

Setting Yourself Goals

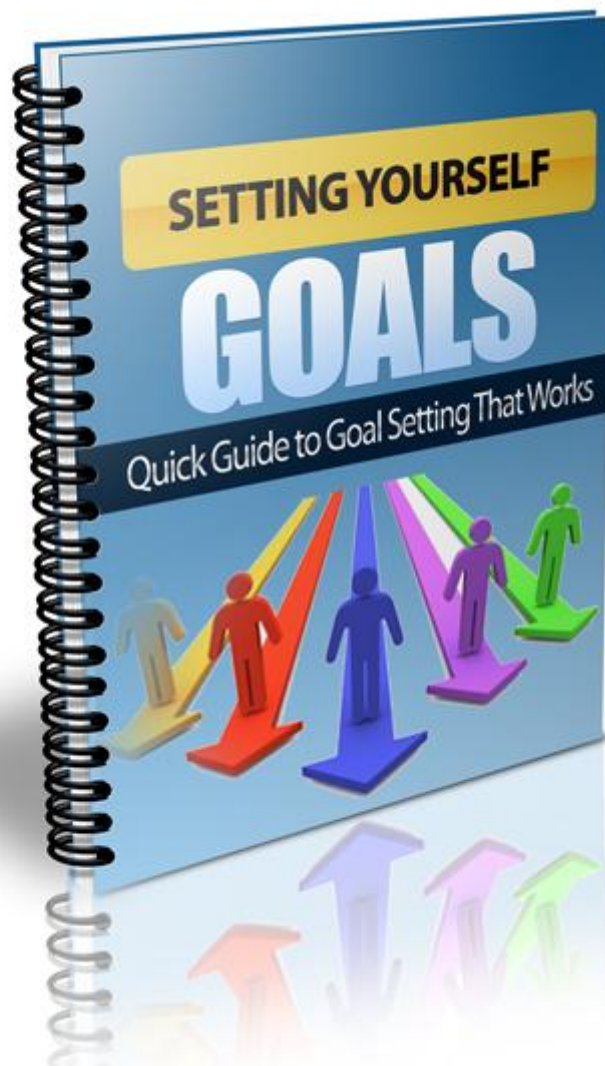


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Understanding Goal Setting Theory

Perhaps the most popular proponents of the goal setting theory are philosophers E.A. Locke and G. Latham. Their theory suggests that goal setting is innate among human beings and that identifying and mapping out methods to reach them are some of the most natural factors of human behavior.

Related literature would tell you that goal setting theory is rooted on these four basic ideas:

1. People rationally set task-related goals.
2. People are the ones that determine how much time and effort are afforded into reaching these goals.
3. Goals, to be effective, must be specific, accepted and attainable.
4. It is important to be list feedback on performance.

The goal setting theory assumes all of the above four and makes the following general claims:

1. Goal setting affects behavior.
2. Difficult goals result in higher performance levels.
3. Motivation comes from lessons from a previous goal.
4. Goal clarity affects performance.
5. Goal difficulty is directly proportional to satisfaction.

Goal setting and behavior

Goal setting theory states that identifying goals allows people to make calculated decisions. Once these are realized, they naturally direct and provide motivations so

that these goals are reached. It also helps people commit to something and arrange their activities so as not to deter them from the intended achievement.

Performance is correlated to difficulty

The more challenging and difficult it is to reach a goal, the higher the resulting performance level. Of course, if a task is a little daunting, the more effort a person will likely give to accomplish it. According to the goal setting theory, performance is influenced by four key factors.

First, goal setting centers on a person's attention to actions that would lead to a goal, thereby reducing the time and energy given to things unrelated. Second, as mentioned earlier, the higher the goal, the more effort is required. Third, when a person knows he has control over the time and effort to be set aside, the more persistent he becomes. And fourth, there are lessons to be learned.

Motivation is driven by past actions

People get motivated to work toward a goal if they had been exposed to or familiar with a similar situation that saw failure in the past. Goal setting theory notes that errors and dissatisfactions push people to do better the next time.

The clearer the goal, the better the performance

This needs no further explanation. If a person knows exactly what he wants to attain, it will be a lot easier to identify proceeding actions and faster to reach the goal. Performance works at its full potential this way.

Goal difficulty affects satisfaction

In relation to factor number two, people tend to derive a greater worth when they complete difficult tasks. According to Locke and Latham's goal setting theory, satisfaction levels are driven by the amount of effort and sacrifice put into a certain goal. Challenging goals give a stronger sense of achievement.

Motivation and Goal Setting

If you knew that you could achieve anything you wanted to, maybe get that job that you always thought was slightly out of your reach or find and build that wonderful new relationship which has remained somehow elusive, that would be amazing wouldn't it?

Keep the thought positive. Don't get annoyed with yourself for not using the resources before. Focusing on a negative energy will probably prevent you from moving forwards. Focus on what it is that you actually want, the outcome you desire.

All you need is motivation and goal setting.

Goal setting and performance

Goal setting improves performance when:

- Goals are specific
- Goals are difficult
- Goals are Challenging
- Goals are Attainable
- Goals are participatively set
- Goals are most often for individuals, but may also be team/group based

In order to stay motivated, observe the following:

1. Identify your Values, Beliefs and Desires

What is important to you motivates you. This simply means that if you assign a value to something important, you are more likely to do what action is required to reach the goal.

People's goals and desires grow from their values and beliefs.

Draft a list of your values, beliefs and desires. Take time to think about the interrelations of the items.

The list should be a source of motivation and must help you achieve goals you have set. The quality and depth of your motivation is directly related to your commitment. You must be sure that you can live up to reach the goal you have set.

Taking this for granted could lead to frustration that could diminish your motivation.

2. Do a Self-Assessment

Do an informal assessment of your existing abilities. Have a reflection on what you know about yourself. Accuracy and honesty is essential at this point. Underestimation or overestimation would result from inaccurate assessment of one's abilities.

If you already have an assessment of your strengths and weaknesses and you know what you value and desire, it is now possible to establish personal goals.

All goals should incorporate these common attributes:

A. Realistic

Goal setting should be realistic. The goals set should be based on your existing abilities and circumstances.

B. Possible

Remember not to establish goals that would make the realistic, unrealistic.

C. Flexible

Always anticipate obstacles along the way and learn how to move around them.

D. Measurable

Have a time frame so you would know if you have reached your goal.

E. Under Control

Remember to set your goals based on your own values and beliefs. Target goals where it is possible for you to control the outcome.

3. Role of Personal Circumstance

You should be in a position to be able to act on the goals you have set. Failure to consider your personal circumstances would impair your motivation and goal setting.

Changing circumstances always influences goals. If your circumstances change but your goals doesn't adapt it could undermine your motivation.

People are often unwilling to adapt and adjust to the situation. It is hard for them to adjust their self-expectations. There are times when people can get frustrated and lose their motivation.

Motivation and goal setting can be maintained if you would take into account your personal circumstance.

Redefining goals is very important to remain motivated and stay on the path to success.

4. Breeding Success

Personal circumstance, motivation and goal setting affect the outcome of success.

If you failed to reach any of these steps, your motivation will diminish, you would fail to work up to your abilities, and this would dampen your chances of success.

Importance of Goal Setting

The importance of goal setting is evident among professionals. They work full time and yet still manage to have fun with their family; They extend their hands for community service and yet still manage to have some time to do their hobbies.

Their secret lies not in controlling time but in managing time. Time management. This is the essence of goal setting.

The importance of goal setting, however, is not limited to professionals. Every successful people has understood and acknowledged the importance of goal setting. Athletes, doctors, lawyers etc. have used goal setting in one way or the other.

1. Goal Setting is a Map

Identify an area of your life where you want advancement. Then work through the goal process that follows. Here are the steps needed to make a map.

A. Identify the exact goal

What you really want in life? What is your purpose and your objective? You must ask yourself these questions to have a concrete idea of what you want in life.

Time, however, can change the way we look at things. One day you may want to be a published romance novelist after five years, the next day you may want to be a water colour painter with mother and child as inspiration. When this change of heart happens, don't despair. There's no wrong with changing a goal for a another goal. This is part of life. Change, that is. But having an objective, an exact goal at present, will give you an idea of what you want. Changing that goal along the way, as you

travelled to reach your goal, is just one of the events that you'll encounter along the way.

B. Identify the completion date

Goals should have a period of completion. It is not a goal if it doesn't have a specific time of completion; it would be a dream. A daydream, that is.

Goals are concrete and realistic aspirations. It isn't a goal when you say, "I want to be a novelist within my lifetime." It is a dream. A goal must be put this way, "I want to be a published romance novelist before I reach 35." This gives you a period to push your pens and write down that publishable novel. It hurries you to reach your goal. It motivates you to beat time, have a published novel ahead of time you've set for yourself.

C. Identify the evolution of the goal

Change is inevitable. And it applies even to goals.

Goals may evolve into something, maybe even far better than your earlier goals. If earlier you want to be a published romance novelist before you reach the age of 35, it may evolve into something like: a published Young Adult novelist before you reach the age of 35, and have written a script for a video game.

2. Goal Setting Is Your Vision

When you set a goal, you are actually seeing a vision, a vision of yourself in the near future. Imagine if you accomplished the goal you have set after five years, it was as if you have predicted what you will become five year ago!

Having a vision not only makes you feel contented with yourself, it also pushes you to look ahead and go forward instead of to live in the past.

Setting Goals and Objectives

Frustration usually arises from situations where people feel they have no control of.

Consider this young executive who have forgotten to prepare his sales pitch for tomorrow. He's scheduled to present to the ten top executives of a company about the latest luxury car that had arrived yesterday morning. It is already two hours past midnight. He was so tired. He is still wearing his office clothes. Two in the morning and only now that he remembers to study the car parts, engine and new gadgets. Now, he wants to point the blame to his boss for having him write the monthly report when he knew very well of his scheduled sales pitch. If only he had written it down or punched a reminder on his PocketPC.

Blame it all you want to somebody else, but the fault always lies to the person who fails to schedule and set goals and objectives.

Pitfalls in Setting Goals and Objectives

1. Where you are

Is my goal attainable where I am right now?

Know your personal circumstance and decide if a goal that you need to set is reachable. It should be attainable within the time period that you plan to construct.

2. What obstacles you have to face

Do I see a time constraint in reaching this goal? I have pending work, can I finish them on time to do this task?

After understanding your personal circumstance, identify the constraints. Make a list of them so you can attend to each item properly.

3. What strategies you can use to overcome them.

Can I make arrangements with my boss regarding my deadline? Can I set appointments? More importantly, can I delegate some of the tasks that I have just written down?

Setting goals and objectives is much like a very careful planning. A person must identify possible threats to the completion of the goal and outline strategies to counter them.

What is Often Overlooked

1. Setting of priorities

Identify your priorities in life. Most people don't even know what or who they want to be in the future.

Take the case of the young executive. If he voiced out to his boss that the sales pitch tomorrow may get them 7 car sales, his boss might snatch from your hand the monthly report and slam it on the desk of your co-worker.

Know your priorities and assert your priorities when needed.

2. Accept Your Fears

Most people fear to set goals. Either they are afraid of their future or they just simply made a choice to enjoy the present. Usually, the former is identified as the culprit.

Fear of setting your goals too high. Fear of making a commitment. Fear of not knowing what course to tread on.

Whatever you fear, keep in mind that by setting goals and objectives, you are, step by step, moving towards your dream.

3. Goals are a Map of your Life

Most people see goals as restrictions or obstacles to their sense of freedom.

But critics should see goals the other way around.

It is a map that you made. It shows you where you are and what roads you are treading into.

You made that map. It is yours to modify according to what priorities you have set.

4. Consult your Goals

Usually, goals are set but are forgotten during the day. They need to be regularly consulted to remind yourself that they need to be accomplished. Goals will give you an idea what road to take or when it is the best time to stop.

Goal Setting Techniques

Most people go panic once they realized the day ended with them doing nothing productive. Time seems to fly so quickly for some of us.

All our effort, time and energy are constantly challenged in this busy world. The reality is that there is simply not enough time to do everything that we want to do.

With goal setting techniques, we can maximize the use of our time. The goal setting techniques outlined below are so can guide you through the basics.

1. Evaluate

What do I really want? Where do I want to go? What do I want to do now?

This is a goal setting technique that demands a lot of reflection from your part.

Go forward and visualize your dreams then slowly trace it backwards to the present and evaluate on what you need to do to achieve that dream.

Review the past to see if there are hidden motives that you have yet to consider. Sometimes the past has its ways of getting in the way to your goals.

2. Get Real

We have dreams to reach, yes. But we can't have everything we dreamed of in a snap of a finger.

Know when a dream is attainable; learn to accept and let go of it when you realized it is not.

Know your strengths and weaknesses. Identify what are the things that does not support your long-term goals; this is a way of filtering out what are distractions and what is necessary.

3. Plan

Identify your Key Action Steps. Ask yourself, how will I go about this? What schedule or strategy should I focus on?

Planning is an important goal setting technique. An effective plan is something that can successfully identify the interconnections between the short-term and the long-term goals.

Planning forms ideas in our heads and is a powerful goal setting technique. Remember that "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail."

4. Focus

Sometimes, we get overwhelmed with planning and as a consequence, lose our focus. One goal setting technique to avoid losing focus is to aim for one goal at a time.

If you dream to be a successful novelist, painter or a photographer, can you aim for it all at the same time?

The answer is yes, you can.

You won't lose focus if you know which of your goals deserve your utmost attention and extra time. If being a novelist topped the list, you can still do painting and photography at the side, more like a hobby. Just remember, don't let these hobby eat out your time for novel writing.

5. Monitor and Re-evaluate

In evaluating goal setting techniques, ask yourself the following: Am I doing just fine? Am I on the right track? Am I on time? On cue? What strategies are working? What are not? Can I streamline my processes?

We have outlined some action steps during our planning. But we rarely take the time to think thoroughly what actions are actually needed. By re-evaluating, we are actually identifying those actions that are not needed.

A Goal, a Dream

By observing the goal setting techniques cited above, our dreams is just a step away from us. But oftentimes the goals we set for ourselves remain an unattainable dream. We became a victim of our own actions: procrastinating in the middle of the journey, or losing interest altogether although the finish line is just a few meters ahead. The motivation to do another step must come from us, from within. We must not expect our loved ones or friends to push our backs just to make that big step.

Goal Setting Strategy

Goal setting breeds success.

Goal setting strategy is a common practice among successful people. Successful people know that people must be proactive instead of reactive. If you are already successful and want to stay that way, goal setting is one way of being in control.

Goals provide us with direction and objective enhancing our motivation and focus. It allows us to look beyond our actions and see the progress that is made. This anticipation provides us with fuel to further our drive to reach our goals.

The strategy of goal setting is an influential aspect of every research and practice in improving performance.

Goal Setting Strategy

There are several goal setting strategies that should be considered first before actually laying down goals. Visualize this strategy and picture the story of the bucket that never seems to get full:

1. Core values

A primal goal setting strategy is to decide on what is important to you. If you can identify your core values you can decide what core projects to set that your life should have primary focus on.

Imagine that these core values are the rocks that would be the first to be fit down in the bucket.

2. Secondary Values

We could divide the core values of our life into several aspects. We can then identify secondary values to complement the core values that you have identified previously.

Imagine that these secondary values are the pebbles that will fit down into the bucket in the spaces between the rocks.

These pebbles represent the other projects that contribute towards those widest categories of your life's core values.

3. Daily Activities

Another goal setting strategy would be to identify actual daily activities that contribute towards our multitude of projects. These daily activities actually complement our secondary values.

Imagine that these daily activities are the sand that would fill out the spaces left behind by the rocks and the pebbles.

4. The Action that We Take

The bucket is already full of rocks, of pebbles and of sand. Yet there are still some very small cracks or crevice that needs filling. That is water. Even a small crevice could be filled-up by water.

This extra space that is available to water is also the most sensitive part of goal setting strategy.

This represents the very next action steps that we can take.

Remember that the big projects would only happen by the small action steps that we take. Remember to discard the things that do not truly contribute to your core and secondary values.

Always be mindful of the little strategies that you could use around you. It could be a book for learning, a paper for writing, PocketPC use, earphones for listening to training audios, etc. You can incorporate various mediums to effectively take action on your goals.

The Strategy to Success

The goal setting strategies mentioned above will make sure that you are always connected, mindful, and focused to the bigger picture.

Try to do it all. You can do this by breaking everything down into a hierarchy and make the most of every moment. It would always fit everything together by size, location, or by movement.

People who try to prioritize by level of importance, and who try to schedule specific activities to time, usually fail. This is because of the many distractions, interruptions, even changes in a persons mood and energy levels, or new inspirations or projects that reveal themselves as you move through time.

Try hard to prioritize or else you would get confused and worst be overloaded. Do this by keeping a running list of next step activities. Remember that willpower does not last long but pure intent together with preparation & organization allows you to do things you have never thought you could do.

Tips on Goal Setting

Setting Goal is like painting the tracks towards your desired destination. Without goals, you will get lost in the jungle of life. Although you may reach your destination, the means of reaching it might not be within the standard of your morals.

In order to reach your goals guilt free and swiftly, consider the following tips when setting goals.

1. Remember that every person has goals

Similar to the dissemination of information in a company, you may need to have some form of communication to relate your goals to those people who are directly affected by these goals that you have set.

Remember that everyone have goals of their own. So it is important that those closest to you be informed of any goal which you perceive can have a direct effect on them.

2. Start from top to bottom

When setting a goal, start from the top to bottom and not the other way around. Remember to have a foresight, to know what you really want in life.

Start from there, then work your way down. Start from the most important aspect to the least important aspect of your life.

3. Define areas of division

To avoid getting too overwhelmed with the goals that you have set, learn to divide the areas of interest.

From there, identify and set important goals. Again, implement this rule of thumb, "set from top to bottom."

By defining areas of importance, you may open your eyes to new possibilities that you have never seen before. You would realize that these areas are intertwined and setting goals in one area would have an effect to the other areas or would entail sacrifices from you.

4. Set benchmarks for your goals

Before you could even measure your goals, you have to first set reasonable benchmarks.

You would use these benchmarks to measure whether you have achieved your goals or not. These benchmarks can usually be expressed in quantitative terms.

5. Know when to stop

What are the signs that your goal is going on the wrong track? When it is time to bid goodbye to a goal and walk away? Consider the following:

- You are losing money than you have to

You tried gauging the monetary equivalent of a goal. You found out that you are spending way too much just to get the target. What should you do? Walk away and set more attainable goals.

You can go back to this expensive goal if, and only if, you've re-mapped your goal plan, studied every pros and cons for pursuing it, and raising enough money to actually attain in.

- You have spent too much time and effort to reach it

If your goal has been taking all your time, away from yourself and loved ones, walk away from it. You have other important goals to attend to.

- More and more of your loved ones are begging you to let it go

If you're a family man and your wife and kids are begging you to let go of your goal, learn to halt. Don't think that halting is like giving up. You have just learnt to know of your priorities.

You can start pursuing for your goals again after you've studied and learnt to manage your time and resources.