

Creating Goals – Goal-Setting Strategies for Leaders

Leadership Development Goals: (Part 1) Are You Part of the 3 Percent?

Do your organizational leaders have clearly defined written goals?

Research shows that those people who actually sit down and write out their goals not only end up achieving them, but have higher incomes and ratings for overall success and life satisfaction.

According to Brian Tracy in his book *Goals!*, there is a study that reveals just how effective written goals can be. Here is what Tracy reports:

Mark McCormack, in his book *What They Don't Teach You at Harvard Business School*, tells of a Harvard study conducted between 1979 and 1989. In 1979, the graduates of the MBA program were asked, "Have you set clear, written goals for your future and made plans to accomplish them?" It turned out that only 3 percent of the graduates had written goals and plans. Thirteen percent had goals, but not in writing. Fully 84 percent had no specific goals at all.

Ten years later, in 1989, the researchers interviewed the members of that same class again. They found that the 13 percent who had goals that were not in writing were earning twice as much as the 84 percent of students who had no goals at all. And most surprisingly, they found that the 3 percent of graduates who had clear, written goals when they left Harvard were earning, on average, 10 times as much as the other 97 percent of graduates all together. The only difference between the groups was the clarity of the goals they had for themselves when they graduated.

Yes, you read that correctly. The 3 percent who had clear, written goals earned *ten times as much* as the 97 percent who didn't have clear, written goals. Almost all successful people have goals, and outstanding high achievers have clearly defined written goals. That said, how come so few people actually write out their goals?

Why Not Set Goals?

There are four main reasons people don't set clear goals and write them out. Many people say they can't be bothered to take the time to sit and write them out, preferring to keep them in their heads. But no one is really that busy, as it only takes a few minutes. The real reasons are probably deeper, involving the fact that if they are kept in "the head," it is easy to change, revise and ignore them. This avoids accountability issues and facing failure. Looking further into the psychological reasons, we find the following four factors:

1. **First, most people don't realize the importance of goals.** If you grow up in a home where no one has goals or you socialize with a group where goals are neither discussed nor valued, you can very easily reach adulthood without knowing that your ability to set and achieve goals will have more of an effect on your life than any other skill. Look around you. How many of your friends or family members are clear and committed to their goals? Successful people are all committed to action plans. They set goals out in writing and follow them.
2. **They don't know how to set goals.** Some people confuse goals with wishes and fantasies. They think in terms of "having a lot of money," "getting a great job," "having a nice family," "getting fit," without breaking these wishes down into their component parts and the action steps it would take.

These aren't goals but wishes and fantasies common to everyone. A goal is different. It is clear, specific and measurable. You know when you have achieved it or not.

3. **They have a fear of failure.** If goals aren't written down, we can change them to match what is actually achieved without having to face any feelings of failure. Furthermore, many people make the mistake of setting goals that are easily attained in order to avoid failing. This is a form of unconscious self-sabotage. They end up going through life functioning at sub-optimal levels rather than at the level they are truly capable.
4. **They have a fear of rejection.** The fourth reason people don't set clear, written goals, is that they fear they will be seen by others as ridiculous if they fail. They don't want to face criticism be seen as not capable or worthy. This is one reason to keep goals confidential when you begin to start out with goal setting, other than sharing with your coach, mentor or a trusted peer.

3 Reasons Your Goals May not Work

Knowing the barriers to successful goal-setting, you are ready to learn how to set goals that will help you succeed and find the satisfaction you deserve. You may already have in mind three important goals for yourself that you've been wanting to achieve for a while. Go ahead and write them down now; save them for review later. Before you can set effective goals, however, you need to consider the three elements listed below:

There are three main reasons why your goals may fail to inspire and motivate change.

1. **The goal isn't valued enough**—you haven't committed your mind *and* heart. It doesn't align with your values. It may be something someone else thinks you should do, or, it may compete with other values you find more important.
2. **Your goal isn't specific**—it's too broad and overwhelming. While “getting fit” is admirable, it really isn't a goal—rather the outcome of attaining the more specific goals of working out regularly, doing sports and eating less junk food.
3. **Your goal isn't supported**—you don't have a coach or mentor to cheer you on in your little successes, or to help you come back after a setback.

Each of these elements must be carefully considered in creating goals that you can achieve. Once you have aligned your goals with your true identity, values and life purpose, you will find them easier to accomplish. The energy will flow, because the goals are an expression of your true self. Then, when you have written down your goals in a specific, clear, measurable way that is time-framed, the small steps along the way will become evident. This also keeps the energy flowing, and helps you to remain focused on the goal.

The best way to get support for your goals is from a coach. Friends and family members may be helpful, or not. A professionally trained coach is an expert at helping you to achieve what you want. He or she can also help you with the goal setting process to ensure that your goals are aligned with your values.

Resources:

Tracy, B. (2003). *Goals! How to Get Everything You Want —Faster Than You Ever Thought Possible*. Berrett-Koehler.

Cairo, J. (1998). *Motivation and Goals: How to Set and Achieve Goals and Inspire Others*. Career Press.

Leadership Development Goals: (Part 2) Strategies for Aligning Purpose, Identity and Values

“Begin with the end in mind,” encourages **Stephen Covey**. When you look at your life, there are so many goals you could pursue. But before you can set meaningful goals for yourself, you need to know where you want to go. If you clearly understand where you want to be, you can make sure your actions bring you closer to that place each and every day.

Corporations spend billions every year on strategic planning. They align their business goals and operations with their mission and values – their core reasons for being in business. Executives also involve themselves in similar planning sessions with their executive coaches. They examine their strengths and weaknesses with their coach, they look at their career and personal goals, and make strategic decisions about where and how to spend their time and energy.

Career coaches do the same thing with individuals. They explore and clarify with you your identity, your values, and your true purpose in life. How can you know what you need to do, where you need to spend your time and energy, if you don't know what is most important to you? This is difficult and important work. And it is hard to do alone. Taking the time to make personal definitions for yourself will make the process of goal setting and staying on track much easier.

Regardless of whether your goals are to finish a college degree, get a better job, buy a home, or lose weight, the process is the same. Goals you set must be consistent with your true identity if you want to sustain your motivation over time.

Here are three essential elements you must consider before writing down your goals:

1. **Examine your identity:** Quite simply, who are you? Self-awareness is the cornerstone to emotional intelligence and so important that this one feature will do more for your success in life than any other social competency. If you know yourself well, you can choose a path aligned with your strengths and weaknesses. You will not get distracted by people, places and things that are not congruent with your true self.

How do you improve your self-awareness? Through working with your coach, doing assessments, examining your attitude, your passions, your self-image, examining your assumptions and beliefs and being willing to ask for and receive feedback.

Avoid defining yourself in terms of external things (job titles, education, family roles, etc.) and look at your personal integrity, ethics, and things that are important to you.

There are several behavior styles and personality type assessments available through your coach. Learning about your own preferred, natural way of behaving and thinking can greatly improve your understanding of yourself. As a side benefit, it also improves your understanding of others different from yourself. Ask your coach about the DiSC, PIAV, Meyers-Briggs, or other assessment tools.

Here are some questions to ask yourself to gain clarity about your identity:

When thinking about myself, what am I most proud of?
How would my friends describe me?
How would my co-workers describe me?
What does my family say about me?
What are the three most important areas in my personal life?
How have I changed over my adult years?
What are my strengths?
What do I avoid or dislike doing?

- 2. Define your values:** What are your most fundamental beliefs? Identify three important moral values that are important to you. The more clearly defined your values are, the more energy and focus you will have for your goals. Values provide the basic structure you need to build your personal life, your career, your business and any other aspect of your life.

Consider your attitude towards other people. Think about your current obligations to your community, family and friends. Reflect on the core beliefs you have that you would want to pass on to the younger generation. If you were to mentor someone, what values would you project as being most important in the world?

Here is an exercise to help define your values. Look over the following list of values and rank each from 1 to 10 (with 1 representing values most important to you). Be sure to add any that are important to you but not on this list.

Security	Wealth	Good health
Relationship with spouse	Relationship with children	Relationship with family
Fame/recognition	Job/career	Power
Happiness	Friendship	Retirement
Owning your own business	Long life	Travel
Respect of peers	Spiritual fulfillment	Charity
Having fun	Sports/fitness	Learning/education
Peace/tranquility	Influence	Integrity/ethics
Artistic expression	Community involvement	Ecology/environment

What are the five values you ranked the highest? Those five values should be receiving 80% of your time and energy. Write down your five most important values on a separate sheet of paper and post them somewhere you will see them every day. This will drive your actions and keep you focused on what is most important.

These values are the foundation of your success. They help you prioritize the goals you set for yourself. Without values clearly defined and prioritized, it is difficult to prioritize goals. This makes it easier to make a choice when commitments compete for your attention.

3. Establish your goals: Goal setting is not easy. It is hard work requiring time and thought. It means soul searching. Fear of failure – and fear of success – can stop people from setting clear goals and interferes with the process of actually putting them into writing.

If you have completed steps one and two – you have examined your identity and clarified your values – then you have already done the hard work. The goal setting should be a natural extension of your values.

If you value good health, then your goals of eating well and exercising regularly follow naturally. Focus on only three goals at a time, in order to be focused. Break each goal down to two or three components, along with specific, measurable, realistic time-frames..

Resources:

Tracy, B. (2003). *Goals! How to Get Everything You Want —Faster Than You Ever Thought Possible*. Berrett-Koehler.

Leadership Development Goals (Part 3): What's so SMART about Goals?

Goals are very exciting and energizing. They drive us to achieve beyond our expectations. They make it easier for us to focus and concentrate, and give us permission to say “no” to distractions. Then dreams really do come true. But unless you spend time to explore, plan and prioritize, setting the wrong goals can lead to disappointment and disillusion. This saps your energy and motivation.

It is crucial that you motivate both your mind (what you think you should do) and your heart (what you value). It is difficult to examine your values, beliefs, and true purpose without a trusted partner such as a coach. Once you have explored with your coach what is really important to you in your life (career, family, community, your values and purpose), it should become clear what you need to do. Your goals are a natural extension of your values.

Goal-Setting is Not for Sissies!

If you have prioritized 3 areas or values in your life, you are ready to set your goals. Three is an ideal number, as more than that can disperse your focus and concentration. You should be prepared to spend time, money and energy on achieving these goals. Remember, *goal setting is not for sissies!* It requires sacrifice. You have to really want to achieve them and be willing to say “no” to distractions.

At this point you're ready to cast those ideas into the form of a SMART goal. A SMART goal is:

- S—specific
- M—measurable
- A—attainable
- R—realistic
- T—time framed

1. Be **specific** when you write down a goal. Narrow your focus. “Getting fit” is not a goal, but an outcome. “Exercising regularly” is not specific enough. Write down things like, “Ride bike 40 minutes four times a week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday).” Start small and start specific. You can always expand goals as you make progress.

Don't try to be all inclusive. Focus on making progress on two or three goals before expanding them. The more you can refine and define, the more specific you are, the easier it is to stay focused. Don't forget to ask for the help of your coach. Your coach can send you email reminders and hold you accountable.

2. Write down your goals and their **measures**. You will need to track the minutes, the days or the number of times you engage in your goal behavior. If you don't complete the originally defined time or measure, write down the minutes you did complete. This will track your efforts and help sustain you when you lack energy or motivation.
3. Make sure the goal you write down is **attainable** and **realistic**. If you know that 40 minutes on the bike will exhaust you, or create stress because of the time involved in showering, changing, or other inconveniences, then change the goal to something easier and more attainable.

Make sure your goal is something you like to do. When you create pleasurable memories when you are engaged in the activity, then you increase your chances of doing it more often. If running on a treadmill makes you think of sweat and dread, then think about the fun you have when you run outdoors with a friend. One person reads books on a stationery bike, and the memory of reading a good story is associated with exercising. Some people find it useful to reward themselves after goal activity, as long as the reward doesn't sabotage.

“No pain, no gain” is true in many areas of goal setting. Remember, if there is too much pain, you will not gain your goal. Make sure you are willing to pay the price of achieving your goal.

By the same token, you need to evaluate and review your goals so that they are not too easy. If you are well on your way to achieving your goals, then you may have set them too low. Try stretching them 10 or 20 percent. If you are not on track, give yourself permission to reduce them by 10 percent. You should review them regularly with your coach and look at issues of alignment with your values. If you are not achieving your goals, you may have picked the wrong goals. People usually do what they want to do, and if you are choosing not to follow your goals, there is a reason that needs to be explored with your coach.

4. Your goals need to be **time-framed**. There needs to be a beginning and an end. This would look something like this: Have a fifteen percent increase in sales by the end of the year. This should be tracked at regular intervals. Furthermore, since sales increase could be a function of number of clients, there might be more specific goals for number of client contacts.

For example, you may have a goal of writing one article a week for your newsletter or e-zine to your clients and prospects. This may mean you need to read two books a month, spend one hour a week of internet or library research, and spend at least an hour writing, editing and formatting each week.

As you track your progress, ask for someone to hold you accountable. Research shows that it is easier to stay on track when you have support and reminders. Your coach is trained and has expertise in this area. Ask for help. You don't have to do this alone.

What to Do When Goals are Incomplete

There are no failures. With the help of your coach, you can review without judgment and look at your shortages. This is where real learning about yourself takes place. The self-awareness that can be gained when you set a goal that you do not achieve is worth the price of admission.

But these lessons are difficult lessons to learn by yourself. With a coach, reviewing the reasons for incompleteness tells us something about our true values, competing commitments, real priorities and gives us invaluable information about *what really matters* to us.

If self-sabotage appears, there are reasons that can be examined. Often there are "old tapes" or outdated assumptions and beliefs that can be re-examined and revised. Our goals bring out limiting beliefs about ourselves. But rather than giving in to them, use your coach to explore them and to revise them into empowering beliefs.

Choosing and planning your goals is hard work. It takes time and commitment. The rewards, however, are great. By aligning your head with your heart you will set meaningful, attainable goals that will help you make progress toward what you truly value in your life.

Working with a seasoned executive coach trained in emotional intelligence and incorporating leadership assessments such as the Bar-On EQ-i and CPI 260 can help you become a leader who develops and achieves significant goals. You can become a better leader who models emotional intelligence, and who inspires people to become happily engaged with the strategy and vision of your organization.

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