

GOALS that work

why goals are important and how
to get the most out of them

an e-book by Manage 2 Win



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You Should Have Goals

Without a destination in mind you are just wandering around aimlessly.

Each person's life is a journey with thousands of stops between each respective destination. Everyone dreams of achieving big things on their journey. Some people journey far, while others barely venture out of their comfort zone.

Setting goals will allow you to break down big leaps in your journey into measurable, achievable tasks, with each task representing the work required to get from one stop to the next. It gives you a map to follow, and it improves your rate of success.

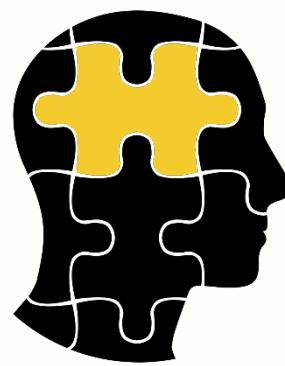
Also, achieving your goals is personally fulfilling. It gives you a sense of accomplishment, joy, and satisfaction.

The Research Behind Setting Goals

Setting goals is powerful. When we set goals we become invested in them. By deciding an outcome is desirable, a part of our brain believes it is an essential part of our identity and sets up the conditions needed to motivate us toward achieving it.

Let's focus on three aspects of the science behind goal achievement.

First, research indicates human beings have difficulty discerning between things we want and things we already have. This problem presents itself when we define a goal. The goal exists, but the outcome has not been achieved yet. Our brain senses that something is missing. Our brains assess in-process, unachieved goals as lost valued possessions. This sense of loss creates a tension that drives us to complete the goal.



Second, the neurotransmitter dopamine is a powerful reward system that acts as a natural motivator in your brain. You get a hit of dopamine every time something occurs that makes you feel valued or accomplished¹.

Many software applications and mobile devices take advantage of this fact. Games and social media use bright colors, fun sounds, and creative objectives to urge you on to the next step, or additional content. Your phone buzzes or dings when a new message arrives, and your email client shows a small pop-up on your screen each time you get a new email. These applications and devices are designed to be addictive, to make your brain release dopamine, and seduce you to return again and again.

The same is true of setting and achieving goals. Defining goals creates an expectation and motivation in our brain to complete them. Then we experience a reward and satisfaction fueled by dopamine every time we complete a task, reach a milestone, and achieve an objective.

Third and finally, we are greatly influenced by the endowment effect². The endowment effect causes us to place a large value on something we own.

One of the most cited examples of the endowment effect is from a Cornell University study by Daniel Kahneman, Jack Knetsch, and Richard Thaler³, which involved giving participants a coffee mug and then offering them the chance to sell it or trade it at equal value. Participants required twice as much in compensation to sell the object they owned compared to how much they were willing to pay to acquire it. They called this the endowment effect.



The endowment effect causes us to covet ownership of something and ascribe more value to it simply because we own it. When something becomes “ours” it becomes integrated with our identity and we are reluctant to part with it.

Similarly, when we set goals we take ownership of our future. We create a map towards desirable objectives, and that map becomes a part of our identity. The simple act of setting goals makes them personal and valuable, increasing our drive to complete them.

This is why teams that set clear, measurable goals with accountability generate 3X the results of teams without goals⁴. Another study says you waste 30% of your capacity and performance potential when you are not driven to achieve specific objectives.

Therefore, goals are not an option if you want to be your best and love what you do.

There is a lot more to the science behind goals, but one thing is clear: Defining and pursuing clear, measurable goals with accountability enables us to thrive individually and on teams because we are hardwired to achieve meaningful objectives.

There's no question about it. You should have goals.

How Should You Write Goals?

Clearly and concisely.

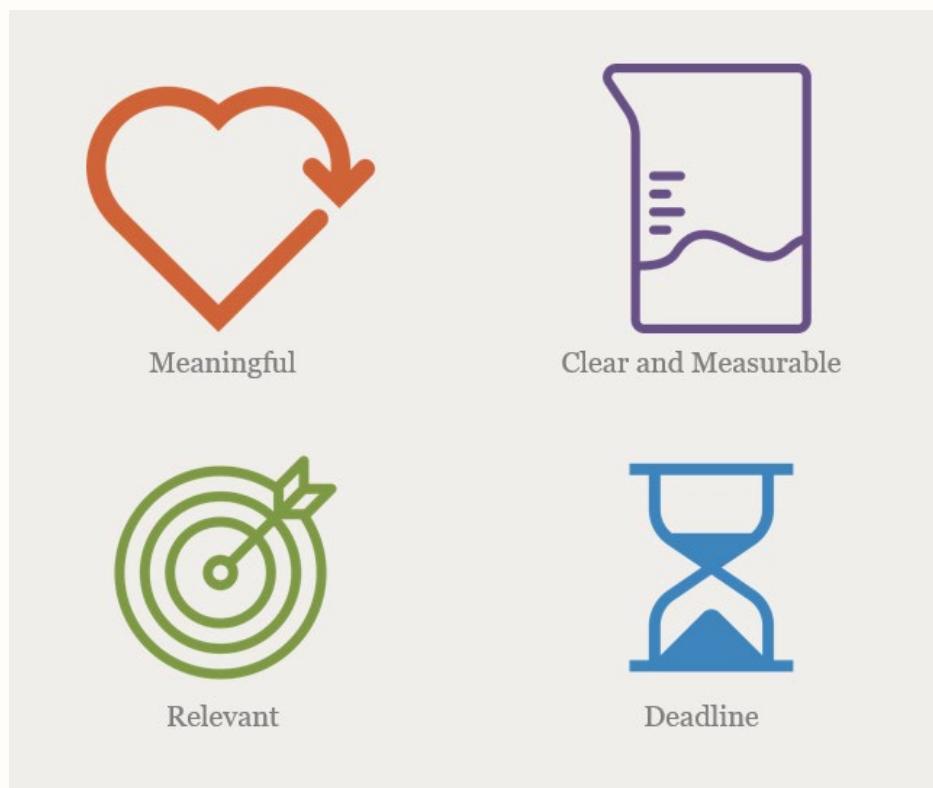
The previous lesson talked a lot about why everyone should have goals, but it said nothing about *how* to write goals.

Writing goals properly is very important, and there are lots of ways to write goals and pursue them. A quick search on our part turned up over 27 different methods on how to write a goal properly.

Some of them are good, but some of them are seriously lacking in effectiveness.

The 4 Characteristics of Effective Goals

The effective goal-writing methods share four characteristics. These characteristics determine each goals' strength, impact, and viability:



1. **Meaningful:** Ideally, a goal should connect something you find personally fulfilling with why you want to achieve the goal.
2. **Clear and Measurable:** The goal must be clear and measurable to you and anyone else involved.
3. **Relevant:** The goal should be relevant. In other words, it is important and therefore completing it is the best use of your time.
4. **Deadline:** There must be a firm date to complete the goal, otherwise there is no urgency.

Using these characteristics as a guideline, we can properly craft a goal. "Complete 2 things" would be a very poor goal. However, "Earn my MCSA: Office 365 certification by August 31st, 2019" would be an excellently written goal assuming it is relevant to your career and company objectives.

Here are a few more tips for how to write goals.

Keep it Simple – The Power of 3

I (David Russell) once had a boss who had 17 goals to achieve by year-end. Most of the objectives were clear and measurable because he was a sales manager.

However, he did not achieve most of his goals. Why? There were two likely problems:

1. There were too many of them. He was a nice guy, but his boss gave him too much to do.
2. The goals were all due at year-end. He would have done better if each objective was separated into individual tasks or phases in shorter, connected timeframes, and the due dates for the 17 goals were spread throughout the year.

Having forty-five goals is impressive, but it's unrealistic. Human beings achieve more when we focus our energy on a small set of objectives.



We recommend everyone in your organization have three major goals at any a given time. No more.

Less than three is fine.

Take Ownership of Your Goals

Who should write the first draft of your individual goals?

You should. Studies prove the person responsible for achieving a goal takes more ownership for results when they think of the goals themselves, discuss them with peers or their boss, and then fully accept the final version.

People who have been in a position for less than six months may work with their manager to define their goals, or managers may define goals for open positions with input from others.

Define Goals as a Team

Team goals can be a great way to galvanize a group of people around a shared objective. A shared goal encourages cooperation, communication, and collaboration among team members. Additionally, the diversity of talent and personalities on a team can be a huge advantage to goal achievement. One person's strengths may be different from another's and combining these strengths may improve the team's ability to achieve their goals.

When it comes to creating team goals the people on the team should come up with the goals for the team. In this way they take ownership of the goal, more so than if a boss just assigns them a goal.

Managers should encourage and supervise the creation of team goals to make sure they align with the company's overall objectives.

Our Goal-Writing System: TARGETs

We like to think it's pretty good.

We have a goal writing process we call T.A.R.G.E.T..

TARGET goals are clear, measurable objectives with due dates. We like the acronym TARGET because it helps you write a clear, measurable sentence defining your goal with a due date that everyone understands.

It looks like this:

- T** To (preposition)
- A** Action verb (positive word)
- RG** Relevant Goal to my priorities
- E** Effective, clear measurement to achieve my best
- T** Timeframe in which to complete the goal

TARGETs are consistent with the SMART method of goal writing. However, the term "TARGET" also defines and reminds us how to write the goal properly.

Here is an example of a clear, measurable TARGET:

To increase consultant utilization rates to 78 percent for Q1 2019.

It's breaks down like this:

To (begin the statement):	To
Action verb:	increase
Relevant Goal:	consultant utilization rates
Effective measurement:	to 78 percent
Time limit / due date:	for Q1 2019

This is a very well-written goal. Assuming you and your company need to increase consultant utilization rates for the quarter, it meets our criteria for the four most important attributes of effective goals.

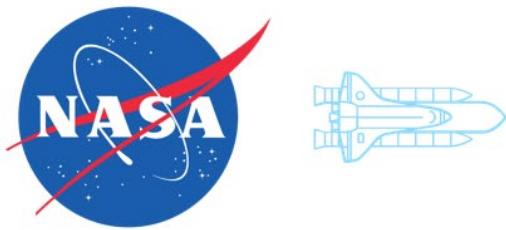
You can then refine this goal, breaking it down into bite-size pieces.

NASA: Refining Your TARGETs to Make it to the Moon

On May 25th, 1961, President John F. Kennedy announced the United States' ambitious goal to send an American to the moon by the end of the decade⁵.

Suddenly, NASA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration founded less than 3 years prior⁶, was under a lot of pressure to deliver on that goal.

The objective was clear: Put a man on the moon.



As Jim Collins would say, this was certainly a major BHAG. A Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal!

The problem? It had never been done before. The methods were not clear. Much of the technology did not exist. There were no manuals, no processes, no knowing what to expect, and no one to show them the way. Humanity had just started trying to put people in space.

Also, this was during the Cold War⁷. The Russians had already orbited the Earth with their Sputnik mission in October 1957. The pressure on the Kennedy administration and NASA was immense.

However, despite the difficulties, NASA eventually launched a successful mission to the moon on July 20th, 1969, when Apollo 11 commander Neil Armstrong stepped onto the moon's surface and uttered his famous words: "One small step for man, one giant leap for man-kind."⁸

But... how did NASA go about achieving this goal? The answer: One step at a time.

You see, NASA engineers understood the daunting task ahead of them, so they separated the TARGET of getting someone to the moon and back into a series of major milestones. Then, they determined the steps required to achieve each milestone.

From building a rocket propulsion system powerful enough to break free of Earth's gravity, to designing a life support system that could keep astronauts alive, every objective was broken down into groups of tasks.

As each group of tasks was completed, a milestone was passed, and the journey could continue.

One Step at a Time

NASA engineers took the big goal of putting a man on the moon and broke it down into smaller and smaller achievable steps.

The illustration features a NASA engineer wearing a white spacesuit with a blue NASA logo on the chest, a white flight helmet with a clear visor, and a white hard hat. The engineer is standing to the left of a large, orange, stepped ladder that leads up to a circular object resembling the moon. The moon has several small craters or landing sites marked on its surface. The background is plain white.

NASA completed hundreds of small-to-midsize tasks to accomplish milestones. The milestones, achieved in sequence, ultimately put an American on the moon ahead of the Soviets.⁹

You can and should refine your goals the same way.

Writing goals often inspires us to think big. It's easy to create large, broad goals that ignore the smaller pieces of the puzzle. In order to develop a real plan of action, we need to break down our big goals into small steps we can accomplish in succession.

It takes a little time and practice. However, just like NASA, breaking down your big goals into milestones and tasks will help you get to your destination.

Prioritizing Your Goals

Make sure you've decided which ones are the most important.

Writing goals can be an exciting exercise. After you have written your goals, you need to decide which ones are the most important.

Narrow down your list to a few vital objectives that mean the most to you. You can keep the rest of the goals in another list, but your top objectives should be separate from the others.

Establish a pecking order by using one of two prioritization methods: Weighting or Numeric.

Both methods work well.

Weighting

Weighting goals is the traditional HR approach to goals and explains which goals have higher priority using percentages. The total weighting for all goals within a specific time period is one hundred percent, and two goals are never weighted identically. One must be more important than another or weighting them is a pointless exercise.



Here is a simple example of goal weighting for a sales person:

Close 10 sales	80%
Show-up on time	15%
Dress professionally	<u>5%</u>
Total	100%

The 80% weighting to “Close 10 sales” makes it clear that it is by far the most important objective. If the sales person meets or exceeds their quota then it creates significant other opportunities for their company.

In contrast, it may help the company's branding or reputation if the sales person shows-up on time and dresses spectacularly, but that goal is significantly less important. If they don't close the 10 sales, then their job is in jeopardy.

Numeric

This second approach to prioritizing goals is very simple. The numeric method ranks each goal starting at 1 and illustrates that you should work on priority #1 first, then when you have time you work on priority #2, and so on.

It can also be interpreted to mean you should spend more time on #1 than #2 if both are being pursued simultaneously. If we use the example above, it is clear where this sales person should spend their time:

- #1 Close 10 sales
- #2 Show-up on time
- #3 Dress professionally

A numeric approach does not emphasize the magnitude of priority like an 80% weighting overshadows either a 15% or 5% weighting. However, it does offer a specific priority of how your goals are prioritized.

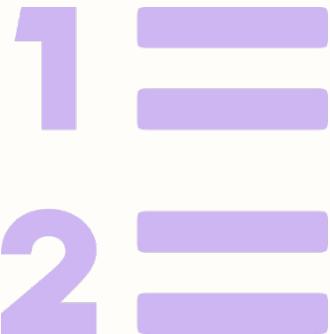
We recommend using either method of prioritization.

Goal Hierarchies & Team Goals

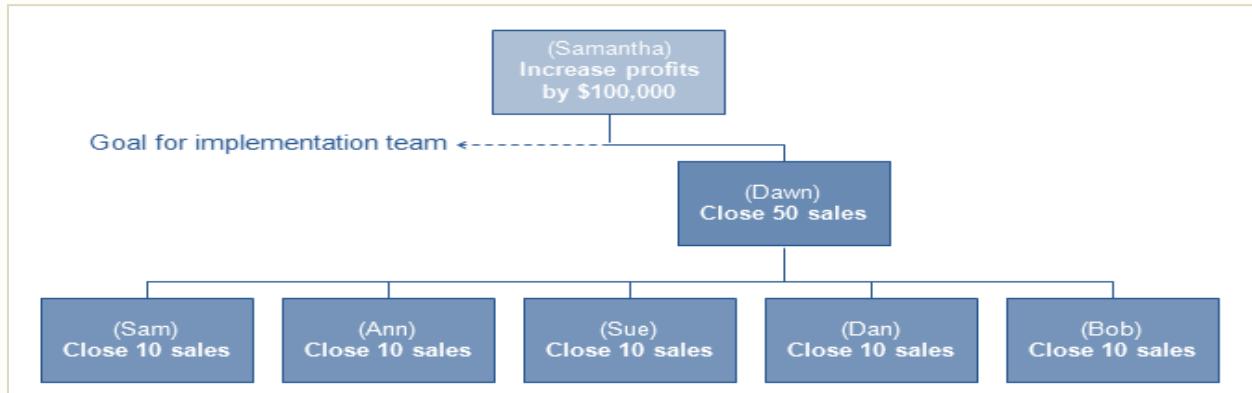
After your goals are prioritized, you may want to share them visually.

One way to explain your goals visually is to use a hierarchy. Goal hierarchies show how smaller tasks are connected to larger goals. The sales example below illustrates:

- The significant primary TARGET for a group of individuals
- Each person's contribution to the TARGET
- People who can be hurt if you fail to achieve your TARGET(s)



- How people achieve more together than working alone



This is a great way to demonstrate how each person's activities contribute to the overall success of their team.

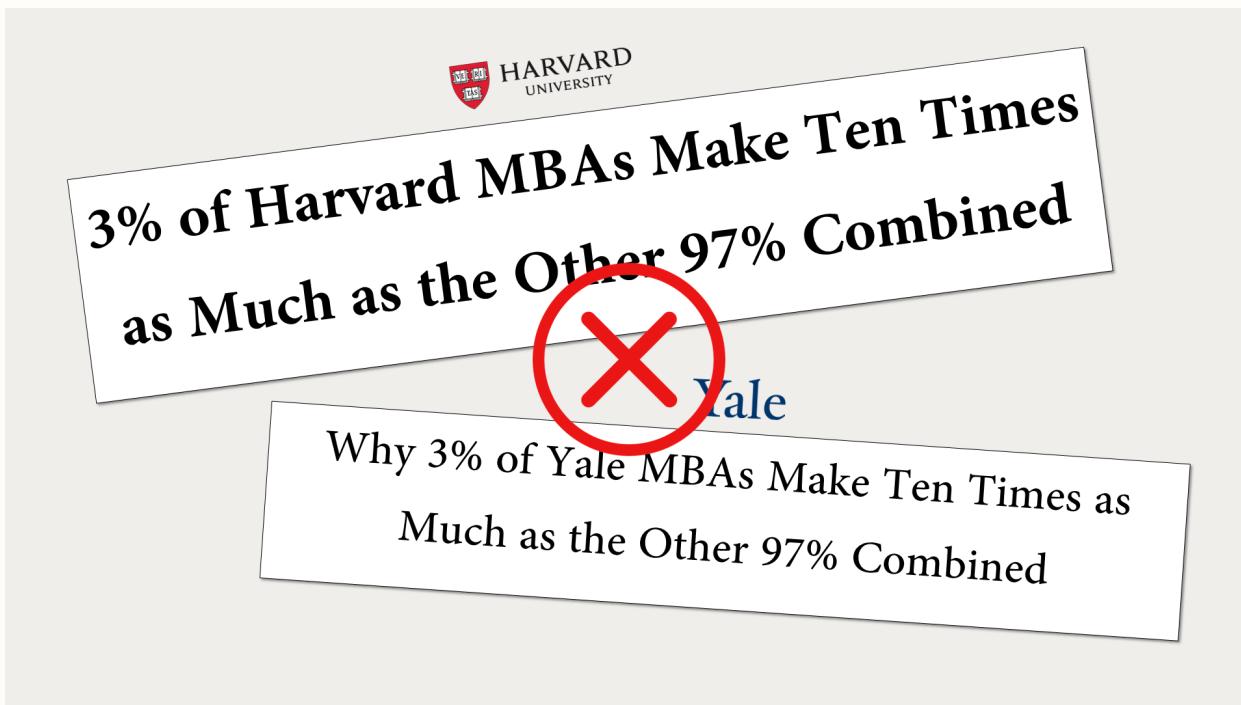
The same principle applies to company goals. They need to be broken down into specific goals for each person.

Optimizing for Goal Achievement

Create the right environment for success!

Now that you have written goals and prioritized them, let's talk about how your environment and approach can affect your ability to achieve your goals.

Many articles, books, and self-development gurus often perpetuate a myth about goals. The headlines look like this:



Unfortunately, these claims have been proven false¹⁰. They were perpetuated by two reported studies, a 1953 Harvard study and a 1979 Yale study on the performance of graduates who wrote down their goals versus those who didn't. A 1996 Fast Company article was the first to point out that these studies were never conducted¹¹.

However, the fake claims of Harvard or Yale graduates' success after writing down their goals were not far from the truth.

A recent study by Dr. Gail Matthews of Dominican University¹² supports some of the conclusions of the fictional studies. Her study in 2014 recruited 267 people

from various backgrounds in the United States and asked them to complete various goal-setting tasks¹³.

Participants in Group 1 were asked to think about goals for a four-week period, while groups 2-5 were asked to write down their goals. Group 3 was asked to write action commitments for each goal, while Group 4 had to share their goals and action commitments with a friend.

Finally, Group 5 had to send weekly progress reports on their goals and action commitments to a friend.

The result was more than 70 percent of the participants who sent weekly updates to a friend reported successful goal achievement versus 35 percent who kept their goals to themselves. Out of the five groups, Group 5 was 100% more successful than the rest.

Follow a Process

Another study by Zimmerman et al. of the CUNY Graduate Center examined the hypothesis that people who focused on a process for achieving goals would perform better than those who only focused on the outcome. Additionally, their hypothesis assumed people who focused on the process AND the outcome would perform better than those who only focused on the process¹⁴.

Their study involved 90 high school girls, each playing in a game of darts, and separated them into three groups:

1. Group 1 was instructed to try and get the highest score possible (outcome).
2. Group 2 was taught how to throw darts properly and then instructed to focus on their dart-throwing technique (process).
3. Group 3 was taught proper dart-throwing technique first, then once they had mastered their skills they were instructed to try and get the best score (process + outcome).



The researchers found that Group 3 achieved significantly higher scores. This is significant because it means we can achieve our goals at much higher rates if we are wise enough to follow the right process required for each objective.

In our consulting with clients, we refer to this as Systematic Power.

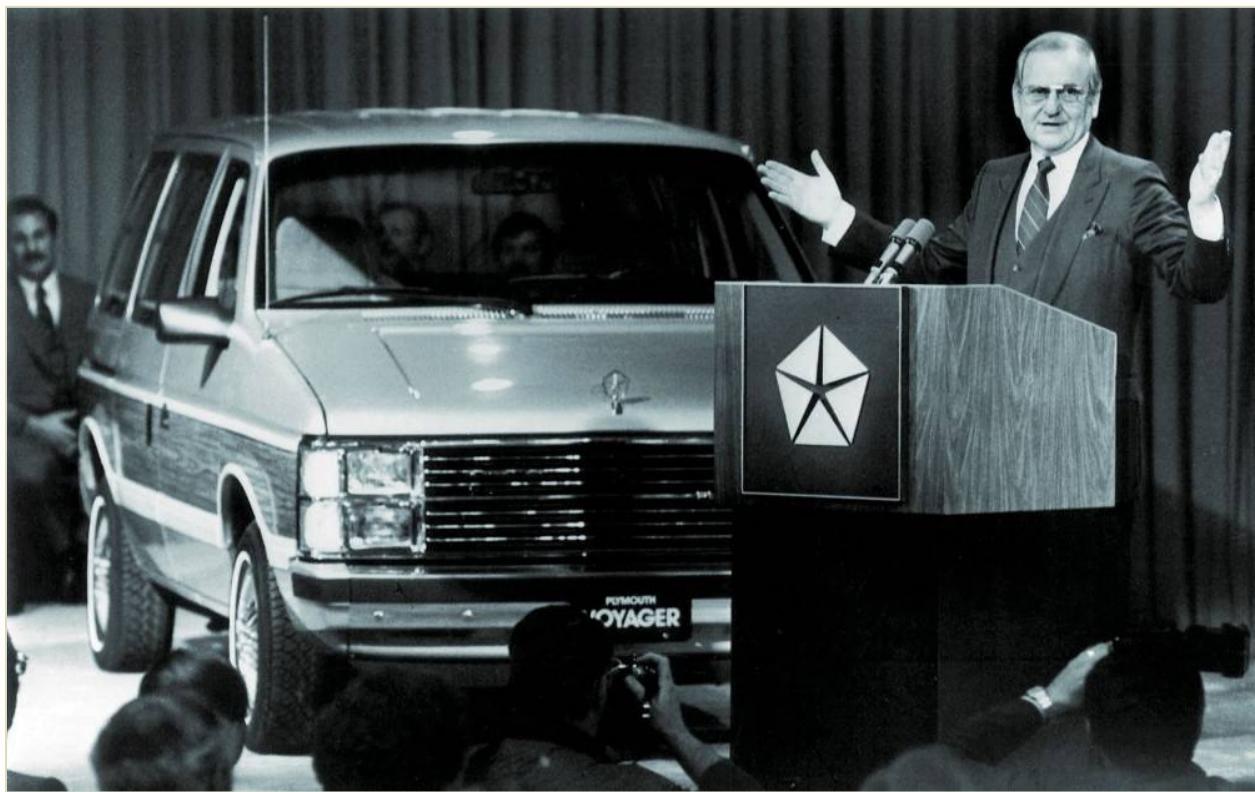
Best Practices to Achieve Goals

A few more tips to stay engaged with your objectives.

The way you follow-up and follow-through on each step of your goals is a big factor to your success. Here are a few best practices you can follow to help you stay on track.

Sanctuary

From 1978 into the early 1980's Lee Iacocca led an effort that saved Chrysler Corporation from bankruptcy. One of the disciplines he credited for helping save the American carmaker was every Sunday evening he would separate himself from the family to spend two hours in his study.



He was alone. No interruptions. No email. He held himself accountable to the previous week's objectives and wrote down the next week's objectives. Iacocca credited this habit as a major reason he was able to stay focused on what was most

important each week, and ultimately led the way to achieve his mission: Restore Chrysler's profitability and market share.

Iacocca had a map to get Chrysler from where it was to where he wanted it to be. He knew what his goals were and how to get there. But he still needed to spend time each week checking in, reviewing progress, and making sure they were on the right track.

The discipline of setting aside time to review your map and adjust the routes to your destination is what we call Sanctuary time.

The core agenda for Sanctuary follows the acronym "MAP."

M - Metrics: Did I meet or exceed all the metrics for my performance this past week, or other timeframe?

A - Adjustments: Where do I need help, should research information, and/or make adjustments to stay on track?

P - Plan: What is my plan for the upcoming week?

 **Like** Iacocca, your big accountability meeting or Sanctuary time should be weekly, with zero distractions. This might be 20-30 minutes, or up to two hours.

Your Weekly W.I.N.

Another tool you can use to track your progress on your goals is a weekly WIN. Each week's WIN is comprised of 1-3 activities to be completed in a specific week to move closer to achieving your TARGETs.



Weekly W.I.N.

1-3 activities that must be completed in a week.

Here is an example of a weekly WIN:

This Week

1. Fully document my work and time as I go in our PSA.
2. Complete the server migration for Smith & Son.

Last Week

1. Fully document my work and time as I go in PSA. **COMPLETE**
2. Meet with Ralph to update my employee strategic plan. **COMPLETE**
3. Complete my edits to our new Client onboarding process. **COMPLETE**

Notice these WINs include the same #1 each week. This is because documenting work and entering time is an ongoing, weekly WIN that enables this person to achieve a TARGET that is very important in this position.

Accountability Meetings

Remember the study by Dr. Gail Matthews of Dominican University, from Lesson 5? The people who were most successful at completing their goals wrote them down, created action items for each goal, shared them with a friend, and then updated their friend every week on the status of their goals.

This is accountability. Be a role model for this habit and watch your productivity soar. Teach it to others, especially people you manage or mentor. Their accelerated progress will contribute to your momentum.

Have the Same Standards (Managers, take note)

Before finishing this course, we must talk about standards. You can write the best goals, create a stellar work environment, and utilize every best practice we've just taught. However, without consistently enforced company standards then productivity and goal achievement will vary greatly within your organization.

There are two major problems with pursuing goals in most workplaces. First, too many leaders break the rules they set for the organization. Second, management fails to hold people accountable when a standard or performance metric is not met.

If your company culture is based on setting and achieving goals, as it should be, then be prepared to sincerely, empathetically, and firmly enforce boundaries when people violate your standards. This goes for everyone, not just you.



Develop your standards

Develop and communicate your standards. Then give everyone equal ability to hold each other accountable.

We once had an owner call us to discuss an employee issue. The employee had violated their travel policy by staying at hotels and buying airline tickets that were not the least expensive. The owner had yelled at him. The employee argued that

the loyalty to one airline enabled his bags to fly free, which included company samples. They debated and the owner stayed upset. He asked us, "Why doesn't he follow our policy?"

We replied, "You only have a policy when it is enforced. You yelled at him, but then let him get away with it. Therefore, you have no policy."

Perception is reality. Leaders who say one thing but do another establish unspoken policies. Employees with good intentions who violate policies set a bad example for others, encouraging broader violations by their peers.

Develop your standards with your team, hold everyone accountable, then give everyone else on the team equal ability to respectfully hold each other accountable.

Set Some Goals

If you don't have any, it's time to start.

Now you have learned all about Goals That Work*.

Whether you are setting company goals, team goals, or personal goals, having properly written goals is an incredibly powerful starting point. Add in a few best practices for achieving your goals and watch as your rate of achievement soars.

Thanks for reading,



At Manage 2 Win our focus is on leadership and company culture. We work with business leaders to help them be more systematic, achieve greater results, and enjoy their work more than ever before. Learn more at www.manage2win.com.

To find more e-books like this visit manage2win.com/books

Contact:

info@manage2win.com

*this e-book was adapted from the Hit Your TARGETs course featured in [Dave's Charm School](#), our soft skills and emotional intelligence training

Appendix

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