

# What People are Saying About *BIG GOALS...Short Deadlines*

Mickey Straub has done things that a lot of us have only dreamed of and has outlined his strategy for success for you in *BIG GOALS...Short Deadlines*. Twenty years ago, I met this guy in the gym and now Mickey is a good friend and my mayor. I'm in his corner!

**Bo Jackson**

*Former 2 Sport All-Star*

*President/CEO, VEJ Holdings LLC*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

*BIG GOALS...Short Deadlines* is a must-read. Learn from it and put it into action in your own life. The book showcases what you can do, if and when you put your mind to something, regardless of the degree of difficulty. To see 50 capitol in 50 days is remarkable because of the enormous time investment and intricate logistics. Not only did he accomplish this, but the findings he uncovered were remarkable.

I coach champions for a living and Mickey Straub is the epitome of a champion. His unwavering self-discipline, concentration, optimism, relaxation, and enjoyment regarding this trip and the writing of this book are Zone worthy. Read his book and leverage his wisdom and knowledge.

**Jim Fannin**

*America's ZoneCoach®*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

*BIG GOALS...Short Deadlines* is one of those books that truly captures "IT ALL."

Told in an easy-to-read story of one man's journey, the lessons on setting goals, forming habits, priority management,

establishing values and obtaining results come shining through. It is rare when such large and complex topics as goals, country, spirituality and patriotism can all bleed harmoniously into one.

Mickey is a dear friend with great wisdom, great heart, and a great story. All who read this book will benefit in their career and life.

**Edward Deutschlander, CLU, CLF**  
*CEO, North Star Resource Group*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

What makes this so incredible is that Mickey Straub did not just travel to 50 capitol buildings in (less than) 50 days, he laid out his plan according to the foundation of his deeply-held philosophical and faith values. Certainly, he is the only person in history to deliver and contemplate Lincoln's Gettysburg Address in all 50 capitol buildings.

As such, we should give his advice consideration because there is no other person with the wisdom of his perspective.

**John D. Morris**  
*Director, Ronald W. Reagan Society of Eureka College*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Mickey Straub masterfully sets goals and manages the activity required to accomplish them. By sharing his adventures through the 50 Capitols in 50 Days trip, he has given us a front row seat to his success and the perspective necessary for personal growth and accomplishments. His exceptional understanding of how people learn and apply knowledge transcends industries. Thank you, Mickey, for sharing your wisdom and experiences with us in *BIG GOALS...Short Deadlines*.

**Daralee Barbera, CFP, CMFC, CLF, ChFC**  
*Managing Principal, Waddell and Reed*  
*GAMA International President 2014-2015*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

“You can get there from here” might be a proper paraphrase for the philosophy of author, mayor, businessman, and patriot Mickey Straub.

His new book *BIG GOALS...Short Deadlines* is a road map, not just of his physical journey to 50 state capitols in 50 days, but to positivity and the process of the goal planning and visualization that made it possible. I recommend this book to anyone who has a dream or a burning goal and needs some well-experienced tips on how to move forward.

**Jim Peterik**

*Grammy-winning songwriter of the #1 motivational anthem of our time: “Eye of The Tiger”*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

During his 50 Capitols in 50 Days, Mickey has applied the same tools and philosophy he had been using the past two decades to help financial professionals accomplish their goals. His inspiring journey is a practical application of the tools, habits, measurement, and focus needed to achieve your goals and dreams. This book is a must read and the missing link to execution!

**Joey Davenport**

*President, Hoopis Performance Network*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

If you want to tap into your full potential and start really achieving what you are capable of in your life, then you must read this book. Mickey has cracked the code of what it takes to get you to play your “A” game on a consistent basis.

**Machen MacDonald**

*#1 Bestselling Author, Provoking Your Brilliance  
Founder ProBrilliance Leadership Institute*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Mickey Straub has written a good book on how to accomplish big goals and short deadlines with a patriotic and spiritual message. Read the book carefully and you will gain insight into some of the success strategies needed to achieve your goals. Remember to “measure and monitor what matters most.”

**Garry D. Kinder**

*Chief Executive Officer, Kinder Brothers International*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Mickey’s personal journey of 50 Capitols in 50 Days provides an example of what is possible when you follow your heart. In this book, Mickey offers a glimpse of the possible and attainable if you apply certain disciplines.

**Jon R. O’Neal, CLU, LUTCF**

*Chartered Financial Consultant*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

This book is exactly what more Americans need today: good common sense ideas they can use.

**Steven J. Fedewa**

*Vice President, Knights of Columbus*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



# **MICKEY STRAUB**



**SAM, Inc.**  
*Burr Ridge, Illinois*

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# Preface



*"It is the homestretch, not of a ball game, but of a trip. If you are not a sports enthusiast or a traveler, you may want to consider it the end of an intense project or the near-completion of a mammoth goal. In my case, for me, it has to do with a trip, an incredible trip, many others, including myself, thought may be unachievable. It has been an amazing trip that has brought out the best in people, especially in me; I have seen it firsthand. It has also been humbling, extremely humbling.*

*When I woke up this morning, I had the usual thoughts: Can I still succeed? Where am I? How far is there to go? What do I have to do today? How many hours of sleep have I had? And, the big ones, "Will I have the energy to finish?" and "Will it really matter?"*

Those words were written by me when I was in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, while sitting on a couch early that foggy morning looking out over that magnificent lake by the same name. It was day 39, with 44 capitols behind me. I continued:

*"It's undeniable that this stretch, this calling up every ounce of energy, power, and fortitude that I can muster, is making a difference for me and on me. But the real hope*

*that I have, the real driving force for this trip, this metaphor in life, is that it will make a difference in other people's lives. That gives me energy. Sure, I can do things to make me happy and that will get me going. But the real excitement that I get is from making other people happy or the feeling that I am making a difference in other peoples' lives."*

It was never my intention to write a book on how I was able to achieve my goal of visiting 50 capitols in 50 days. But the realization that the very strategies and techniques that were used to build our company and serve our clients for many years were the same strategies and techniques I needed to succeed on this journey. It was an accidental, yet life-changing discovery!

It was day two in Vermont when it hit me that if I was not extremely disciplined and organized, more disciplined than I had been in years or perhaps in my lifetime, then I was going to fail! Then came the realization, the honest reflection of my recent past, that I had been undisciplined for a long time. It hit me like a ton of bricks! Boy, that was a tough pill to swallow...to admit that I was off course and a bit of a hypocrite, maybe even lazy! But it was a truth that I had to reckon with, and I knew at that moment that I was in trouble.

This was a humbling awakening: I had fallen off-track myself and gotten into some bad habits. I needed to change ASAP and start practicing what I had been preaching or else I would FAIL! I needed to employ the very habits and determination that I had used to build a business and maintain solid and trusted relationships with clients, or the trip would be sunk and all of my efforts and those of others who

helped in this initiative would be wasted. This was an unexpected discovery.

This book was never part of the initial plan. It didn't even enter my thoughts until I serendipitously ended up at the breakfast table overlooking scenic Lake Coeur d'Alene at the home of my wife's college friend whose family happened to be on vacation in Washington State. On my way across the Northwest, we contacted them and they were kind enough to give me their garage code to get into their house just hours before I arrived. It, like so many other things on the trip, just fell into place.

The words just started coming that day and so did the dream of a book, which percolated for a couple of years. I just knew that I had to share the discovery, however accidental, of the formula for success on my crazy journey. This formula for success helped me overcome thoughts of quitting countless times.

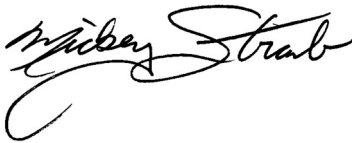
My historic trip to 50 capitols in 50 days proved to me that an effective goal-achievement strategy does exist...and that it can help anyone achieve their goals both large and small! It was like a discovery of a hidden treasure that had been under my feet for years that could help people maximize results, minimize regrets, and get more done in less time. After I returned from my trip, this same strategy helped me achieve a lifelong dream of being elected to public office as mayor of a Chicago suburb. I won the election against all the odds and predictions. It has been an honor to serve the people of my village and it's a privilege to have the opportunity to learn and make a difference.

This book is not about a trip nor is it about an election. Or maybe it is. Maybe it's about *your trip* through life and *your campaign* to realize your potential? It is about the lessons I learned along the way that can be applied to help you accomplish any goal, personal or professional, big or small. Fellow Baby Boomers, this book can help you get one step closer to crossing the items off your bucket list. Don't write them off as impossible! If I can overcome insurmountable odds and internal pessimism to make a dream come to fruition, then so can you!

I am excited that you chose to read *BIG GOALS...Short Deadlines: Success Strategies Inspired by One Man's Trip to 50 Capitols in 50 Days*. It's not just about a trip around the country; it's a road map of a different kind. Now, you get to share in this treasure of personal discovery and uncover the opportunities and life experiences that are all around you!

It was an accidental discovery, but success is not an accident.

To your success,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mickey Straub". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, sweeping underline that loops back under the name.

Mickey Straub

# Acknowledgments



Much of the writing of *BIG GOALS...Short Deadlines* was done at various Starbucks locations in and around Burr Ridge, especially Western Springs, Clarendon Hills, Oak Brook, and Hinsdale, Illinois; though I also made progress at stores out of town, too, like in Lake Geneva and Milwaukee. There's just something about the energy and music of the communal atmosphere and the shared values that I felt from fellow patrons that sparked my creativity and gave me inspiration. Thank you Starbucks!

I also made numerous excursions to two other locations to find privacy and collect my thoughts. My deep gratitude goes out to John Morris, Director of the Ronald W. Reagan Society at Eureka College (Eureka, IL) where I would camp out for a couple of days in their old Presidential Guest House, as well as to Father Tom Koys of St. James Church at Sag Bridge (Lemont, IL) who allowed me to frequently use the rectory for some spiritual uplifting. As a way of showing my eternal gratitude, these two organizations will share in part of the proceeds from the sale of this book.

Let me start out with saying thank you again to my friends and family who bookended this journey, with special thanks

to Jim Long, Sheri Lessig, Chris Faron, and Dick Coan. They were so deeply involved with the planning and execution of the plan, that I doubt either the trip or the book would have been possible without their help.

Some needed encouragement to tell the story after the trip was over was also received from some unsuspecting places. I am so thankful to the preceding mayor of Burr Ridge, Gary Grasso, and my pastor, Father William DeSalvo of St. Isaac Jogues Church and Mike Ellis of Hinsdale Magazine whose enthusiasm helped fuel my own to memorialize the trip and the lessons learned along the way. A year later, I also serendipitously met Emmy Award Winner and author, Glen Aubrey, at the 150th Anniversary of the Gettysburg Address, who encouraged me to write multiple books on the trip and lessons learned. (We are also kindred spirits; Glen has written several books about our 16th President and leadership.)

Thank you also to my good friend and best-selling author Machen MacDonald for his coaching along my writing journey and for ultimately connecting me with the publishing team. From the moment that I went to Tamara Dever's company website for TLC Graphics, I felt like I had come home. She has been a blessing, as have her colleagues, Heidi Sheard and Erin Stark, who edited and formatted every page and made this dream become a reality.

I would also be remiss if I failed to mention my inner circle who I entrusted to give an honest appraisal and candid feedback of the first completed manuscript. Thank you to my two sisters and one of my brothers, Ginny Hahn, Jolly Koebele, and Joe Straub, as well as Matt Baron, Jim Fannin and Tom O'Brien, who helped to make *BIG GOALS...Short*

*Deadlines* the best it can be. I would also like to thank my dear friends Steve Fedewa (Knights of Columbus), Art Heiman (AIG), and Jon O’Neal (American National) for the role they played in the trip and in encouraging me to write about the role that activity management can play in goal achievement.

No words can sufficiently express my love for my wife, Charmaine, and my appreciation to company staff for the countless times they all allowed me the time and flexibility to go and write this book. Their support and understanding made it possible for me to invest the time and effort to process, document, write, hone, and re-write what is contained within. There was just something that told us all that these lessons had to be shared.

There were so many people who told me during the trip, “God has His hands on you.” Well, it appears that He still does. Thank you, Lord, for making this all possible. As I reflect on this life-changing trip done for love of God and country, I am deeply grateful to all the people who I met along the way to make this journey possible and for all the unsung heroes.

I would like to give special thanks to my sister, Jolly, and dedicate this book to her. She has always been my biggest cheerleader. I still have the picture that she sent to me back in college with the image of the Norman Rockwell painting of the little girl with a black eye outside of the principal’s office with the caption, “I’ll be there to cheer for you.” During the 50 Capitols trip, I spoke with her virtually every night and doubt that I could have gotten through it without her daily encouragement and caring spirit which she shared

even while in the midst of her own personal and financial challenges. It is no surprise that my sister's birth name is really "Mary" Jolly, considering the joy and selflessness she exudes, even in the face of adversity. Jolly, your selfless nature never ceases to amaze and humble me.



## CHAPTER ONE

# The Journey Begins



As Americans, we are encouraged to dream from the moment we are born. From movies to television shows to commercials, it's as if we are being trained to dream. We grow up reading about dreams in childhood books, hearing about dreams in school, and seeing examples of dreams in movies: simply click your heels, wave a magic wand, or don a superhero costume and *voila*... your dreams can come true!

Our country itself is a classic example of a success story and an unlikely one at that. Built by men and women who had little more than “a dream of freedom and independence,” our forefathers fended off the superior arms of their enemies and beat the odds in order to build the foundation for what Abraham Lincoln called, “The Last Best Hope of Earth.” Dreaming is part of the fabric of our nation.

Have you ever dreamed of success or wondered if a secret to success really exists? Is there a key or combination that, once discovered, could virtually guarantee that the opening of the floodgates of prosperity would flow into your lap? How about a formula for success or a series of steps that, if

followed, could assure your success in achieving any personal or career goal, New Year's Resolution, or something on your bucket list? I would be surprised if you did not.

For me, I have wondered and sought out the secrets of success since childhood. That was, perhaps, a bit of luck because what I learned during my formative years would form the foundation for what I would attempt in my fifties. Known to many as America's Zone Coach, Jim Fannin said this about my trip, "The 50 Capitols in 50 Days trip was a 'daunting task' that most human beings would not undertake!" And that it was.

Dreaming about it for years, I made every excuse for why it wasn't the right time, whether it was personnel issues, cash flow, or the potential \$20,000 expense. Once launched, I thought about the pressures back at the office constantly, and I tried to manage from afar while fighting back fatigue. I questioned myself almost daily, especially in the mornings when I woke up exhausted in a strange bed, in a strange town wondering if I had the strength and resolve to carry on. It was the toughest thing that I have ever tried to accomplish physically, financially, and emotionally!

Looking back, the preparation for the trip didn't just start three months before the trip, but long before that. As I mentioned to a good friend and noted in my journal shortly before departure, "I feel like I have been training for this for years."

Searching for the keys to success and reading "How to" books was a part of my life even as a teenager thanks to my brother, Joe. Memorizing quotes from my parents had a profound impact on me as a kid, many of them I repeat to this

day. Looking for the best, most efficient way to do something always made sense to me. With five older brothers and sisters, all of whom had been a mentor and hero to me at one time or another, I recognized from a young age the benefits of learning from the experiences of others, from those who have already been down the path that I was seeking.

When my business fell off-track early in my career (while in my thirties) and after a few other wake-up calls, I had two choices: to give up and accept it or to go out and seek the answers from people who have already been down this path. I chose the latter. What I set out to find were the secrets to success. What I also needed was the confidence to know that when I found them, that they would be effective for me!

My original motivation to find success in my career was pretty selfish in nature; I needed to turn my business around. I was fueled by optimism and personal drive. But, then came some external motivation when one day, I opened up the “Frequently Called Numbers” page in my phone directory and noticed that eighteen out of twenty names had been “whited out” and written over. Ninety percent of my closest and most trusted colleagues were gone from the company! Using a quote from the Apollo 13 Space Mission, I thought to myself, *Houston, we have a problem!* (For you young guys, you may need to Google “Wite-out,” the Bic brand correction fluid or white paste applied to paper to mask written or typographical errors.)

After talking with one of the newer sales reps, Vinnie, I learned that I was not the only one who had sought help from management and hit similar road blocks. My goal to find the best practices that could help my peers build their businesses

intensified. We needed to figure out a way to increase productivity and lower the astoundingly high turnover of 85 percent in the first four years of someone's career in our industry-at-large. Then, my focus widened to include managers because while some may succeed alone, most will fail alone and nothing takes the place of good leadership.

Knowing that success leaves clues, I sought out and researched the most successful people that I could find, study, meet, or read about. I became a voracious reader and studied many of the greatest writers in the last century, like Og Mandino, who wrote seven inspirational books including two of my favorites: *The Greatest Salesman in the World* and *The Spellbinder's Gift*. I read books like Stephen Covey's, *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* and *Principled Centered Leadership*. I re-read several others including *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill, *The Strangest Secret* by Earl Nightingale, and *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie.

I found nuggets of wisdom in so many books, parables, conversations, and even in articles like the one about singer John "Cougar" Mellencamp who was going through a bit of a metamorphosis of his own. In an attempt to grow up a little (my words), he chose to drop his middle nickname that reflected his younger, wild side (my words). The thing that really stuck with me was that he committed himself to a "lifelong self-improvement course." I liked Mellencamp's philosophy so much that I decided to adopt that phrase for myself. I was embarking on a journey of lifelong improvement.

Becoming a distributor for Nightingale/Conant Corporation, the pioneer in self-help audiotapes, I turned my car

into a “university-on-wheels” to learn as much as I could, as fast as I could. It helped that, as a salesman who was on the road a lot, driving 30-40,000 miles per year, I had plenty of time to listen, learn, and reflect.



## CHAPTER TWO

# Time Management is a Misnomer



During my search for the keys to success, I spent long hours researching, listening, studying, and attending seminars. There was one thing that came to the surface repeatedly and I suspected it could have a big impact on my business and in my career: *If I could just manage my TIME better . . . I would be more successful!*

When you think about it, we all have the same amount of time: 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, 12 months and 365 days or 8,760 hours of time every year to seek our goals and do whatever we wish. Some people seem to flourish while others flounder! *Why is that?* And though the same thing could be said for virtually any profession, in my world of sales, the disparity in income was huge with some earning five to ten times more based on the same amount of time and what appeared to be similar effort.

I became convinced that the key to success, both mine and others, had to do with how well each of us managed time, so learning how to better manage my time became my top priority. I studied practically every one of the latest time management tools available in those days like Day-Timer, Day Runner,

TIME Systems, Priority Manager, FranklinPlanner, and others. I considered myself a student of time management, while I'm sure my close friends and family thought of me as a time management junkie! Luckily "time management" was the big rage those days and that enabled me to read, study, attend seminars, and quiz many of the users of the various products on the market.

Day-Timer was the first time management system that I started using in my career. The fact that the manufacturer was headquartered in my birth state of Pennsylvania helped me feel a special kinship to the product. I welcomed being reminded of friends and family, but kept my eyes open for other alternatives. After a year or so, my sister, Ginny, introduced me to the FranklinPlanner which her company had just implemented. After Stephen Covey joined forces with them to become FranklinCovey, it really catapulted them ahead of their competitors at the time, so I tried their planner. The company grew quickly and even made substantial investments in case studies, training and research, and development of time management software which was just starting to become more widely accepted in the sales industry. I always remembered the results of one of their studies on this subject which I was told concluded that there was a better connection between the mind and the pencil, than the mind and the computer.

My journey of researching and trying various time management products continued. After a sales call one day, I accidentally ran across another product called TIME Systems. I attended their seminar, which helped me learn even more about establishing disciplined systems and managing



the sales pipeline which were paramount to increasing business and ideas that I would use later in my career. All of this, of course, was done in an effort to control this thing called *time*!

After all that research, testing, and piloting of multiple time management programs over a period of years, I had two major revelations that changed my outlook forever. Here is the first one:

## **You Cannot...Manage Time!**

You might be thinking, *Are you crazy? Sure you can...I have been managing my time all my life!* Time management courses have been taught for years. Countless books have been written on the subject of time management. They are household words and yet seems allusive to nearly everyone. Am I saying that you cannot manage time?

Actually, yes, that is exactly what I'm saying. You cannot manage time! Just try it. Is there anything you can do to speed up or slow down the hands of time? No. Can you save it up, store it, or trade it with anyone? No. Can you beg, borrow, or steal time? No, you cannot! You can't stop or start it, buy it, sell it, lease it, or rent it, and you certainly can't manage it...at least not in a literal sense.

The reality is that you cannot manage time...all you can do is spend it!

This led me to my second and equally important revelation: If you cannot manage time, then what can you manage? To get my business back on track, I asked myself: *How did I build my business and acquire clients when I started*

*my career?* Looking back, it wasn't because of how well I managed my time; it was because I managed my activities well. What kind of activities? It was specifically my sales activities, like the number of sales and client service calls that I committed to making every day. Having clear activity goals and good daily habits was at the heart of what helped me grow my business.

Literally speaking, you cannot manage time. This is my second revelation:

## **You Can Only Manage Activity!**

This is not just a play on words; it is a reality. As Mark Twain said, "The difference between the right word and almost the right word is like the difference between lightning and a lightning bug." Coincidentally, that quote came to mind as I was writing this particular chapter in the library off of the lobby in the Mark Twain Hotel in Peoria, Illinois, with Mark Twain's portrait hanging just above me.

You cannot manage time; you can only manage activity. Whether it's your physical activity at the health club, playing a sport or musical instrument, studying at college or medical school, performing the right sales activities, or any other activity you can imagine, what matters most is not how much time has passed, but what you do during that time.

## **At Best, Time Management...is a Misnomer.**

This concept of not managing time but managing activity became the topic of some of my first motivational speeches.

I can still remember holding up a placard to illustrate this point at a car dealership called Woodfield Ford in Schaumburg, Illinois, in the early-nineties (circa 1993). The dealership may be long gone, but the message is timeless and I still have a white piece of plastic about five inches high and eighteen inches wide with green letters on it that reads:

1957 - 2057

I introduced the concept while holding the old plastic sign at a Saturday morning sales meeting and said, “This represents my birth year. Since my goal is to follow George Burns’ lead and live to be one hundred years old, this could be etched in my tombstone someday! Which part of this sign do you feel is the most important part?” After pausing to let people consider my question, I said, “Is it the year that I was born? Is it the year of my death? Or is it the time in between—the dash?”

Arguably, they are all important. If it wasn’t for the beginning year for any one of us, we would not have been born. That’s when we came out crying and everyone else was happy. And, hopefully, when the final year arrives, the reverse happens. We will go out happy and others will be crying. But, the more important question is going to be: What did we do with the time in between? What did we do in the *dash*?”

What that dash represents isn’t just the years that span the time; it’s the time that spans the years and what you did with that time. The dash represents our activities and accomplishments during our lifetime, whether it’s between

years or hours worked. I would use the same analogy when I would hold up a sign reading “9 – 5” and ask, “What is most important, the time you start work, the time you leave work, or the time in between?” The same principle applies. *It’s all about the dash.*

One of the best lessons about time that I have ever experienced happened many years later in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, at my best friend’s graduation from the MCP Hahnemann University Hospital. As my friend was exiting the stage after receiving his diploma, I commented to his classmate, “It’s amazing to me how he can walk up on stage as Raj and walk off stage as Dr. Ambay! He could have chosen to stay where he was at or do something else for the last five years. He could have chosen to work an hourly job, yet he chose to spend time in medical school. Now he’s a doctor, and his life is changed forever!”

His classmate turned to me and wisely replied, “Yes, *time* will pass anyway.” More profound words were probably never spoken.