team. And that's a struggle for us, quite honesty, at Voltage. A lot of times, there's great work that we could go get, right? But we're a relatively small team of six or seven people where there's certainly lots more that we could go do. We could be interested. We could be curious. But how do we also balance that lifestyle of let's do things like raise our children, be involved in our cutie, give back to each other, but also to grow ourselves? I don't know that I have a set standard for my folks I coach.

I generally talk to people about, your businesses probably want you to improve by 10% year over year. That probably is sort of meeting expectations. What



does that mean? That probably means you have to get more efficient at something. You need to have mastered something, right? And you probably need to delegate some things. You say, well, I don't have people to delegate to—I would push back and have said, if you don't have direct reports, there are still things that you probably take on your desk that don't need to necessarily show out there. So 10% is sort of meeting expectations.

When I'm working with folks, looking at goals, I generally say let's assume that 10% is meeting expectations. If you're trying to exceed, let's start to look at that 15-20% range and what's the path for that? And then we just decide, some of businesses have had a great couple of years, 20% would be easy to achieve on revenue growth. But for others, 20% would be knocking it out of the ballpark.

So then you kind of use that measure of realistic. But I sort of say, 10% year-over-year is about what we need to improve upon. 15-20% means that you're probably a little ahead of market. So I kind of push people to think about, whatever you're doing, try to get a little beyond 10%.

**Jennifer:** And if you aren't paying attention to your current pace in that equation, you're making a mistake. Because if you achieved that set of goals but you pushed the pace beyond your real capacity to expect another 10-20%, to repeat that is a recipe for burnout. It is measuring, what pace did I run at last year and what season is it? Is it another season to choose to push hard again or am I in a rinse cycle—and by that, I don't mean backsliding—I just mean a cycle in which that exponential growth is actually not. You're in an infrastructure building phase of your work season.

**Jeff:** So one of the folks I coached just had a beautiful baby girl about three or four months ago, so her goal for this year—it's her third child—is to be able to raise a child well, be able to do all the necessary projects, but not to volunteer on all six projects that will come up. She's going to find one that's really in her sweet spot and really be able to drive that and say, this is a season where just getting some sleep matters this year. This could be the last child.

And so, she knows, hey, I want to do this really well. I've got young kids that's also starting school in this scenario. I want to make sure this is a good year. But sign me up for one good project. But I don't know that I can do the three or four that really traditionally is what she would sign up for. I think that's a realistic leader as well.

**Jennifer:** Right, and that piece that is hidden inside of there is excellence. When we're making decisions in our business, one of the ways we choose is, in

which direction can we be excellent? What is it that we are really going to excel at? Where are we going to deliver the best result for our client or our own sense of professional satisfaction? And that's a really important piece of the equation, because excellence breeds success. And so, keeping that in mind as you're prioritizing is a helpful piece of data.

**Jeff:** We'll start this conversation here and we'll continue it throughout the show. But let's talk a little bit about resiliency. We set these really good goals and we have these great intentions at the beginning of the year to achieve these things. But then life happens, we get busy. I've got a road trip this weekend to Texas. Then I'm going up to Philadelphia with a client here in a couple of weeks.

So I'm aiming to eat healthier. I'm trying to drink more water, all that kind of stuff. But then you get on the road and life happens. And you get off track, right? So what do you do to make sure that you're still focused on the goal and maybe not beating yourself up? Any suggestions there?

**Jennifer:** I think there's some intention with renewing—going back to your desired outcome and repainting that picture for yourself. What do I want? What do I really want? If you're painting a picture that's really positive, it's easier to reset on the goal. If you're painting a picture of discipline, and I mean that in a positive way and not a negative way, if it's discipline and retribution, you'll find your energy waves are disciplined in the positive sense.

It's really grounded in our enthusiasm. It will paint a positive picture where you're focused on the vision of what it is that you want to accomplish. It will be a lot easier to renew your commitment to that goal when you get off track or when failure is happening.

**Jeff:** We used the book, the *Power of TED* a good bit, from Dave Emerald. What Jennifer is alluding to here is asset-based thinking versus deficit-based thinking. Right? So if I was to play that same scenario, the first three weeks, I've done really well. I've honored it. So I've had a not-so-great weekend. I could beat myself up on that not-so-great weekend or I can say, hey, a little bit of a slip-up but hey, three really good weeks. How do I get right back to it?

So I think there's an element of, how do build on what you're already doing? And yeah, we're going to have setbacks. If you're not pushing hard enough, you should probably find some failure, truthfully, and there should be a few mistakes. But then also making sure that there is time to review what you're

working on so you can then say, am I on track or am I not on track? Does that make sense?

**Jennifer:** That does make sense. The other piece of that is to evaluate your errors. And what does it mean to really leverage your mistakes to really get the learning out of them? We only learned, right? Mistakes are indications that we're trying. So, we only learned, though, when we evaluate. What was it that went wrong so we can apply those lessons to the next run?

**Jeff:** That's good. So we'll do this. We'll continue on resiliency. I'd also like to have a conversation about should we have an accountability partner or not? Is that a good strategy or not a good strategy? We'll pick up on that conversation right after break, so stay with us and we'll see you in two minutes. So thank you.

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**Jeff:** Welcome back, and again, happy 2017. So glad you could be with us and take the time out of your day to join us. I'm here with Jennifer Owen-O'Quill from Voltage Leadership and we've been talking about how to plan for 2017 and making it the best year that you could possibly make it.

We talked a little bit about resiliencing before the break and whether we should have an accountability partner or not. I'll finish up a couple of thoughts around resiliencing and return it to Jennifer.

For me, I often have clients that get off track and they'll come, they'll apologize and they'll say they're sorry six times from Sunday and I'm like, stop the madness. I don't need you to say you're sorry, okay? Really, I don't. This is about you, and what are you trying to achieve? I try to work with them and say, hey, look, it's been a busy two or three weeks. I get it. We all get a little off-track. So my encouragement would be, let's not beat yourself up. Let's find what's been working right. And how do you build from that?

I'm not letting you get off scot-free. I'm going to be saying, what does it take to get back on track? I'm going to push you and challenge you and make sure that you have some conversations around that. But please, for the folks out there, stop beating yourself up. Jennifer alluded to this earlier that the achievers out there really have a hard time finding the positive a lot of times. So I'll encourage you, maybe one of your goals this year is positive self-talk.

How often do you have a positive self-talk? What actions do you take to do a positive self-talk? Maybe it's the beginning of the day, you find a word that's a

keyword, at the end of the day some gratitude and what would you write about today. So maybe that's one of your goals. But again, the leaders I see the biggest growth in do set some clear goals but they're also patient with themselves when they get off track.

**Jennifer:** Positive mindset is so important. It's one of the basic differentiators between the extraordinarily successful, is that they have that positive mindset. It's one of the first things I actually notice about you, Jeff, is that you have this real sense of success that you carry with you. I think that's a piece of why people are attracted to the business, because there is that spirit inside of it. And we see the evidence of what happens when you have that mindset and you're able to share it and multiply that in different organizations.

There's a wonderful book, Dr. Allman, Daniel Allman, wrote called *Change Your Brain, Change Your Life*. This is something you really struggle with in terms of a negative mindset. There's some really great practices and tools and tips that he offers, some of it are some of the things that you alluded to, Jeff, which is being able to pause and really reflect on and draw your attention to the things that you did accomplish over the course of the day.

We always have a task list, but what I would encourage you to remember is a task list is not your to-do list. Your task list is a list of things from which you're going to select your priorities for the day. And so, what are the two or three things that you must accomplish in the course of the day for it to be the most successful and that creates that positive sense of accomplishment? And to erase that language of, that's my to-do list. That's your task list and you create a set of priorities and a to-do list from that. It builds that momentum. So that's a tip for helping to create that sense of accomplishment and positivity.

**Jeff:** Good. There's some things that I want to get back to but I am going to skip that for a moment and I took a note so we'll get back to that. The question I asked before the break was accountability partners was, should we or shouldn't we? So an accountability partner is someone that you share your hopes, your goals with, and you say, "Can you help hold me accountable to what I'm trying to hit?" Then there will be some sort of regular follow-up. I just want to make sure we're all following the same language.

So, Jennifer, I'll let you go first this time—accountability partner, is that a good thing or not a good thing? What's your thought?

**Jennifer:** I have always had an accountability thought. It's really important. Sometimes I have a cohort of colleagues that are accountability partners. And

there's different types of accountability partners. There's a coach that can be a person that you really trust that is your person, that's driving your skills and your particular desired outcomes for your whole life and professional life.

And there's another accountability group that can be your group of colleagues that have a similar set of experiences. I have a cohort of CEOs that I meet with that I facilitate a strategy session with over the course of the year and that group finds accountability for, what are you doing to move forward the goals that you had? But also, they understand each other and they can bring an amount of compassion and wisdom, both to the conversation, and because they understand firsthand.

So there's accountability in terms of a coach that's pushing you to achieve particular goals and outcomes and then there's the accountability of a peer group of other professionals that are doing the similar kinds of work. I think both of them are useful.

**Jeff:** In general, I agree. Here's the places where you just have to be cautious about it. I think Jennifer alluded to this a bit. Do you trust the person that you're going to share your hopes and dreams with? So this isn't about stealing your ideas and things like that. You should watch that if you're working on a patent or something like that. What we mean by that is, I remember the first time I was going to run a marathon and people were like, oh, my God, you're going to ruin your knees. The knee injury had nothing to do with me running all these years. But people were like, 'gosh, that's crazy. Only crazy people run marathons.'

Similarly, a couple of years after that, I decided to go out on my own and started my own company that has been—we're five and a half years out now and it has been outrageously successful, but I can't tell you how many people I talked to that tried to talk me out of launching my own business. And I launched it literally in October of 2011, and so we were right in the height of unemployment in the U.S. We were running close to 10%. I remember them announcing that and them saying, 'oh, my Gosh, you're leaving a job where you paid a salary and all that. You're going to pursue your dream and all that kind of stuff. '

So a few of those people—I'm shocked that they wouldn't have supported me and I was kind of testing them out to be my accountability partner, to try to help me stay accountable. I had never done a website before or written marketing materials. I was looking for people that were going to help me. So one of the barriers I ran into was, wow, I've got to be really sure that the people

I am going to count as accountability partners understand my hopes and dreams and can give me support but also challenge me. And believe in that.

I think part of when you look at your 2017 goals, you may have different accountability partners. There's a concept out there called an advisory board. Find four to five people that can be your personal advisory board. Kind of like companies have it.

Each person can be something different. I've got someone, everything from a spiritual advisor to using someone like Scott Eblin as an executive coach for me. They help me stay focused on my own task and even really close friends that have known me since childhood and they'll tell me the real me. They'll say, Jeff, that doesn't sound like who you are—why are you concentrating on that?

And so, those are the people that I'm really going to make sure I understand what I'm trying to achieve and have them hold me accountable. So I think in general, an accountability partner—good idea. You're well-vested in your own goals and then when you're starting to explain this to people, make sure they have your best interests at heart as well.

**Jennifer:** I would say, when you're thinking about the who's in that, what is the direction in which you are trying to grow and is that person the right light for the direction you're trying to grow? I have a couple of new mentors that I'm adding to my cohort of accountability this year. Some folks that have been down the road that I am going to move on, and both of them are giving me their time.

I'm going to be very specific in my requests. I've been very successful over the years. But thinking about giving their gifts and talents and what they're going to achieve and how can they help me? What wisdom do they have and how do I connect to that? Is the right direction for accountability necessarily the direction I have been looking?

There are some folks that might not be accountability partners. They might be better support people for you. Or just fun companions. I would also offer a caution of, be careful what you ask of your spouse. And your really close friends because that might not be the role they need to be cast in or they want, really. So to expect things of our partner or our best friend might not be appropriate for the role they want to play in our world.

**Jeff:** That's a good reminder. I think one thing that I want to hit on about is that one of the barriers I would have—you're starting new things a lot of times

when you're trying to hit goals and so you guys are busy. Listen to this radio show. I know you guys are the top 1% in doing what you're doing out there and the reason you're listening is you want to get even better at it. One of the concepts I would just have is about resetting your calendar. Lee Hubert and I are working on a podcast here in the next few weeks—we'll come on and we're going to give you a bunch of tips, our best practices around time management. So we'll spend a whole show on that.

I want to hit this one right now. Resetting your calendar is critical because what's happened is where you left off in '16, you probably had some things left over. So we talked about this in an earlier show around start, stop, and continue, but I really encourage you to start thinking about this. If you're going to try to work in new things that you're trying to learn, maybe a new exercise, a new project you want to work on, a book you want to read to grow yourself—there are only 24 hours in a day.

And we're not asking people to get less sleep. We're hopeful that some of our clients—they're actually working on more sleep. And so one of things that I would really encourage you to do is just to sit down with your calendar in the first week to two weeks before you start back into your regular old zombie state of, here it is, week after week, and critically assess, do I still need to be doing these things on my calendar? Are they still serving me? Do they still serve the business? Do they still serve my goals? And really start to say, okay, if not, why are they still in the calendar? What do you think about that concept?

**Jennifer:** I think it's really important. And to look in three directions. One is what 'yes activity' would you keep? There are things to add that might not have been important or priorities into what you accomplish but are now, given the current state of your business and your life. So one of the things we've added is a real rhythm of routine strategic thinking as opposed to longer times, more regular pieces of time over the course of the year. It's important.

The other thing is, sometimes you might get asked to do something that you really want to do. This actually happened to me this week. I got asked to do something I really do want to do and given the current state of my work and my commitment to what I want to achieve for my clients, I cannot add it.

I would love to, and I had to communicate that. I would really enjoy doing this. It's the kind of thing I want to spend my time on and it is not the right thing right now. And please come back. So there is your 'yes' and your 'no' that's important and what you add and you subtract and what you don't add are really important.

**Jeff:** Every time you're saying yes, you're saying no to something else, whether that's family time, that's that workout you're hoping to get in or it's finishing the project or just sanity so that you're calmer when you go to bed at night. I do think that's a really important one.

My dad was really great at this. I remember he was maybe 65, 66 years old. And I was stepping down from a board and I asked if he'd like to step onto the board after I left. It was for—we both went to the same college, James Madison. And he goes, Jeff, I'm really honored and flattered that you asked that I would do that. I think it's great that you've done it. That's just not what I'm interested in. Could I offer a suggestion that you maybe recommend this person takes it? So not only did he say no in a nice way, he also offered a suggestion to somebody else.

So when you're getting all these requests, really think about, do I have to do that or could somebody else do that? So calendar resetting is really one of the things that you'll need as a tool for the upcoming year. So what we're going to do is we're going to wrap up the show with some of our best practices. When we come back in a few minutes, we'll give you a few of our best practices and our thoughts to close out this show and help you launch into a great 2017. See you in two.

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**Jeff:** Welcome back. I am here today with Jennifer Owen-O'Quill from Voltage Leadership Consulting and we've been talking about how to make 2017 your best year. So we're going to wrap up the show with some of our ideas and suggestions from this past hour.

My first thought, though, is how are you feeling? What's your own thinking right now? Are you nervous? Are you optimistic? How are you sort of embracing 2017? And whatever it is, it's probably appropriate. All sorts of reactions are probably there.

Personally, I am extremely excited we'll be writing a book. It'll be published early in the year. We'll continue this radio show. We've got some great new clients lining up with us. And I'm also just a touch nervous in saying, wow, that's a lot of commitments there. You know? Have I carved out enough time?

Additionally, my first child, Olivia, got into Duke University. She'll be going off to college this year. So that's really exciting but there's also a sense of the first time having a child leave home and go off to college. I'm just trying to show you



that all feelings are legitimate and realistic and the more you can have that accountability partner that knows you, understands you, has your best intentions and desires, then they'll be there to be that support person.

So, Jennifer, what about you? What's your best thinking from our show and getting ready for next year?

**Jennifer:** I'll piggyback on your accountability partner. It's really important to drill down into your thinking about what it is that you hope to accomplish. To put some meat on the bones about what exactly the habits and behaviors that you need to be able to deliver you into that destination. So, accountability partners are great, particularly if they're good question askers about what you're going to do about that. How are you going to accomplish that? What is the next thing that you're going to do to get to that goal? And that puts those things in sizable chunks. The other thing I want to remind our listeners about is plan to meet. What interactions do you need to have and what's your rhythm for getting to the end of your year? Having a plan to communicate it effectively and that time that you gather with other people to think and to decide and then act is really important. Those things are called at the best, meetings.

So when you're able to design a rhythm like that where you're thinking, strategically, when is my annual meeting going to be? When are my quarterly meetings going to be? Who needs to be in the room to keep me effective and thinking well? What do I want to accomplish monthly and how do I create some strategic momentum every month and that intersection between the strategic and the tactical? It's what happens in those monthly meetings at their best.

And then that weekly rhythm of where is that accountability on an ongoing basis? What questions do I want to ask during that time and what questions do I want to pose during those conversations? Those are just very important benchmarks to be able to pull people together and ask questions to say, what are we going to accomplish to do next?

**Jeff:** Right. I don't think there's one right way. As we're looking here at the studio, across the way, I've got a whiteboard. I printed mine out so I've got a visible reminder that I go and look at every day. It's right by me so I can visually see it.

For others, it might not be so important. I've had a couple of my clients already share their goals with me, whether it's SMART sheet or a Google Doc or whatever, to say, hey, I'd really like you to concentrate on X or Y in my spreadsheet and can I count on you for that?

So whatever it is, let's find a way that you can keep yourself accountable and keep it in front of you on a regular basis. Again, the more the smart goal it could be, so again, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely. The more it can hit, the better chance of success. We also talked about resetting your calendar again. We'll do a much deeper dive.

But to be able to do this, just like Jennifer said, put some time on the calendar. I would say, put your goals on the calendar first. Your weeks are busy. Whether that's getting a workout in three days a week, put your workout in there. You want to have a date with your significant other, put that on there. There's key meetings or key relationships that you want to building over the course of this year, get that on the calendar. The rest of the space fills in. It will.

So making sure that you've got time on your calendar—get some of that stuff that serves you well. Maybe in '16, or maybe it didn't serve you well in '16, get rid of some of that stuff. And then my last thought on this, and I'll let Jennifer wrap up with a thought or two, is having some patience with yourself and being resilient. Because we're not going to hit every goal. Life's going to get busy.

Remember, this is over the course of the year so there are going to be busy seasons of this year and there are going to be spots where maybe it's not quite as busy. You're always going to have a lot going on. That's just the nature of where we live in. But you know the difference of, if I was a CPA, I'm probably not going to try to hit my biggest goal in April. My biggest goal in April should be getting all my clients handled, right? But maybe my developmental goals come later in the year. So you know your own season but being patient with yourself. You've got the year to be working on these and are you on track or not? Jennifer.

**Jennifer:** And that question of are you on track or not? This is a great time of year as we've come to the beginning of 2017 to stop and look back and say, how did I spend my year? What did I do with my time? My 168 hours a week—112, we should be awake, right? It's not actually very much time. Where are my yeses and my 'no's and how do I then look ahead and say, this is what matters to me and this is what I'm going to protect in terms of my time and put that down on the calendar now, because then, you know it will happen. And you know what you can do? Relax. You can just relax and allow the calendar to unfold.

**Jeff:** Any great goals or New Year's Eve stories you want to share? We've got a minute here before we get to the end of the show.

**Jennifer:** You know, I really did enjoy that practice of calling out the things that I hoped for and to really think about what it is that I want to accomplish and how I specifically want to be engaged with my world and have an impact on the community and the clients that I have. What is it that you want to accomplish? What is it that you'd hoped when you pull into the end of 2017, your impact was on the world that we share and the people's lives around you? And what are you going to be proud of when you get to the end of the year?

**Jeff:** I'll tell you a practice that we do that's pretty simple with my family a couple of times a year. Just before the holidays and then just before summer break starts. What we asked of the kids—what would they like to have happen over Christmas break, holiday break, and then the summer? And we just keep a list, a white piece of paper. We smack it up onto the side of the refrigerator.

Do we hit all of them? No. Are they the most specific goals? No. But are they able to say, hey, we'd really like to do a hike or I'd like to go see a movie. So this past Christmas break, I had only seen one movie this whole year. I saw movies in back-to-back days. We saw *Rogue One* one day and then we saw *Moana* the next day. It was awesome.

You know the part that was awesome, though? Was just sitting there looking and seeing my family together and being able to get popcorn and we hung out and it was something that they'd been wanting to do and they'd been talking about it for weeks. So just asking that question made it come into a reality. So I would just say, do something simple. Ask your family and friends for a couple of things that we want to get done. And make that the start of some really good things this year.

**Jennifer:** We call that in our family the bucket list. And it's fun! We do it every season. What's the bucket list for fall? What's the bucket list for winter? It's also fun to do in your workplace. What do we want to have—where's the pleasure of play in our work? If we were to have a bucket list in our work, what fun thing would we like to have come true in this quarter? And that could be part of what you're striving for as well.

**Jeff:** Absolutely. I think for us, we had put on, we might go play some golf as a team this year.

**Jennifer:** Absolutely. That'll be fun when I'm playing, it's always a party because it's a lot to laugh at.

**Jeff:** We'll make sure we laugh about that. And then we go on a quarterly basis are going to try to go to lunch together as a team and put that in our strategic planning day. So I hope that you've gotten some really good tips for the day. As we look to the course of this upcoming show, just a few things to look forward to—we're going to have folks like John Hagmaier back on the show who's been an entrepreneur and some ideas that he had.

Folks from the Arbinger Institute, Outward Mindset. We'll talk to them about how we keep our mindset in the right space as well as some time management tools and tips. I'm also working to try to get a person that's in charge of entrepreneur center at VCU on our show as well as some other best practices throughout the course of the year. So those are some upcoming weeks.

So I really appreciate that you've been with us today. You've been listening to *Illuminating Leadership* with Jeff Smith and Jennifer Owen-O'Quill. If you want to connect with us during the week, reach out on Twitter @JMUJeff or on Facebook at Voltage Leadership. You can always go to our website, VoltageLeadership.com.

You can e-mail me at [Jeff@VoltageLeadership.com](mailto:Jeff@VoltageLeadership.com) and reach me by phone at 540-798-1963. Again, you've been with Jeff and Jennifer on *Illuminating Leadership*. Make it a great 2017 and please, shoot us an e-mail and let us know about what you're trying to work on and we'll keep an eye on you and make sure that you're following your hopes and dreams. Thanks, and make it a great week. Bye, now.