



This Is Your Life Podcast
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Michael Hyatt

Michele Cushatt: Welcome to *This Is Your Life* with Michael Hyatt, where our goal is to give you the clarity, courage, and commitment you need to do what matters. My name is Michele Cushatt. I'm your cohost today, and I'm sitting in the studio with Michael Hyatt. Hey there, Michael!

Michael Hyatt: Hey, Michele.

Michele: We are rapidly approaching the end of 2014! Can you believe it?

Michael: I can't believe it. Where has this year gone?

Michele: I know! It has flown by! We only have a couple of weeks left, and as always happens as we approach the end of the year, I do some reflecting on the past year and kind of evaluate how far I've come and the goals I've accomplished and all of that. More times than not, I haven't quite accomplished what I thought I would.

Michael: Well, I had the same experience. I mean, I set out with great goals, and inevitably I failed at a few of them, but I do think it's possible.

Michele: I think it's possible too.

Michael: To accomplish the ones that matter most.

Michele: Well, just to kind of get started on this topic of goal setting, I have a few interesting statistics for you. First of all, 25 percent of people abandon their New Years resolutions after one week. That's one in every four who make a New Years resolution.

Michael: That's right.

Michele: They pretty much abandon them after one week. That's so fast! I think I was surprised to read that.

Michael: I know! In a sense, it wasn't surprising, because I don't think resolutions really work for most people. We'll talk about that more as we get into this episode, but it's not that surprising, probably.

Michele: This was also compelling to me. Sixty percent of those who make New Years resolutions abandon them within six months, so now we're in the majority of those who make them.

Michael: That's right.

Michele: They abandon them within six months, which really confirms what you just said. Resolutions don't really work.

Michael: Probably the rest of them aren't being honest.

Michele: Yeah, probably true.

Michael: Seriously, in reality, I bet it's a higher percentage. I think it's really hard to survey for this kind of information to get the truth.

Michele: Yeah, because people don't want to admit that they didn't do what they said.

Michael: Yeah, exactly.

Michele: Okay, this is even better. The average person makes the same New Years resolution 10 separate times without success.

Michael: That's sobering, isn't it?

Michele: I need to know... Have you done the same resolution multiple times?

Michael: I actually have done that. I don't know if I've gotten as high as 10, but I have seen the same resolution show up on my list for multiple years.

Michele: Like losing 10 pounds or reading more books or whatever.

Michael: Yeah! Exactly.

Michele: We make the same one again and again. It's spending more time with our kids or whatever it may be.

Michael: Whatever it is.

Michele: Which actually doesn't need to be a New Years resolution. It probably should be a daily resolution. But 60 percent do so within six months, and then that average person makes the same resolution 10 separate times without success. Here's another one, specifically about weight and diet, which tends to be a common theme for New Years resolutions.

Michael: This is sobering.

Michele: Five percent of those who lose weight on a diet keep it off.

Michael: Five percent. Sobering.

Michele: They keep it off. Only 5 percent. Ninety-five percent regain it, and a significant percentage gain back more than they originally lost. I can already hear some people saying, "Oh, there you go! I don't need to have a diet this year, because that just proves that it's not going to work."

Michael: No, and this is a huge industry.

Michele: Uh-huh. It is.

Michael: Of course, the first of the year is prime time for people who are wanting to lose weight, probably because of the guilt of overeating during the holidays.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: It's the fresh start, "This year is going to be different," and all of that, but it is sobering to think that 95 percent regain it, and a significant portion gain more than they lost.

Michele: Oh, that's frightening. So we don't want to be that person. When we set goals, when we have something we want to achieve and shoot for, we want to be the kind of people who actually follow through on it.

Michael: Yes.

Michele: We don't want to be the people who abandon ship after a week or after six months or who, heaven forbid, achieve the opposite of what we set out to do, where we gain weight rather than losing weight. So how do we avoid that?

Michael: Well, first of all, I think we have to acknowledge the fact that resolutions don't work.

Michele: Okay.

Michael: There has to be a different way of doing it, and one of the things I started doing about 12 years ago is engage in a very deliberate, very thoughtful process of goal setting. I really believe that goal setting done right works.

Michele: Okay, so now stop for a minute. Are we just talking semantics here with goals versus resolutions? What's the difference between the two?

Michael: No, and we'll talk about this as we go through the content of this episode, but there's a very specific way to construct a goal that helps you ensure that you'll follow through on it, so just to have a dream or an aspiration or a stated intention is not enough. There's a specific format you have to use to

make this happen, and it's one of the reasons why I developed this course that we launched last year, *5 Days to Your Best Year Ever*. I tried to take everything I had practiced and learned about goal setting over more than a decade and reduce it to some simple lessons people could follow to achieve what matters most for them.

Michele: You know, that program, *5 Days to Your Best Year Ever*, had some great results. In fact, I have a testimonial from Lisa Baker from Chicago, Illinois. This is what she said. "I've always been someone who had big dreams for my life. Every year I would set a handful of goals, full of hope for the future, but inevitably, I got derailed and eventually gave up." Oh goodness. I've been there, Lisa.

"In fact, as the New Year approached this year, I had just about decided to quit setting goals altogether, but then I found the *5 Days to Your Best Year Ever* course. For the first time in my life, I had the confidence of knowing I was using a system that actually worked, and I finally had a realistic, step-by-step plan to reach the goals that mattered most to me. Not only have I been shocked by the things I've accomplished, but so have my friends and family. I feel so proud that I'm reaching more of my potential with every passing day." That's quite a testimonial.

Michael: You know, I'm so blessed by those testimonials, and we sent out a film crew around the country and gathered a bunch of these, and this will be part of our rollout for the course this year. But it's incredibly satisfying to see not the people who are these statistics but people who have actually been deliberate and thoughtful and are accomplishing the things that really matter, things that may have eluded them for years or decades. They're actually achieving those.

Michele: Well, a big piece of this course, *5 Days to Your Best Year Ever*, is on goal setting, and today we're going to talk about *the biggest mistakes people make in goal setting and how to fix them*. Because really, those mistakes that are made on the front end in setting the goals are actually what set you up for success or failure down the road.

Michael: Absolutely.

Michele: Let's get started. The very first mistake that people make in setting goals?

Michael: The first mistake is that *they don't write their goals down*. This is huge. A lot of times, people just say them out loud or tell a friend, but they're not really something they write down. Now I don't know if you've heard of this study, Michele, that was done in 1953. It was an MBA study that was done at Harvard. Basically, here's how it's reported. It says 3 percent of the graduating class had written goals. It was back in 1953.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: They tracked these students for 30 years. In 1983, they discovered that those 3 percent, on average, were making 10 times as much as the rest of the class combined. It's a great story, but unfortunately, it never happened. That study was never done. It was debunked by a lot of people,

including Yale University, but there was a study that was done at Dominican University of California by a psychologist by the name of Dr. Gail Matthews.

Michele: Okay.

Michael: She did this study on about 267 participants. One of the things she discovered (this is important and powerful) is that you're 42 percent more likely to achieve your goals just by writing them down.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: There's a power in writing down a goal that begins to give it life and begins to move you toward that goal. A book that I read with my children and my wife several years ago (we actually took it on a vacation) was awesome. It's called *Write It Down, Make It Happen*.

Michele: Uh-huh.

Michael: I don't agree with everything in the book, but one of the arguments the author makes is that when you do write something down, you set something in motion. So it's not like this big kind of thing about setting something in motion in the universe, but you just solidify or make concrete your own intention and begin to focus your own efforts and your attention toward accomplishing that goal. So that's the first mistake people make. It's just not writing the goal down.

Michele: So interesting. I actually have an index card on which I wrote down goals, things I wanted to accomplish. I did this probably six years ago. I was sitting at a conference, and they were talking about goals. I decided to write on this index card, just a 3x5 card, what I wanted to see happen over the coming years. I intentionally wrote down things that seemed too far out of the realm of possibility.

Michael: Good!

Michele: They just really seemed... They were so huge, and I thought, "There's just no way this is going to happen, but I'm going to write it down anyway." As of this coming year, they will all have come true.

Michael: Wow!

Michele: The last one on the list will actually be true. I still have that card. Of course, it's all frayed and everything.

Michael: Yeah.

Michele: It has been in my purse for that long, but I've seen that actually happen.

Michael: I have too.

Michele: Simply writing it down kind of changed the course of my life because all of a sudden they weren't just these far-off things that would never happen but things that, even in just writing them, became kind of the focus, something I was intentional toward.

Michael: It's like you put a stake in the ground, almost.

Michele: Yeah.

Michael: After we read this book, we were on a family vacation, and we all wrote a list of 100 things we wanted to do before we died.

Michele: Uh-huh.

Michael: I went back and recently reviewed that. I put it into an Excel spreadsheet. I know you'd be disappointed if I hadn't, but I did.

Michele: You put it in a spreadsheet. Of course you did.

Michael: It was kind of my bucket list, and I was amazed at how many of those things I had already accomplished even though I didn't have an action plan, even though I hadn't done anything beyond just writing them down.

Michele: Uh-huh.

Michael: So just that act has value all by itself.

Michele: That's great. Okay, so that's the first mistake. They don't write them down. Now we have a whole list of 10. Let's move on to the second one. We have a bunch to get through, so we're going to have to fly.

Michael: We do.

Michele: Okay, the second one?

Michael: Okay, the second one is that *they create too many goals*.

Michele: Okay.

Michael: There's an old Chinese proverb that says, "Man who chases two rabbits catches neither."

Michele: I love that proverb.

Michael: Isn't that a great proverb? But it's true in goal setting too. Sometimes we decide we're going to rehabilitate our lives, we're going to get really serious about goal setting, and we set 20, 25, or 30 different goals in all of these different areas. That's too many.

Michele: Okay.

Michael: My rule of thumb generally is that you need to set five to seven goals.

Michele: Okay.

Michael: That's ideal.

Michele: That was my next question.

Michael: It's difficult for our minds to focus on more than seven, but it definitely needs to be no more than 10, so this forces you to choose and prioritize. You only have a certain amount of attention. You only have a certain amount of resources, and if you divide them between too many goals, you really kind of build in your own failure.

Michele: Mm-hmm. All right. The next mistake?

Michael: The third mistake is that *they only focus on one area of their lives*. It's very common for people to have goals as they relate to their careers.

Michele: Okay.

Michael: But if you're going to be fully expressed as a human being, if you're going to become all that you were created to be, you have to set goals in the other areas of your life. Your health, for example, your spiritual life, your marriage, your involvement in the community, and yes, career goals... All of those different slices of the pie have to be addressed if you're going to experience happiness and meaning as a human being.

Michele: Mm-hmm. Now on the last mistake you were talking about the quantity and how you would recommend five to seven. If you're talking about writing goals in multiple areas of your life, is it five to seven per area or five to seven total and you just divide those up between them?

Michael: No, I say it's five to seven total.

Michele: Okay, so you might have one or two related to your career, one or two related to family, and one or two...

Michael: Yeah, exactly. Yep.

Michele: Okay, got it.

Michael: Yep, and sometimes it's just one big one in my family. I'm making this up, but it could be, "This year, the only thing I really want to achieve is that I want to have a date night with my spouse once a week."

Michele: Okay.

Michael: That may be your only goal, but you realize that in having that one goal, you're going to really move the needle in terms of your family and your relationship with your spouse.

Michele: Well, that kind of leads us right to the next mistake because I was going to ask you... You can't just make a goal that says, "I just want to spend more time with my family."

Michael: Yeah.

Michele: We have to move beyond that, which is the fourth mistake. What is it?

Michael: It's that *people don't make their goals specific*.

Michele: All right.

Michael: This really could be first in a sense, because I see this one violated over and over again. People say, "I want to lose weight," or, "I want a better marriage," or, "I want a promotion." That's not specific.

Michele: Or like I said, "I just want to spend more time with my family."

Michael: Yeah.

Michele: That's not specific enough. I mean, that's a good intention, but that's not specific enough.

Michael: That's right. So here's an example. I might have a goal called "Write a book." But that's not really a goal; it's a dream. But if I say, "I want to finish *The Life Plan Manifesto* manuscript," which is the book I wrote last year... That's the kind of specificity we're looking for. Or you could say, "I want to learn photography." That's too general. But to say, "I want to complete the lynda.com Photography 101 course..." That's the kind of specificity we need.

Michele: Okay. All right. That actually gives you some kind of parameters to move forward.

Michael: Yes.

Michele: Got it.

Michael: By the way, the reason you want it to be specific is that you want to know when you've achieved it.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: If you can't look back on the activity and say, "Yes, I did that. I can check it off my list," it's not specific enough. For example, if you say, "I want to lose weight," well, how much? Five pounds? Ten

pounds? Thirty pounds? You want to be able to cross the finish line, check it off, and have the satisfaction that you've achieved the goal.

Michele: For those of us who are in love with lists, it's very important to check it off the list.

Michael: Yes, it is.

Michele: It's very critical. It gives you that feeling of success. What's the fifth mistake?

Michael: The fifth mistake is that *they don't make them measureable*. What gets measured gets improved, and to be able to measure it is partly an aspect of specificity, but let me give you an example. If I say, "I want to lose weight..." We already said that doesn't have the specificity, but if I say, "I want to lose 35 pounds," I'm going to know when I've accomplished that.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: That's making it measureable. Another example: "I want to earn more money." Well, how much more money? If you said, "I want to convince my boss to give me a 10 percent raise," that would have been a measureable goal. So you want it to be something you can measure, something that's quantifiable, something that makes you able to know when you've crossed the finish line.

Michele: And you also said that about when you made the comment about wanting to go on a date with your wife once a week. That sets a very measurable goal.

Michael: That's right. It's something you can track and something you can make progress toward. Yeah, absolutely.

Michele: Great. Okay, so we've gone through five of this list of the 10 biggest mistakes people make in goal setting. Just to recap, they don't write them down, they create too many, they only focus on one area of their lives, they don't make them specific, and they don't make them measurable. What is the sixth mistake?

Michael: They don't assign a due date.

Michele: Okay, so what do you mean by that?

Michael: Well, you have to have a date by which you're going to accomplish that goal. "I'm going to lose 35 pounds by April 1 [or June 2 or whatever it is]." There are a lot of benefits of deadlines, and I want to give you a few of these, because I think... It's tough because if we put a deadline on something, then suddenly we're accountable for it. You know what I'm saying?

Michele: Well, I think there's a part of me that doesn't want to put a deadline on it, because I can't predict what's going to happen next month or even later this week.

Michael: Right. So you kind of fudge.

Michele: "Well, something may come up, so I don't want to put a deadline on it." But you think the deadline still matters.

Michael: Absolutely, and here's why. There are three benefits. First of all, deadlines create a sense of urgency.

Michele: Okay.

Michael: When I have a deadline, when I realize something has to be done by a certain date, then it's going to focus my attention and it's going to make me work toward that and realize, "I have to get down to business. I have to get in the game if I'm going to win."

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: Second, they balance your workload. You can't accomplish everything at once. When you do deadlines, you may attack some goals during the second half of the year, some in the first quarter, and some in the second quarter, but they balance your workload. The third benefit of a deadline is it helps you prioritize your daily tasks.

Not everything we do every day is important, but we ought to be spending some time moving toward the important and not merely the urgent. The deadline gives us that sense of self-generated urgency as opposed to the urgency that comes from our circumstances and the people around us.

Michele: So if you have something due tomorrow or something for which you set a deadline of Friday, you might work on that to try to tackle that rather than something that doesn't have a deadline for a couple of months.

Michael: That's right. Well yeah, and unfortunately, what happens to most of us is that deadlines are imposed by other people, but we don't put a deadline on the things that are really important, that we said matter to us, so we never get to them.

Michele: Yes.

Michael: There's not that sense of urgency. "My boss asked me to work late this week, so I'm not going to take my wife out on that date that I said was important."

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: But if I have a deadline, that creates that urgency that makes it happen.

Michele: Is it important to set maybe smaller deadlines or due dates, like incrementally? For example, I have a second book that's due in March. That's far away, so there's a sense that that deadline is so far out there, so what I almost have to do is set some shorter deadlines for myself.

Michael: Intermediate ones.

Michele: Yeah, intermediate ones that will help push me forward toward that deadline, because sometimes the deadline that's so far out doesn't have the same urgency that a deadline 30 days from now may have. If I can schedule it out, that helps.

Michael: Yeah. First of all, yes. On bigger projects like that, it's helpful to have intermediate deadlines.

Michele: Okay.

Michael: Sometimes if we're not careful though, it can cause us to over-plan, and it becomes kind of a fancy way of procrastinating. What I think is more important than identifying a full action plan... Again, sometimes that's necessary. If you're building a house... I'm going through some construction on my house right now. I want to see the full plan, but in most cases we don't need that, but what is important is I want to understand what the next action is and assign a deadline to that.

Michele: Okay.

Michael: In your case, maybe it's creating the outline for the book, outlining that chapter, or writing the first two chapters.

Michele: Okay.

Michael: So you don't really need to see the end from the beginning, but you need to at least see to the next step so you can make progress and build momentum.

Michele: Okay, that makes sense. All right. Moving on to the seventh mistake people make in goal setting.

Michael: This is important as well. It's that *they don't keep them visible*. They create the goals, they lose them in their computers, they lose them in their desk drawers, and they just don't keep them visible. If you don't keep them visible, you're going to forget about them because life has a way of coming at you faster than you can process, and you get sidetracked. You go, "Squirrel!" and you're off to something else.

Michele: Yes.

Michael: You're sidetracked by something else and not focused on what you said at the beginning of the year was what mattered most. So you have to keep them visible.

Michele: Where do you put your goals so you see them regularly?

Michael: Well, I put mine in Evernote.

Michele: Okay. Do you actually go to Evernote to look at them regularly?

Michael: Yes. I have a shortcut that's on my Evernote sidebar.

Michele: Okay.

Michael: I have several things that are shortcuts to different notes that are important to me, so I have a note that, in this case, is my 2014 goals. When I click on that, I see all of my goals. Now that's not the only thing I do with them, because I also track them in a task manager, but I want them summarized in one place where they give me this ability so I know what those seven goals that are most important for this year are.

Michele: Is there value in having an actual hard copy somewhere? There are times when we're not always in front of our computers.

Michael: There are?

Michele: Well, okay... For the rest of the normal world, there are moments when we're not in front of our computers. But is there some value in having that written somewhere where you can...?

Michael: I think it depends on your style. You have to use what works for you.

Michele: Okay.

Michael: I've done everything and seen everything from people actually framing them and putting them on their walls in front of them (I've done that from time to time) to creating a vision board so it's really graphic and colored and compelling or, again, making it digital. The thing I love about Evernote (I get nothing for advocating this) is that it's with me no matter what device I have or where I am. It's on my cell phone, on my Evernote account there. It's everywhere I am.

Michele: Mm-hmm. I like Evernote for that reason as well. Okay, the eighth mistake that people make in setting goals?

Michael: *They don't stretch outside of their comfort zones.* The reason why this is important is that very rarely will a goal be compelling enough to you to get you to do anything unless it's outside of your comfort zone.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: If it's just kind of like a small, incremental improvement... Let's say I have a goal, and I'm going to lose three pounds in the next three months. There's just no jazz in that. That's not compelling.

Michele: I could just skip lunch and maybe do that.

Michael: Yeah.

Michele: That's not really a stretch.

Michael: I actually look for three kinds of negative emotions that indicate I'm on the right path. This is a reframing of these emotions.

Michele: Yes!

Michael: You and I have talked about how we struggle with some of these emotions. One is fear. I know I'm outside of my comfort zone when I feel that little *ping* in my heart that says I'm afraid. It's that little bit of, "I might not be able to do this. It might not work out." That's an indication to me that I'm on the right path. Another one is uncertainty. "Well, I don't know how I would accomplish that." Let me tell you something. In goal setting, identifying the *what* is way more important than identifying the *how*.

Michele: Okay.

Michael: The *how* will show up once you get clarity about the *what*, so if you have uncertainty about the goal, that's actually a very good thing because something is going to have to show up in you, in your way of thinking about something, to accomplish it that you're not clear on now. That's an indication that the goal is outside of the comfort zone.

Michele: You know, that's true. As you were talking, I was thinking that's true of taking a trip. We have to find the pinpoint on the map of where we're headed first, and then the *how*, the road, ends up presenting itself.

Michael: That's the perfect analogy.

Michele: Yeah, but if we try to find the *how* without knowing the pinpoint destination, we'll just be all over the place.

Michael: That's right.

Michele: Great.

Michael: Let me just give you the last one. The third emotion I look for is doubt. Maybe I don't have the resources. Maybe I'm not sure that I have what it takes.

Michele: Well, that means I'm on the right track. I just want you to know.

Michael: You're totally on the right track.

Michele: Doubt seems to be always at my shoulder.

Michael: That's an indication that you're onto a goal that you're going to find compelling enough to follow through. I'm not talking about getting psychotic or crazy about it, but it has to be something that is a little bit outside of your reach.

Michele: Yes. Well, because that's really the only way we grow. It's to stretch.

Michael: Totally.

Michele: If we play it safe all the time, we're never really going to grow as leaders, as influencers, or even just as people. It's true of our character and everything else.

Michael: That's exactly right.

Michele: That's great. Okay, so that eighth mistake is that they don't stretch outside of their comfort zones. What is the ninth?

Michael: The ninth is that *they don't make the goals compelling*. This is important because if the goal doesn't compel you, you're not going to put the effort in to accomplish it.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: Compelling goals, I think, are spiritually meaningful, intellectually stimulating, emotionally energizing, or physically challenging.

Michele: Okay.

Michael: It's a little bit like being outside of your comfort zone.

Michele: Can you say those four one more time just to make sure we get them all?

Michael: Yeah. They're spiritually meaningful, intellectually stimulating, emotionally energizing, or physically challenging.

Michele: Okay. That makes total sense.

Michael: Goals that don't motivate you, that are just set out of a sense of duty... I promise you that you're not going to follow through on those.

Michele: Oh no, of course not. There are too many other things competing for our attention.

Michael: There are too many other things. That's why you have to focus on the benefits of achieving a goal. For example, if it doesn't sound that compelling to spend a date night with your spouse, you're not going to follow through. But if you say, "What would it be like if I had a deeper, more meaningful relationship with my spouse, where I am understood, I can say anything freely, and we have this level of intimacy between us?" then all of a sudden you'll think, "Okay, that's compelling to me."

Michele: Okay, that is very compelling. Uh-huh. Even just talking about it is compelling.

Michael: It's just a different way of reframing it.

Michele: Okay. So that ninth one is that they don't make them compelling. What is the final mistake people make in setting goals?

Michael: Well, *they don't identify the next action*. In essence (we talked about this when we were talking about action plans), what I was taught in the corporate world is that you go through this strategic planning process. You identify your goals for next year, and then you develop these detailed action plans. I mean, I have seen unbelievably detailed action plans.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: There is software that was designed to do this very thing. So often, I've seen those action plans, those strategic plans, put into a notebook, put on the shelf, and never looked at again. They're just too complex. It's overwhelming. Again, I want to say that if you're building a submarine or if you're adding on to your house, you may want that kind of specificity and that kind of detail, but for most of us, that's a fancy way of procrastinating. Really, what we need to do is just identify the next action. "What's the next thing I need to do to move the ball down the field?"

Michele: Forward. Mm-hmm.

Michael: Yeah. For me at least... If it's the right goal, I rarely see how I'm going to get there. I don't know how I'm going to achieve it. You've just gone through a book-writing process yourself.

Michele: Yes. Exactly.

Michael: At the beginning, it seems overwhelming.

Michele: Oh, totally. In fact, I think that's why I'm having a hard time diving into the second mistake. It's because I'm looking at the big, huge project and all that needs to be done, and it's like, "Where do I start?"

Michael: Well, now you have the disadvantage of knowing what it takes.

Michele: Oh, yes. I know. Before, I was just ignorant, so....

Michael: I have to tell this story. I remember when I got my first book contract (this was back in 1997), after about 30 publishers had said no. I was so elated, so excited, that literally for maybe 10 seconds, I celebrated, and then I thought, "Oh my gosh! I have to write this book. I told them I could do it, and I have no idea where to start!"

Michele: Yeah, I don't think you're alone in that feeling. It's like, "Oh no! Now I have to actually write it!"

Michael: But I think that's true for most of life.

Michele: It is.

Michael: But if we can identify the next step... I felt less overwhelmed when I was able to identify... I'll tell you that I do almost every book I write now this way. I say, "Okay, I'm going to set up the folder structure on my computer."

Michele: Okay, that makes me laugh because that's exactly what I do.

Michael: Is it?

Michele: I open up Scrivener, and I organize the folders because once the folders are organized...

Michael: It starts getting real.

Michele: Then it starts to get real, and I feel better. It's kind of like organizing my closet.

Michael: Yeah.

Michele: Then I can find things, and... It probably means we're both neurotic, but I do the exact same thing.

Michael: That's another topic.

Michele: Yeah.

Michael: Then from there, the next action for me is to do what they call in the publishing world the *front matter*.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: It's the table of contents, the copyright page... A lot of that is just boilerplate, but I get all of that finessed. Then I'll go through, and I'll set up the title of every one of those files. I'll put a place for an epigraph if I'm going to use that. I'm just kind of framing together the structure. I'm not really doing any writing yet, but I'm starting to get some momentum.

Michele: Well, just taking the next action is sometimes what kind of starts the creative process and everything else. Again, going back to the map and the pinpoint... After taking the first few steps, then you can see the path clearly enough to take the next few steps.

Michael: That's the hardest part, right?

Michele: Yes.

Michael: The hardest part of running is not the running. It's getting out of bed.

Michele: Tying on the shoes.

Michael: And tying on the shoes.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: Back to the book thing again. I always encourage authors (I do this myself, and you can do this with nonfiction, not fiction)... I write the easiest chapter first. That may be chapter 12 in the book, but I want to get the sense of momentum. What I don't do is start out with the hardest chapter.

Michele: No.

Michael: That's like a rock too big to push.

Michele: Yeah, not a good idea. I love this. I think this tenth one is probably the one that's most transformational to me right now, this idea of just the next action.

Michael: Yep.

Michele: You don't have to see 10 or 100 miles down the road but just the next step.

Michael: Well, I think that for most goals that we take on, it's not the goal that's so daunting. The real battle is between our ears. The real battle is for our thinking.

Michele: I call it the committee in my head. Oh no, did I just reveal too much? It's all of the people talking in my head.

Michael: I have that committee too. It's multiple voices.

Michele: Yes.

Michael: I think the people who really achieve big things (this has been my experience, and it's definitely true with every goal I've taken on)... I have so much doubt. That committee is so loud sometimes in my head. We're going through a launch of a product right now as we're recording this, and all this morning I've been battling the committee in my head.

Michele: Uh-huh.

Michael: But I know that if I just stay in the game, if I just take the next action... What's the next most important thing? If I'll do that next most important thing, most of life has a way of working out.

Michele: That is so true. It all comes back to this whole idea of goals again and why it's so important that we don't just have these big, nebulous dreams out there but we actually translate that into tangible goals that we write down. It gives us kind of a plan for where we're going. It helps us to focus and live intentionally, which is what this podcast (and your blog and everything) is all about.

Michael: Yeah. Well, that's why this topic is so near and dear to my heart. It's because I really do want to empower people with a process that moves them toward the things they want out of life. Just one final thought (or near final thought, because I know you always ask me at the end)... Happiness really isn't in getting more stuff or necessarily in achieving things. It's really in making meaningful progress toward the goals that matter. If we have a sense of progress, that's what brings happiness to our lives.

Michele: So true. Now we are getting ready to launch *5 Days to Your Best Year Ever*. It has been completely revamped. I mean, it's better than ever before, so to those who were part of it this past year and enjoyed it, it's even better now, right?

Michael: Yeah. We got feedback from the thousands of people who went through the course, completely rewrote it... Well, we didn't completely rewrite it. The basic milestones and building blocks are there, but we completely re-recorded it. I rewrote my part of it because I want to make it more accessible and easier to accomplish.

Michele: Well, the good news is that it's December, and we aren't to the New Year yet.

Michael: That's right.

Michele: We're close, so you have time to get started on this now, which is really brilliant. We don't want to wait until January 1 to do this.

Michael: That's right.

Michele: We really want to get a head start. Why is it important to get a little bit of a head start on this?

Michael: Well, because you want to hit the ground running.

Michele: Okay.

Michael: When everybody else is talking about goal setting, you want to have your goals and be really taking those first few weeks of the next year seriously. You want to take 2015 seriously and realize this could be your best year ever. The only difference between its being your best year ever and not being

your best year ever is your intention and your willingness to follow through with the process. It's a proven process that'll get you there.

Michele: Well, for those of you who are listening, if 2014 did not turn out exactly like you wanted it to (which I understand; not everything goes according to plan), we really want to help turn 2015 into your best year ever, so we'll have information in the show notes for this episode on *5 Days to Your Best Year Ever*. You can be a part of that. We'd love for you to join the family and to join us in this course. I think 2015 is going to be the best yet.

Michael: Oh, I do too. You know what? I enter into every year with that expectation. "How could I make this coming year better than last year?" I want to constantly be improving and making progress toward the things that matter to me.

Michele: Well, if you've enjoyed today's conversation, you can get all of the show notes and a full transcript of this episode at michaelhyatt.com. In addition, if you would rather watch the video than listen to the audio, we also have the video fully recorded at Michael's website. Again, that address is michaelhyatt.com. Do you have any final thoughts today?

Michael: Yeah. You can do this. This really can be your best year ever, and I would just encourage people to go to that website, bestyearever.me, and explore it. See if it's right for you. I think it will be. If you're listening to this podcast, you're the kind of person this was designed for.

Michele: Exactly. Again, that website is bestyearever.me. Well, thank you again for being with us today.

Until next time, remember: Your life is a gift. Do what matters.