

Set achievable goals

Goal setting has been described as “the inner technology of success”. It is one of a business’s most important activities. Unless taken seriously, this vital planning task will be futile, producing only a few high-sounding intentions that, for various reasons, are soon forgotten.

To develop and implement challenging and achievable goals, consider the following:

1. Make sure goals are realistic

A goal that aims too high, or offers a great deal of risk, with little chance of achievement, leads to frustration and surrender. Unrealistic goals with inadequate resources do not attract commitment from employees.

2. Keep your goals simple

If goals are complex, it is unlikely they will be clear and specific enough to focus effort and marshal the necessary resources. Clear, simple goals give employees an unmistakable vision of what needs to be done.

3. Develop your goals as a group

When goals are imposed, rarely does anyone become committed to them. Develop goals with those who will be responsible for achieving them – your employees. The goals become a matter of record and, through personal involvement everyone will be more motivated to work towards their attainment.

4. Know why you have set each goal

For every goal, ask why you believe that goal is important to your business. If reasons don’t meet your expectations, revise the goal until it warrants inclusion – or delete it.

5. Make your goals specific and measurable

Goals should be specific rather than vague, and quantitative rather than qualitative. For example, rather than proposing that you should “become more visible” around the factory or office, it is more relevant to state that “I will spend at least one hour a day mixing with employees in the workplace” and “I will meet weekly with floor supervisors”.

6. Write goals with accountability in mind

The successful accomplishment of goals usually depends on someone being held responsible for each goal. This often creates a sense of urgency and purpose, especially when personal reputation or career advancement is involved.



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7. Make your goals timely

There should be a time dimension that specifies when the goal is to be achieved. Tying a specific deadline to a goal along with individual accountability usually leads to a more proactive approach to its achievement.

8. Write your goals down

By committing your goals to paper, and making them public, you not only convert dreams into tangible targets, but also work harder for their achievement.

9. Align goals with the business's mission

Remember to link individual goals to group goals, which ultimately should be linked to organisational or corporate goals.

10. Publicise your goals

The best way to accomplish anything is to set your goals – then publicise them widely. If you commit yourself publicly to a certain thing by a certain time, then it's very difficult to back out. If you do, you lose face – and most of us would rather get the job done than be judged as one who can't deliver the goods.

11. Review progress regularly

Schedule regular meetings to review progress with employees. Be honest and forthright in your assessments and don't expect 100% achievement. If you find that a specific goal is unreachable, that it was too ambitious, modify it so that it is attainable. It's a good idea to set and monitor sub-goals as a means of giving an ongoing sense of achievement and keeping people motivated along the way.

12. Make your goals challenging

A goal that is set too low and too easy to reach offers little challenge or interest. Add "stretch" to encourage performance. Striving for our goals takes us out of our comfort zones and causes us to grow with each accomplishment. The best goals are beyond our grasp, but within our reach.

And also:

- Goals should focus not only on ends but also on means.
- People can only achieve a certain number of goals – don't create a burden by setting too many goals.
- The total set of goals should be mutually reinforcing – one goal should not have to be achieved at the expense of another.
- Face your goals with determination and resolve to never give up. Persistence is important for achievement.



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Further information

The following fact sheets provide further information on these issues:

- Balanced scorecard
- Benchmarking
- Business growth tips
- Business planning
- Control your focus
- Control your stress
- Effective work teams
- Help groups make decisions
- Manage an effective work team
- Motivate employees
- Project management