

Special Report



Successful Goal Setting

**“If you don't know where you're going, you'll probably not
wind up there.”** **Forrest Gump**

Almost every book, CD or DVD on personal success and achievement outlines the **importance of goal setting as fundamental to achieving success** in any endeavour. You simply cannot go somewhere if you don't know where you want to go.

One of the foremost authors on time and priority management, Dr McKenzie, argues that 95% of people don't regularly set goals. How could someone determine and set priorities and time constraints without having goals? In fact most people drift aimlessly - like a feather blown around by the wind – not getting anywhere, or at the least, not where they really want to go or towards what they want to achieve.

Napoleon Hill (the most famous author on success theory, and inventor of the “Mastermind” concept) outlined the importance of having “definite purposes” as one of the key factors to achieving success. Saying that it is the starting point of all achievement and that its lack is the stumbling block for ninety eight out of every hundred people, simply because they never really defined their goals and made a start towards them. Every successful person in any area of life – be it a sport star or a scientist – will testify to having very clear and specific goals. The challenge is that we've heard it so often that we tend to fall into the trap of familiarity. Unless you do it and practice it daily you do not know it. You might know of it, but unless you do it you do not know it.

We can create our future in advance with goals, by literally creating our destiny. We all have goals whether we know it or not. Some people's goals are to pay their bills or just make it through the day. The problem is that most people just have lousy goals. Lousy goals can create a lousy life. Realizing that no matter what your goals are, they are affecting your life everyday you live it. We need

goals that inspire us. Compelling goals have the power to move us. When done properly and specifically, goals transform our lives.

A study conducted in 1953 at Yale University interviewed the graduating class just before they left school. They were asked how many had a clearly defined set of goals with a written plan for its attainment. Only 3% had a clear plan for their lives. In 1973, 20 years later, the surviving class members of 1953 were again interviewed and they found that the 3% that had a set of written down goals seemed happier, better adjusted and more excited about their lives. Another remarkable result was that these 3% were financially worth more than all of the other 97% combined!

Other recent research (*Damon Burton*) has also shown the benefits for people who effectively use goal setting, as they:

- Are happier and more satisfied;
- Suffer less from stress and anxiety;
- Show more self-confidence; and
- Concentrate better.

The power of goals is that they direct our focus. Every great success will testify to the power of focus. In James Allen's wonderful book '*As a Man Thinketh*', he clearly outlines the power of focusing our thoughts on what we do want from life. He says that circumstances does not make the person, but reveals him to himself. We are who and what we are because of the thoughts we harbour. Therefore it is especially important to have goals to direct our thoughts and minds and help us focus on what we desire most for our lives and ourselves. Thoughts are things. As you think so you are and so you will become.

Think of goals as drawing a map: if you know where you are and know where you want to go, even if you do get lost, you will find your ultimate destination, namely your destiny.

In his best-selling personal transformation program, Personal Power II, Tony Robbins urges us to not “get real”, but to “get intelligent”. Where you are today is based on your past experiences. Limiting your future to your past, you will not go anywhere. You need to set goals that are big enough to drive you; to excite you and thus move you forward to where you do want to be instead of just settling for whatever shows up in your life. We need to set goals for how we are going to live our lives in every area - emotionally, spiritually, physically, financially, our relationships and our attitudes. Set goals for the kind of person you are committed to becoming. Something happens the minute you set goals. You become a creator and something clicks. Immediately you change because your expectations of yourself and your life change. You acknowledge to your conscious and subconscious minds that you are not satisfied with where you are.

One of the major motivating factors in human action is that sense of dissatisfaction. To direct our lives we need to use both the positive and negative consequences of goals. Ask yourself what will I gain by attaining my goals? And what will it cost me eventually if I do not achieve my goal?

To cover the important areas in your life, you should set goals in each of the following sectors:

- Family and Home;
- Career and Financial;
- Spiritual and Ethical;
- Social and Cultural;
- Health and Physical; and
- Educational and Mental.

Pursuing things in life is important as it has the power to move us. But more importantly, we need to realize that at the end of our lives it is not the things we

have accumulated that will matter. What will matter is who we became as a person. Realize that we are not really after any “thing” in life but rather the way we think it will make us feel. You don’t want more money but you do want the way it will make you feel - that feeling of freedom, that sense of security, having the time to do what you want to do. Using these feelings, that we are striving for, can help us define the goals we want for our life. It is critically important to know WHY you want something, as the purpose has a stronger influence than the outcome. Purpose is a reason for attaining something and a reason is a motive for action.

Set your goals, regardless of previous “failures”. Start afresh and do it properly. Come from a place of faith and belief and watch your life soar to greater heights of happiness and fulfilment. Above all, enjoy life for it is a gift and live it with passion. It is all out there. The only thing that is required of you is to go and get it and realize that step one is to have a strong enough goal.

SMART Goals

To set goals correctly and successfully, you need to include some ***basic goal-setting related techniques*** into your mindset.

One of the primary, simpler and most comprehensive ideas is to set **SMART goals**. Modern high-level management often use SMART goals and they work just as well for everyone – as well as in your personal and in your working life.

SMART is an abbreviation that will help you memorize the process of creating objectives that are:

- **Specific**: - *Goals and the methods are clearly defined;*
- **Measurable**: - *Objectives are measured numerically;*
- **Achievable**: - *Humanly possible using the required resources;*
- **Relevant**: - *Goals must be relevant to your primary objective*
- **Timely**: - *Goals must be set and acted upon at the right time using deadlines and/or timetables.*

SPECIFIC: Goals should be straightforward and emphasize what you want to happen. Being specific helps us to *focus* our efforts and *clearly define* what we are going to do. Specific is the What, Why, and How of the SMART model.

- **WHAT** are you going to do? Use action words such as direct, organize, coordinate, lead, develop, plan, build etc.
- **WHY** is this important to do at this time? What do you want to ultimately accomplish?
- **HOW** are you going to do it? (Eg: - By...Using...Following... etc.)

Ensure goals you set are *specific, clear and easy*. Instead of setting out to lose weight or be healthier, set a specific goal to lose 2 cm off your waistline or to walk 5 miles at an aerobically challenging pace.

MEASURABLE: *If you can't measure it, you can't manage it.* In the broadest sense, the goal statement is a measure for the project; if the goal is accomplished, then it is a success. Also, several short-term or small increments can be built into the goal to allow measurement.

Choose a goal with measurable progress, *so you can see the change occur*. How will you see when you reach your goal? Be specific! "I want to read 2 books of 180 pages on my own before my birthday" shows the specific target to be measured. Whereas, "I want to be a good reader" is not as measurable.

Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each goal you set. When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates, and experience the exhilaration of achievement that spurs you towards continued effort that is required to reach your goals.

ATTAINABLE: When you identify the goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true. You develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach them. You begin *seeing previously overlooked opportunities* to bring yourself closer to the achievement of your goals.

Goals that are set too far out of reach, you probably won't commit to. Although starting with the best of intentions, the knowledge that it's too much for you means your subconscious will keep reminding you of this fact and will stop you from ever giving it your best.

A goal needs to stretch you so you feel you can do it but only with a real commitment. For instance, we all know aiming to lose 25lbs in one week isn't achievable. But setting a goal to lose 1lb and when you've achieved that, aiming to lose a further 1lb, will keep it achievable.

The feeling of success that this brings helps keep you motivated.

REALISTIC: *This is not a synonym for "easy". Realistic means "do-able."* It means that the learning curve is not vertical; that skills needed to do the work are available; and that the project fits within your overall strategy and goals. A realistic project may push your skills and knowledge but it shouldn't break you.

Devise a plan or way of getting there which makes the goal realistic. The goal needs to be realistic for you at your current situation. A goal of never again eating sweets, cakes, crisps and chocolate may not be realistic for someone who really enjoys these foods.

For instance, it may be more realistic to set a goal of eating a piece of fruit each day instead of one sweet item. You can then choose to work towards reducing the amount of sweet products gradually as and when this feels realistic for you.

Ensure goals are set that you can attain with some effort! Too difficult sets the stage for failure, but too low sends the message that you're not capable. *Set the bar high enough for a satisfying achievement!*

TIMELY: *Set a timeframe* for the goal: for next week, in three months, or by the end of the year. Putting an end point on your goal gives you a clear target to work towards.

If you don't set a time, the commitment is too vague. It tends not to happen because you feel you can start at anytime. Without a time limit, there's no urgency to start taking action now.

Time must be measurable, attainable and realistic.

SETTING REALISTIC GOALS

Setting goals is not that difficult, after all, is it? Except for one area where most people falter. Which is, setting *realistic goals*.

All too often, people set goals that are too high, so they invariably end up not being achieved. Some personal development 'experts' even go so far as to recommend setting goals like your dreams – without limit to either the magnitude of the goal, or the time needed. But what is the point of setting goals if you know you are probably never going to get there? It is just pie in the sky.

Large, but rational and realistic goals, can be handled in another way. If you have one big goal then you have to break it down into smaller parts, or short-term goals. Remember, you will do better if you take baby steps instead of one giant step.

There must be an action tied to each goal. For instance, if your goal was to graduate from college three years from now, the actions tied to that would be to complete the remaining 94 credits you need to complete your degree. You would then plan how many credits you would need to take each semester to reach your desired goal. Furthermore, you would need to figure out what actions you would need to take to support yourself financially while attending school.

Setting goals too low is another tempting trap. Goals not making a perceptible demand on you nor challenging you serve no purpose towards your personal betterment. They become routine tasks giving no sense of achievement, and no motivation to do better next time.

THE MEANS TO ACHIEVE GOALS

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

Lao-Tzu (604 BC - 531 BC)

Remember, when working towards your goals to distinguish between your ‘goal’, and the ‘means to accomplish that goal’.

Sometimes we get blocked on the path to achieving our goals. But many times it is just the means that trap us, and if we stay flexible, we can plot an alternative route to the same ends.

As a goal setter, take some time to review your list of goals and separate the end goals from the means. Keep your end goals on a separate list. Your end goals don’t change much at all — they represent outcomes you are working towards. But you might often revise your means in order to best fit your current situation.

Unless you separate your means from your end goals, you may treat them both with the same importance. This could lead to unnecessary frustration if you cannot use a particular means. You may get too attached to something that doesn’t really matter. And you could miss seeing other paths to achieve your end goals while you are frustrated.

It is important to clarify your end goals and avoid confusing them with the means to get there. With good reason the second habit in Stephen Covey’s *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* is **“begin with the end in mind”**. Notice it doesn’t say, “begin with the means in mind.”

You have numerous means, but you may only have about two or three end goals at a time. The end goals provide a sense of direction as well as a final destination.

Your means are there to help you manifest your end goals. Means bring precision and clarity to your end goals. If you meet unyielding resistance in trying to achieve your means, you should remind yourself to step back and look at the big picture — the end goal. What are you trying to achieve and why?

If one path is blocked, there are plenty of others to choose from. By having flexible goals that connect with the manifestation and expression of your ultimate potential, it's practically impossible to fail except by choice. Don't get so caught up in the pursuit of your means that you lose sight of the ends.

Recognized techniques, or means, to assist you to 'stay on track' to successfully achieve your goals include:

- **Looking at Your Key Goals Regularly** - *at least weekly*. This confirms that you are making progress and will allow you to also determine if you need to modify your plans. You can do this simply by having a reminder memo, listing your key goals, set up on your computer or Palm organizer;
- **Continually Review Your Progress** - *to be sure you are on target*. Unforeseen obstacles and/or changing priorities are sure to arise which may require that you change your approach or means; and
- **Not Procrastinating** - *it is a "silent killer"*. The only way to achieve your goals is to *take action!* Do something now that will assist you to achieve your goals. There is no time like the present!

GOAL-SETTING TIPS

“The difference between a goal and a dream is the written word.”

Gene Donohue

The following **goal-setting tips** will help to set better goals and assist in making a habit of achieving them:-

- **Document Goals:** Making a clear list of your goals (an action list) gives them more force, as you create images of achievement in your mind. Make them measurable and specific.
- **Positively State Your Goals:** Expressing goals positively will result in more positive results - 'Complete this project well' is a more positive goal than 'Don't make this stupid mistake';
- **Prioritize:** Organize your action list into a plan - giving a priority to each goal. Use the 80/20 Rule - 20% of the things that you do will account for 80% of your results. This helps you to avoid feeling overwhelmed by too many goals, while directing your attention to the most important ones;
- **Sequence:** Determine what needs to be done before something else can be done. There are always activities that are dependent upon other activities being completed in advance. What are they, and what is the logical order or sequence?
- **Required Resources:** List everything that you will have to do, and the necessary materials, to achieve this goal. As you think of new items, add them to your list until it is complete;
- **Be Specific:** Set precise goals and time-frames, including amounts, dates and times, so that achievement can be measured. Doing this, you will know exactly when you have achieved the goal, and can take complete

satisfaction from having achieved it;

- **Identify Possible Obstacles:** Focus on removing the most important constraint or limitation that is holding you back - It could be an amount of money, a key resource. Or an additional skill, habit or information that you require. Identify it clearly and go to work to eliminate it.
- **Base Achievement on Your Personal Performance:** Be aware of factors beyond your control such as bad business environments, injury, poor weather, or just plain bad luck. Instead base your goals on your personal performance, so you can draw satisfaction from the accomplishment of your goals;
- **Use Small Intermediate Goals:** Keep the goals you are working towards small and achievable. A large goal can seem that you are not making progress. Whereas keeping goals small and incremental gives more opportunities for reward;
- **Take Action:** After listing your goal, developing a plan, and identifying the major obstacle, do something immediately to start the process of goal attainment moving forward. Start by doing the first thing that comes to mind towards the achievement of your goal.
- **Make It A Habit:** Do something every day that moves you towards your most important goal. The habit of doing something every single day develops the power of momentum - it deepens your belief that the goal is achievable, and activates the Law of Attraction - you then begin moving faster and faster towards your goal.

These tips can be added and applied to what has been discussed so far. They are not a strategy independent of SMART goals, but an essential part of achieving goals.

WHAT NOW?... After Goals Are Achieved

“The achievement of one goal should be the starting point of another.”

Alexander Graham Bell

When you have achieved a goal, take time to celebrate and enjoy the satisfaction of having done well. Absorb the implication of the achievement, and note the progress you have made towards other goals. If the goal was a significant one, reward yourself appropriately. All this helps to build the self-confidence you deserve.

After a goal is achieved, review the rest of your goal plans:

- If insufficient skills-sets have become evident, even though the goal was achieved, decide whether to set goals to fix this;
- If you learnt anything that may require a change to other goals, do so;
- If it was achieved too easily, make your next goals harder; and
- Make the next goal easier if it took an overly long time to achieve.

It doesn't matter if you do fail to meet your goals, *so long as lessons are learned from it*. Feed these back into your goal-setting program. Remember also that your goals will change often. To reflect growth in your experience and knowledge, adjust them regularly, and if the goals do not hold any attraction any longer, then just let them go.

Over time you will realize that goal setting has become important in:

- Building self-esteem, based on successfully achieving goals.
- Focusing on what's important for you to achieve in your life;
- Creating enthusiasm and motivating yourself; and
- Separating what's important from what's a distraction.

If you make goal setting an essential part of your life, you'll find your career accelerating, and you'll wonder how you did without it!

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

The Goals Guy:

If you're looking for a remarkable program that teaches you the secrets and proven methods for shaping your personal success, we highly recommend My Goals - [Personal Strategic Planning](#) program by Gary Ryan Blair.

Another useful tool is [Achieve Goal Organizer](#)

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