

RAFT Leadership Resource – Using a Yearly Theme to Support Your Year

“When your efforts are not directed at a cause or purpose, how will you know what to do day in and day out? How will you know what to say no to and what to say yes to? How will you know when you’ve had enough, when you’ve reached your goal, when you’ve gotten off track, if you’ve never defined what those things are?” – Ryan Holiday, The Daily Stoic – 366 Meditations on Wisdom, Perseverance, and the Art of Living.

Yearly Themes

Once challenge I experience with leadership is not having, or forgetting the intentions of what I, the team, or RAFT are doing. Strategic plans, yearly plans, 3-year plans can provide high level guidance, but I have found that day-to-day the big ideas aren’t helpful. Project plans, calendars, team meetings help organize what is being done, but I find they are missing the reminder of the intention of the project, calendar event, or meeting.

For me having an intention for what I am doing is helpful in guiding me forward. There are many ways to set intentions, but one that I have found super helpful the last few years is creating a yearly theme.

I learned the concept of yearly themes from CGP Grey and Mike Hurley. You can watch their yearly theme video at this link:

<https://youtu.be/NVGuFdX5guE?si=OZ3T38WcFAnWxI8r>

You can visit their yearly theme website here:

<https://www.themesystem.com>

They define a yearly theme as: a broad concept you create to guide you in an ever-changing trip toward the change you want to make in your life (or team, or organization, etc.)”

You can read my original blog post on yearly themes here:

<https://www.raftcares.org/resources/community-blog/yearly-theme/>

And see an example of RAFT’s yearly theme in 2025:

<https://www.raftcares.org/resources/community-blog/raft-2025-the-year-of-community/>

Creating a Yearly Theme

1. Brainstorm focuses or changes you want to make in 2026. If it is helpful use one or more of the following questions to help you brainstorm:

- a. What do you want to change in your life?
- b. What do you want to achieve?
- c. What goals do you have?
- d. Is there something new you want to do or learn?
- e. Is there something you want to improve?

2. Using one word, or a short phrase, summarize what you want your theme to be. Try to make it broad with numerous pathways to success.
3. Write “Year of” and your word or phrase. Here are some examples, Year of:
 - a. Community
 - b. Deepening relationships
 - c. Making good better
 - d. Reading
 - e. Foundations
 - f. Less
 - g. Health

You can find more examples of themes at themesystem.com

4. Write about why this theme is important to you.
5. Write a short description of the theme that reminds you of what you are trying to accomplish with the theme you have chosen.
6. Make a list of ideal outcomes you can measure to know you are making progress on your theme.
7. As the year continues, add more ideal outcomes to your theme as you think of them.

If a yearly theme seems to big, to restrictive, or to big of a commitment you can pick a shorter time frame for your theme:

- The first quarter of...
- The winter of...
- The month of...
- Etc.