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# My Intentional Year

If you love beauty, it's because beauty lives within you. If you love art, it's because you are creative. If it wakes up your heart, a receptor for it already exists within you. Your soul is drawn to the things that will help you unfold your most precious expression.

— Sophia Ocelli





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Want to know a secret? Goal setting and creating big changes in your life and business does not have to involve some boring corporate-like list of measurable and deadlines.

In fact, for many creative entrepreneurs, that's just the kind of thing that makes us feel stiff and anxious. We look at that list of dates and to-dos and we're instantly overwhelmed with the enormity of it all, so we file it away for "later."

And we all know when "later" is in this sense. It's never.

Yet that's just how we were taught to approach goal setting. We've all heard the expression "A goal without a deadline is just a dream." But sometimes dreaming is what we really need to see a clear path to our destination.

And that's what vision boards are all about.

# Dreaming!

Rather than a bland calendar or spreadsheet with dates and impressive sounding goals on them, vision boards give you the creativity to let your dreams grow.

*Which is more inspiring to you?*

This:

- 7/30/15 – new podcast launched.
- 8/30/15 – Kindle book to editor.
- 12/31/15 – build mailing list to 10,000.

Or this:



You see, most goal-setting programs focus on the intended outcome. What is the result you want? And while that's perfect for a business plan, it's really not the best way to keep you inspired and motivated day in and day out.

For that you need to know how achieving your goals will make you **feel**. And that's the real power of a vision board.

# What exactly is a Vision Board?

The most basic definition of a vision board is just this: It's a collection of images, quotes and symbols that have meaning to you and which bring out feelings of joy, peace, love and happiness. They represent your dream life.

Vision boards come in many different formats, both digital and physical. We'll talk more about that later, but for now, let's take a look at the types of content that make up vision boards.

## Images

By far the most common item to find on vision boards, images can be photos, drawings, mind maps, sketches or anything else that has some meaning for you.

For example, if world travel is one of your goals, you might include photos of historic landmarks you want to visit, or airplanes or ships (imagine the feeling of freedom associated with those). If you dream of retiring young, then a photo of you and your family relaxing on the beach will serve as a happy reminder of what life will be like when you no longer have to work.

## Motivational messages

You've seen those motivation posters that say things such as, "Challenge: Always blaze the trail; never follow the path." For some people, these messages can be extremely powerful. When you face a rough patch, simply remembering that phrase can be enough to get you fighting again.

Your vision board might include messages you see posted on social media, phrases you read and jot down in your journal, or even testimonials from your clients or nice things others have said about you.

## Inspiring quotes

Inspiration is different for everyone. For some, the greatest source of inspiration is the Bible. For others, words of encouragement from industry leaders or historical figures is uplifting. You can have fun with these, too. Maybe your best inspiration comes from the notes inside a Dove candy bar or a fortune cookie. Whatever makes you smile or brightens your day is a good fit for your vision board.

## Everything else

What else inspires or motivates you? The blue ribbon your grandmother's quilt won at the state fair? A small vial of sand from that secluded beach you'll retire to someday? Your daughter's baby shoes? Vision boards can include these treasures as well, you just might have to be a little creative when it comes to adding them.

We'll talk about the materials for creating a vision board in a later section. But first, let's look at the reality of how vision boards can change your life.

# The Power of a Vision Board

Whether or not you're a fan of the bestseller, *The Secret*, one thing is undeniably true: That which we focus on we attract more of. If you spend all your time worrying about money, it seems to slip right through your fingers. If you obsess over your weight, the pounds stubbornly hold on. And if you daydream about relaxing in the Caribbean sun, well, you're a lot more likely to find yourself on a beach chair in the near future.

This isn't some airy-fairy make-believe, either. We've known for decades that daydreams have power, and that purposeful visualization is the key to greater success in every area of life.

Top athletes practice endlessly, not only on the field, but in their minds. They actually see that perfect shot, winning race, or stunning backflip. They concentrate on the minute movements that make it possible, how their muscles will react every second, and how they will feel at the end of a stellar performance. This type of visualization creates neural pathways that are virtually indistinguishable from those caused by completing the act itself.

**The result?** Nearly the same as with actual, physical practice.

It works the same way for you. When you visualize your ideal business, your happy home life, your dream vacation, and even your biggest income goals, you're primed to achieve them.

And you'll meet those goals much faster and with fewer stumbles than if you simply list your goals (and deadlines) on a calendar.

Like anything though, effective visualization takes practice. As kids, we spend much of our time daydreaming and playacting, but those are skills we lose as we age. A vision board can help kick start those creative visualization skills again.

Here's another benefit of creating a vision board: It will boost your spirits when you face life's inevitable struggles.

Having a bad day? Spend some time working on your vision board, and you'll feel noticeably lighter at heart.

Feeling overwhelmed? Take a look at your vision board for an instant reminder of why you're working hard now, and what you stand to gain from it.

Struggling to reach a client? Read through some of the beautiful things other clients have shared about their journey with you. You'll be immediately reminded about how valuable you are, and why you do what you do.

But vision boards aren't just for improving your business. They have uses far beyond your monetary goals.



# Vision Boards Work in Every Area of Your Life

Before we get into how vision boards can affect all the aspects of your life, let's take a minute to look at the most common mistake people make when creating them:

## **They focus on the actual goal rather than the result.**

Imagine you have a goal of visiting England. You could express that by simply writing "England" on a whiteboard. But so what? The word itself is unlikely to evoke feelings of joy or anticipation. In fact, the more you see that word, the less meaning it will have.

As a vision board item, it's pretty weak.

Imagine instead, a photo of Stonehenge. The sun is just peaking over the horizon, bathing the scene in a golden light. Thick mist clings to the ground, the ancient structure rising out of it like a circle of ghosts. You can almost hear the voices from 5,000 years ago, as they worshipped their gods, healed their sick, and buried their dead. When you look at the picture, it doesn't just say "England." It instantly transports you there and immerses you in the moment. It's a feeling. Not a goal.

When you create your vision board, regardless of which of life's aspects you're focusing on, be sure to look for images and words that make you feel the way you imagine you'll feel when you achieve your goal. It's not about what you want to have. It's about how you want to feel.

## Business

Business—and the related lifestyle—goals is probably the most common topic of vision boards, and with good reason. Chances are you started your business with the goal of creating a better life for you and your family. It's likely one of your driving motivations, so it's natural to seek out tools that will help you achieve the outcomes you desire.

Vision boards are the perfect choice.

When you're building your business vision board, consider the following questions:

- How do you want your day to go?
- What clients do you want to work with?
- What projects do you love?
- What do you want your typical workday to look like?
- Where will your "office" be?

Look for images and other items that represent your ideal business day, your perfect client, and your ultimate dream job.

# Wealth

Here's another favorite topic for vision boards, and if big financial goals are part of your life plans, it's one area you should pay close attention to.

The reason many people don't reach their financial goals is because we let those negative internal voices hold us back. You know that voice. It says things like:

- "You'll never earn that much."
- "No one will pay you to do that."
- "You've always been financially irresponsible and you always will be."
- "You're just not 'good' with money."
- "They'll never accept that price increase."

We let this voice create our income cap, and unless we take steps to silence it, we will never earn what we're truly worth.

A creative vision board can help. Start by asking yourself...

- What does financial freedom mean to me?
- How can I change the world if I earn more money?
- What charities will I support when I start earning \$xxx?

Then find the images that represent the feeling of fulfillment and joy you'll have as you're able to achieve these goals and more. Maybe that's a photo of needy children your church group helps support, or an animal rescue organization you love. Or maybe it's just a big pile of money so you can retire young and live on a yacht. It's your dream, and it can be anything you want it to be.

The point is, your vision board is the perfect vehicle for finally silencing that negative voice in your head that's keeping you from your financial goals.

# Self-Care

How's your health? For many online business owners, it could be better.

We spend far too much time inside, sitting down, staring at a computer screen. We don't exercise enough. We don't eat right. We don't drink enough water.

How can a vision board help? By making it clear **how much better you will feel** (there's that word again) when you do eat healthy, work out, and are hydrated.

A vision board filled with images of fun activities in relaxing locations is just the thing to remind you—the next time you reach for another slice of pizza—that you're working toward an achievable goal.

## Family & Friends

We don't often think of vision boards as being helpful with building relationships, but maybe that's just because we don't put enough emphasis on setting goals to improve them.

Creating a family and friends vision board just might change all that. Think about...

- What kind of relationships do you want to have?
- What's most important to you as a wife? Mother? Daughter? Friend?
- How do you want your husband to **feel** when he sees you?
- How do you want your kids to **feel** when they're teenagers?

Fill your vision board with items that represent the best relationships you can imagine, and soon enough, you'll begin creating those bonds in your own life.

## Fun

Here's where you can really go crazy. You might not be able to afford an around-the-world cruise (yet) but there's no reason you can't put it on your vision board. No matter what silly, unrealistic adventure you're dreaming of, create it on your fun board.

## Big Scary Goals

Here's where many of us falter. Maybe you have a few goals. Say you want to increase your income by 15%. Or run in a 5k. Or vacation in Greece.

These are all fine, respectable goals, worthy of your vision boards. But what if you turn them up a notch...or three?

- Instead of increasing your income by 15%, increase it by 150%.
- Rather than running a 5k, run an ultra-marathon.
- Instead of a vacation in Greece, move there.

With your vision board populated with meaningful images, thoughtful and motivating quotes, inspirational messages, and plenty of creativity, even these big scary goals suddenly feel much more attainable. And you know what? As we said earlier, that which you can visualize, you can achieve.

So don't be afraid to start a vision board for your biggest, most intimidating goals. You might not get there tomorrow or even next month, but if you keep your focus, you will get there.

# Tools and Materials

So now that we know what a vision board can do for your future goals and your present state of mind, let's talk about the actual building blocks.

Creating a vision board can be as simple as cutting photos out of a magazine and tacking them up on your office bulletin board, or it can be as complex as a hand-made frame with personal photos and trinkets.

- Digital: Created with software designed for the task, or with Photoshop or some other image-editing tool. Ease of use is the obvious benefit with this kind of vision board, because you can quickly add and edit your board.
- Physical: Paper, bulletin boards, whiteboards, or even a wall in your home with hanging pictures. Your creative options are endless here, but your vision board will obviously be less portable.
- Mobile: Created on an app made for tablets and phones. The advantage here is that you'll have your vision board with you everywhere you go.

## Have Fun with It

Remember when you were a kid in art class? Your vision board materials can be just as much fun—especially if you're creating a physical board to hang on your wall.

Start by gathering up a selection of materials to work with:

- Swatches of fabric and ribbon
- A stack of old magazines (hit up your local library for their outdated copies)
- Colored pencils and markers
- Construction paper
- Poster board
- Crayons
- Glue and tape
- Scissors
- Stamps & ink pads

Then begin to flip through the magazines. Resist the urge to get sucked into the articles, and instead, concentrate on how you feel as you see the photos. Do they make you happy? Do you smile at a particular shot? Does it bring to mind a particular goal or dream? Cut out the images that speak to you in some way.



Don't worry about organizing them or categorizing them at this point. For now, just make a stack of images that have meaning for you.

Next, take your board—and it can be a single piece of paper, a full-size poster board, or even the bulletin board in your office—and begin arranging your images, quotes and other materials.

You can have a single board with areas devoted to each aspect of your life, or a different board for each. Your board can be a hodgepodge of random images, or a carefully laid out plan that progresses naturally from one to the next. It can be color coordinated or not. Ultimately, it has to please no one but you, so let your creativity flow.

Don't be afraid to use your pencils and markers to decorate your board, draw attention to certain images, or divide it into distinct quadrants. You can add dates and dollar figures if you like, or the names of people you want to think of as you work with it.

Most importantly, just have fun.

## *Creating Digital Boards*

For those of us who love computers and the speed and efficiency they give us, digital vision boards are just the thing to get your creative juices flowing.

Digital boards have the advantage of being portable, so you can enjoy and be inspired by them anywhere. Plus, they're easy to recreate and reimagine as your goals, dreams and values change.

And let's face it—they're a good deal less messy than the physical kind.

Ultimately, it doesn't matter how you create your vision board, it only matters that you do create one. (Or more.)

Having this tool in your arsenal makes it much more likely you'll achieve your dreams, as well as virtually ensuring your dreams will be larger than they were before you began your vision board adventure.

Before you begin though, here are the most important things to remember about your vision board.

1. It's yours. There is no right or wrong way to create your dreams.
2. Dream big! Your vision board should not be filled with things that you could easily attain next week. A new cell phone has no place on your vision board.
3. You have to spend time with it. A vision board is a living document, and it will work better when it has your attention for at least a few minutes every single day.

Whether you choose to create a stunning collage of individually framed images you carefully collect over the course of a year, or you build it on your iPad from stock photos, give vision boards a try. You might just be pleasantly surprised at the power they can wield in your life and your business.



# Vision Board Checklist

- I have spent time dreaming and brainstorming about my:
    - Ideal life
    - Perfect business
    - Health & wellness goals
    - Family and relationships
    - Dream client
    - My biggest goals
  - I have chosen the format for my vision boards
    - Physical
    - Digital
    - App or Website based
  - I have gathered the necessary materials
    - Magazines and books
    - Colored pens or pencils
    - Colored paper and ribbons
    - Glue and tape
    - Poster board or construction paper
    - Bulletin board
    - Other items
  - I have cut out images that speak to me from magazines and books
  - I have organized my materials into categories that match my vision boards
  - I have created a beautiful vision board that inspires me
  - I have posted my new vision boards in a prominent location so I can be inspired by it every day
  - I am revisiting my vision board frequently to ensure it still motivates and makes me happy
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# My Intentional Year

OF ALL THE PEOPLE YOU WILL KNOW IN A LIFETIME,  
YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE YOU WILL NEVER LEAVE OR LOSE.  
TO THE QUESTION OF YOUR LIFE,  
YOU ARE THE ONLY ANSWER.  
TO THE PROBLEMS OF YOUR LIFE,  
YOU ARE THE ONLY SOLUTION.

JO COUDERT



# TODAY IS THE DAY

Before you create your vision board, take a few minutes to sit in a quiet spot and answer the following questions. There are no right or wrong answers. Think big – this is your life we're talking about!

What would your perfect life look like to you? Feel like? Taste like? Sound like?

Who is with you?

What have you always wanted to be, do, or have, but you've never started?

Who or what do you wish you had more time for in your life?

What brings you joy and happiness?

What type of person do you want to be?

What would your life look like if everything were working? Be creative!

VISION BOARD

PLANNING

TODAY IS THE DAY

BUCKET-LIST

YEAR:

TODAY IS THE DAY

FAMILY &

FRIENDS

TODAY IS THE DAY

SELF-LOVE

SELF-CARE



TODAY IS THE DAY

WEALTH &

ABUNDANCE

TODAY IS THE DAY

WORK &

BUSINESS

T O D A Y I S T H E D A Y

H O M E

TODAY IS THE DAY

BIG & SCARY

GOALS