

Harness the Planning Tools of Missionaries to Make 2015 Great

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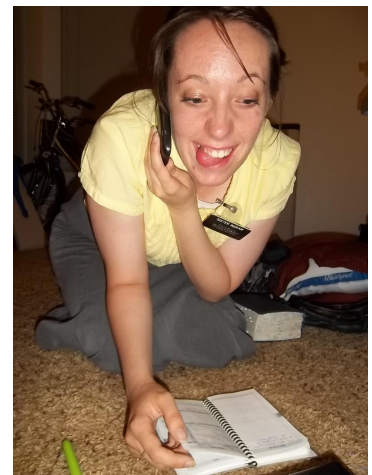
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On April 12, 2013, I woke up in the bedroom I shared with my sister and mother. It was my first morning home from serving in the California Fresno Mission and there were many things I already missed. I missed the vibrant red of the pomegranate-laden trees. I missed the warm sun. I missed my companion. I missed the people.

But perhaps, faced with a day that belonged wholly to me, I really missed my planner.

I now regard the Missionary Daily Planner as one of the best kept secrets of LDS missions. I was an English major so don't check my math, but as a missionary I spent 12 hours a week on average planning. There was our nightly planning session for the next day. There was the time spent reviewing those plans and fine-tuning our lessons the next morning during companionship study. Then there was the weekly planning session every Friday that could take hours.



As missionaries, we knew that “Meaningful goals and careful planning will help you accomplish what the Lord requires of you.”

With hours, weeks, and months ahead of me, I knew the real test of my planning skills was about to begin. Looking back, I failed that test spectacularly. But I've learned a lot in the time since and I'm here to share some tips that will help you harness the planning tools of missionaries.

Make a Schedule and Stick to It. Whether you plan each day out or simply set goals once a month, pick a schedule that works for you and stick to it.

Set Goals. Here are some tips suggested to help missionaries set goals: Follow the Spirit. Measure your progress daily, weekly, and monthly. Be specific and realistic, but set goals that will stretch you.

Create Your Own Key Indicators. Missionaries have numerous key indicators that help them focus on their purpose to invite all to come unto Christ and make sacred covenants. These include lessons taught, investigators at Sacrament, and new investigators found. Create your own key indicators to help you achieve your goals. Key indicators can be seen as ways to measure your effort to reach your goal. An example: If you have a goal to read your scriptures every day, key indicators could include how much time you spend a day reading, when you read, or how many chapters you read.

Share Your Goals and Plans. Missionaries plan with companions and often share their plans with other missionaries. You can plan with your family, your friends, or someone you trust. Let others know about the goals you're setting. Share your successes and account for your failures.

Write it Down. Find a way to record your plans. Whether you have a daily planner, an app on your phone, or a sticky note on your dresser, write down your plans and record your goals. Keep them in a place that is easily accessible and that you know you'll look at.

Evaluate Your Plans. Take time each day to evaluate your plans and make any necessary changes. Always leave room for the Spirit to guide you. If you are not reaching a goal or are having trouble, try to discover what is not working and how it can be changed.

Take Your Plans to the Lord. Goals and plans are most useful when made with the Lord as an active participant. Involve Him through each step of the process. Pray about your goals before you make them and consistently discuss them with Him. The Lord will help you create plans and goals for you and your family that will bring you closer to Him.

Elder M. Russell Ballard, in a talk given to young single adults in 1981, said, "I am so thoroughly convinced that if we don't set goals in our life and learn how to master the techniques of living to reach our goals, we can reach a ripe old age and look back on our life only to see that we reached but a small part of our full potential. When one learns to master the principles of setting a goal, he will then be able to make a great difference in the results he attains in this life."

We hope these tips help you become more productive and help you plan effectively. We'd love to hear what planning suggestions you have in the comments below!