<u>Goals and Goal Setting</u>

Goal Setting

Goal Setting involves setting specific, measurable and time targeted objectives. In an organizational or business context, it may be an effective tool for making progress by ensuring that participants are clearly aware of what is expected from them, if an objective is to be achieved.

To be most effective, goals should be tangible, specific, realistic and have a time targeted for completion. There must be realistic plans to achieve the intended goal. For example, setting a goal to go to Mars on a shoe string budget is not a realistic goal while setting a goal to go to Hawaii as a backpacker is a possible goal with possible, realistic plans.

Managers are not constantly able to drive motivation and keep track of an employee's work on a continuous basis. Goals are therefore an important tool for managers since goals have the ability to function as a self-regulatory mechanism.

The following broad guidelines apply to setting effective goals:

- Make Positive Statements: express your goals positively: 'Execute this technique well' is a much better goal than 'don't make this stupid mistake'
- Be Precise: if you set a precise goal, putting in dates, times and amounts so that achievement can be measured, then you know the exact goal to be achieved, and can take complete satisfaction when you have achieved it.
- Set Priorities: where you have several goals, give each a priority. This helps you to avoid feeling overwhelmed by too many goals, and helps to direct your attention to the most important ones.
- Write goals down to avoid confusion and give them more force.
- Keep Operational Goals Small: Keep the goals you are working towards immediately (i.e. this month or quarter) small and achievable. If a goal is too large, then it can seem that you are not making progress towards it. Keeping goals small and incremental gives more opportunities for reward. Today's goals should be derived from larger goals.

<u>Important Points</u>

You should note a number of general principles about goal setting:

<u>Set Performance, not Outcome Goals</u>

This is *very* important. You should take care to set goals over which you have as much control as possible - there is nothing as dispiriting as failing to achieve a goal for reasons beyond your control such as bad business environments, marketplace difficulties, bad weather, or just plain bad luck. Goals based on outcomes are extremely vulnerable to failure because of situations and circumstances beyond your control.

If you base your goals on performance, skills or knowledge to be acquired, then you can keep control over the achievement of your goals and draw satisfaction from them. For example, if you were running a race, you might achieve a personal best time in that race, but still be disqualified as a result of a poor judging decision. If you had set an outcome goal of being in the top three, then this will be a defeat. If you set a performance goal of achieving a particular time, then you will have achieved the goal and can draw satisfaction and self-confidence from its achievement.

Set Specific Goals

Set specific measurable goals. If you achieve all conditions of a measurable goal, then you can be confident and comfortable in its achievement. If you consistently fail to meet a measurable goal, then you can adjust it or analyze the reason for failure and take appropriate action to improve results.

Set Realistic Goals

Goals may be set unrealistically high for the following reasons:

- Insufficient information: If you do not have a clear, realistic understanding of what you are trying to achieve and what it will take to succeed, it is difficult to set effective and realistic goals.
- Always expecting the best performance: Many businesses base their goals on their best performance - however long ago that was. This ignores changes which may have occurred and ignores the factors that led to that best performance. It is better to set goals that raise your average performance and make it more consistent.

Setting Goals Too Low

Alternatively, goals can be set too low because of:

- Fear of failure: If you are frightened of failure you will not take the risks needed for optimum success. As you apply goal setting and see the achievement of goals, your confidence should increase, helping you to take bigger risks. Know that failure is a positive thing: it shows you areas where you can improve skills and performance.
- Taking it too easy: It is easy to take the reasons for not setting goals unrealistically high as an excuse to set them too low. If you're not prepared to stretch yourself and work hard, then you are extremely unlikely to achieve anything of any real worth.

Setting Goals at the Right Level

Setting goals at the correct level is a skill that is acquired by practice.
You should set goals so that they are slightly out of your immediate grasp, but not so far that there is no hope of achieving them: no-one will put serious effort Review the goals you have set and then measure them against the points above. Adjust them to meet the recommendations and then review them. You should now be able to see the importance of setting goals effectively.

Thinking a goal through

- When you are thinking about how to achieve goals, asking the following questions can help you to focus on the sub-goals that lead to their achievement:
- What do we need to do to achieve this?
- What information and data do we need?
- What resources do we need?
- What can block progress?
- Are we making correct assumptions?
- Is there a better way of doing things?

Long-term goals

- A long-term goal is an achievement set to be reached over a long period of time. The period of time defined for reaching the goal can be almost any length of time; although most long-term goals tend to be measured in years. The definition of a long-term goal usually involves setting short-term goals to divide the timeline of achieving the long-term goal.
- Short-term and long-term goals are important tools in measuring success. Setting and tracking goals is an important step in achieving success in almost any endeavor.

Short-term goals

A short-term goal is something to be accomplished in a short period of time. There is no specific length of time related to the definition of a short-term goal. That is to say, a short term goal may be achieved in a day, week, month, year, etc. The time frame for a short-term goal is related to its context in the overall timeline that it is being applied to. For instance, a short-term goal for a month long project may be measured in days where as a short-term goal for someone's life might be measured by months or years. Short-term goals are usually defined in relation to a long-term goal or goals.

Project Goals

Good project management technique that states goals/objectives can be better defined by following the guidelines from using the SMART acronym:

Specific – Your objective or goal can't be diffuse or nebulous but should be precisely defined

Measurable - Define a method of measuring the objective/goal

Agreed-To / **A**chievable - All parties need to agree to the objective/goal and it also must be achievable

Realistic / **R**ewarding / **R**elevant - It must be a realistic objective/goal, and it must make sense to do it !!!

Time-related - to be completed within an agreed time scale

Goal Management in Organizations

Goal management is the process of recognizing or inferring goals of individual team members, abandoning goals that are no longer relevant, identifying and resolving conflicts among goals, and prioritizing goals consistently for optimal team collaboration and effective operations.

Organizational Goal Management solution ensures that individual employee goals and objectives are aligned with the vision and strategic goals of the entire organization. Goal Management provides organizations with a mechanism to effectively communicate corporate goals and strategic objectives to each person across the entire organization. The key is having it all emanate from a pivotal source and providing each person with a clear, consistent organizational goal message. With Goal Management, every employee will understand how his or her efforts contribute to the success of the enterprise.

Additional information on this and other planning topics can be located through the RESOURCES section on the main menu.