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**Keep Your Eye On the Goal and Go Around the Mule**

**By Roger Reece**

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One of the most exciting activities you can engage in is goal setting. The future is bright and filled with endless possibilities, and by carefully planning a set of actions and milestones you can achieve nearly any goal you commit yourself to.

After you make your plan, the first few weeks are energizing as you see yourself moving toward the goal. Your vision expands and you can feel the positive energy as you visualize the future and your anticipated accomplishments.

But sooner or later it's inevitable that you will face an unforeseen obstacle that seems impossible to overcome. The obstacle may be financial in nature, such as unplanned expenses or a failure to achieve initial revenue targets. It may come in the form of a person or a group of people who stand in direct opposition to your plans. You'll know when you encounter one of these immovable obstacles when you find yourself feeling defeated. It's at this stage that most goals get derailed.

I think of these immovable obstacles as mules. Mules have three key characteristics.

1) They will completely stop your progress. They seem to wait until you're moving full steam ahead, and then step out in front of you to block the path to your goal.

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2) They're stubborn. When you attempt coax them to move, they ignore you. When you try to move them out of the way, they plant their feet and refuse to budge.

3) They don't go away. They seem determined to keep you from achieving your goals.

When a mule steps out in front of you to block the achievement of your goal, you essentially have four options:

1) Abandon your goal. You can rationalize that the goal

isn't really important, or you can simply give up and feel defeated. This is a common response to mules, especially for people who are in the early stages of working toward a goal. Hopefully, you're committed to achieving your goals and have the determination to overcome any obstacle.

2) Wait for the mule to go away. This will generally lead you back to option one, because if the obstacle is truly a mule, it won't go away. Goals, properly set, include milestones and are time-sensitive. The longer you remain in a stalled condition waiting for a mule to move, the more milestones you'll miss, and eventually you'll be forced to admit failure.

3) Move the mule out of the way. This will also generally lead you back to option one, because if it's really a mule, you won't be able to move it. One of the most common pitfalls in attempting to achieve a goal is getting de-focused. Trying to move a mule is a totally frustrating experience, and you'll dissipate your energy in the process. If you want to succeed, you've got to keep your eye on the goal and not on the mule. Remember, your objective is to achieve your goal; not to move the mule.

4) Go around the mule. This is easier said than done, because it's the mule's nature to completely block the path to your goal. Keeping your eye on your goal, you simply concede that the mule is truly a mule and will not be moved. Therefore, you find another path to the goal.

A Case in Point

## Keep Your Eye On the Goal and Go Around the Mule

Last year, my daughter came up with a business plan to set up an art gallery, a dream she had thought about for years. The cost to lease and renovate a space in a prominent location was well beyond her means, but after several months of diligent effort, she found a backer who was willing to invest the money to get her started.

She was so excited! After finding the perfect space, she began working out her goals down to the smallest details. She was finally on the road to achieving her dream. Then, just before she was to sign the lease agreement, a mule stepped out into the road. Her backer backed out of the deal. Without the finances, there would be no art gallery, and after an exhaustive search for another backer she was ready to give up in the face of an immovable mule.

Before the mule had exhausted all her energy and vision,

she began refocusing on her goal, which was to start an art show business. A friend of hers owns a popular night club and offered to let her host an art show at the club on a week night. After a tremendous job of creative planning, she held her first show and completely packed out the club. It was a total success.

She recently finished her third highly-profitable, standing-room-only show, and is well on her way to building a successful art show business without the expense of a permanent gallery. In going around the mule, she found that she could eliminate the need for a major expense and at the same time take advantage of the established clientele of successful night clubs. Today she's more fired up about her goal than ever, and realizes that the mule turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

### Learn to Recognize the Real Mules and Go Around Them

It's often difficult to spot a mule when it blocks the road to your goal. Unexpected obstacles often get in the way, and generally with creativity and determination you can successfully move or eliminate them. But when a real mule comes along, learn to recognize it by its stubborn, immovable nature.

When you initially define a goal, you should attempt to anticipate the obstacles and roadblocks you'll meet along

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the way, and plan accordingly. But once you get started, when you run into an unexpected mule, step back and focus on the essence of your goal. Get creative. Look for high ground and assess the landscape. There may be an even better path to your goal that you've overlooked, and if you can find it you'll have the mule to thank!

Roger Reece is a motivational speaker and delivers entertaining and challenging keynotes, seminars and team-building programs as himself and as down-home countrygeek, Buford P. Fuddwhacker.  
<http://www.fuddwhacker.com>

### **Seinfeld: The Chairs**

**By Alex Reidiboim and Martin Winer**

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Scene 1:

George and Jerry are at the diner having lunch. Jerry eats his sandwich while George stares blankly at the coffee in front of him.

George: I don't approve of coffee.

Jerry: How could you not approve of coffee?

George: Well it's not so much coffee it's that whole Juan Valdez thing. Talk about cruelty to animals.

Jerry: Cruelty to animals? They make coffee out of beans... beans don't have feelings.

George: It's not the beans it's the donkey.

Jerry: The donkey?

George: Yah, have you noticed on the coffee package that Juan Valdez's mule doesn't look very happy?

Jerry: I don't want to know how you can tell when a mule is happy... Hang on a second, you drink coffee all the time.

George: I am in to passive resistance. I enlighten others as to the ills of our society hoping that they will do something about it. This is my niche in life.

This unaired Seinfeld script is an example of the comedic writing skills of Alex Reidiboim and Martin Winer. For any comedic writing needs, feel free to contact [alex.reidiboim@utoronto.ca](mailto:alex.reidiboim@utoronto.ca) or [martin\\_winer@hotmail.com](mailto:martin_winer@hotmail.com)

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