

Setting Goals

A quick and easy way to make sure you have direction in your life and business

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"The person who makes a success of living is the one who sees his goal steadily and aims for it unswervingly."
— **Cecil B. De Mille**

Do you set goals for yourself?

Do you sit down and give careful thought to what you want to achieve over the coming weeks, months and years?

Do you make a point of writing down your goals and referring to them regularly?

If your answer to the three questions above is “no” then you are missing out on one of the most important tools that almost all successful people use to succeed way beyond the levels of ordinary mortals.

Setting goals is so easy that it’s crazy not to set aside the small amount of time needed to sort out an appropriate plan of action.

In this short report I am going to show you how you can quickly and easily set effective goals that are guaranteed to help you achieve more than you could possibly have done otherwise.

If you want to REALLY succeed you need Smart Goals

*'Our plans miscarry because they have no aim.
When a man does not know what harbour he
is making for, no wind is the right wind.'*

— Lucius Seneca

If you've been to business school or read books on goalsetting you might be familiar with the acronym SMART, which stands for Specific, Measurable, Actionable or Attributable, Realistic, and Timed. Let me explain briefly what each letter of the SMART Goal formula entails.

S = Specific

Your goals mustn't be vague they must be as specific as they can be. For example, a goal to *"Be more successful in 2006"* is too vague as it doesn't define what success is. For one person success might be to pass their exams, for another it might be to retire from their job, and yet for another person it might be to earn over \$75,000.

M = Measurable

As well as being specific your goals should be measurable. If your goal is related to money you might set a goal to *"Earn over \$100,000"* or maybe to *"Increase your monthly income by 25%"*. If your goal was sports related you might say *"To knock three seconds off my personal best time"* or *"To win three major tournaments"*.

A = Actionable or Attributable

There's no point in setting goals that are not actionable or attributable, i.e. you have no direct control over the outcome. For example it would be silly to set a goal for your favorite sporting team to win the league if you cannot directly influence that outcome. If you are the team coach, the owner of the team or even one of the players this could

be a goal that is actionable, but if you are just a fan there is nothing you can do that will have any impact on the outcome and so it is not actionable or attributable.

Likewise, you couldn't set a goal to "*Win the lottery*" as it is not a goal that you can directly influence. Yes, you can buy a ticket, or even several tickets, but you cannot influence the numbers that will be drawn out and so it is not actionable.

R = Realistic

When setting goals you need to be realistic. Setting a goal such as "*To be the world's best-selling singer*" is not a realistic goal if you've never made a record, don't have a recording contract and sound like a cat being strangled. Even if that was your ultimate goal it's best to break it down and take several smaller steps. For example, you might start off with a goal of taking singing lessons, forming a band, writing a song, recording a song, or maybe getting a recording deal, but having a goal to be bigger than Madonna is not a great first step.

T = Timed

A well thought out goal **must** include a timescale and must not be open ended. For example "*To get promotion*" is too vague. It would be far better to have a goal that said "*To get promoted by 1st July 2006*".

Example of a SMART Goal

To be a SMART goal your goals must meet all of the above criteria, ie. It must be specific, measurable, actionable, realistic and timed. If any one of the criteria is missing then it's not a SMART goal. Here's an example of a simple well thought-out goal that makes excellent use of the SMART formula.

GOAL: To be promoted to the position of Senior Manager by 1st July 2006

This goal meets the *specific* criteria because you are saying you want to be promoted to be Senior Manager. Not just promoted, but promoted *specifically* to the Senior Manager position. This gives you razor sharp focus as to exactly what you want to achieve.

This goal is *measurable* because you have stated exactly what constitutes success, which is reaching the position of Senior Manager. If you get promoted to be the Senior Manager's Assistant you have not reached your goal as the standard you have set yourself is the position of Senior Manager. Being promoted is not good enough, it must be a promotion to the Senior Manager's position if you are to reach the goal you have set.

This goal is *actionable* because you are in control of whether you get promoted or not. If you work hard, take any necessary classes, and bring yourself to the attention of the people who hand out promotions then you can reach your goal. Yes, the ultimate decision may lie with senior members of staff, but if you go about things correctly then you should be able to influence their decision in the correct way.

Obviously, if there is no possibility of being promoted to Senior Manager then this is not an *actionable* goal. For example, if there is only one Senior Managers role available and that job is being done by someone who has no plans to move on, move up or retire then this wouldn't be an *actionable* goal.

If you are currently working as the janitor it may be unrealistic to set a goal to be a Senior Manager within a year (not necessarily though if you are willing to put in a LOT of hard work), but if you are already on this career path then the goal would be a sensible one and so would pass the *realistic* test.

This goal is *timed* because you have put an exact date for achieving the goal. Putting an exact date takes away any open-endedness and lets you know exactly when the goal must be achieved by. Yes, you might get the promotion several months earlier, in which case you have surpassed your goal, but if the date of 1st July 2006 comes and goes and you have not got the promotion then you have not achieved your goal. Having a specific deadline adds urgency to your goals and allows you to create smaller subgoals that will help you reach toward's your major goals.

Using this clever acronym means you can easily remember all of the attributes necessary to set SMART goals for yourself or other people. As soon as you start to use this method of goal setting you will see an amazing transformation. Gone will be the vague goals that you set and then forgot about. In their place will be highly targeted goals that give you razor-sharp focus that will let you hit your goals like a heat seeking missile.

What about resolutions?

"The secret of success is constancy of purpose."

— Benjamin Disraeli

On the 1st January every year people all over the world set resolutions. It seems to be a common trait among people that compels them to start a new year with a list of things they want to achieve. It might be anything from losing weight to finding a new job, buying a car, studying more diligently or having a more optimistic outlook on life.

At first glance it would appear that resolutions are not really goals, but loosely defined objectives or plans, e.g. to get a new job or to be a better parent. However, all resolutions can, with a little thought be reworded and redefined as SMART goals.

For example instead of setting a resolution to lose weight over the coming year we could set a resolution to lose twenty pounds by the 1st July 2006. This is specific (to lose weight), measurable (20 pounds), actionable (it's totally up to you), realistic (assuming of course that you are at least twenty pounds overweight) and timed (by the 1st July 2006).

Some other resolutions take a little bit more thought. Take for example the resolution to be more organized. We can learn a lot about this kind of goal from Benjamin Franklin. Early in life he came up with a list of virtues that he wanted to live by. On the surface each one of these looked like a simple and very vague resolution, but if you carefully read the words in his autobiography it quickly becomes apparent that without knowing it he was following the SMART formula to the letter.

Here are the first three of his virtues.

Temperance – Eat not to Dullness. Drink not to Elevation.

Specific (to be temperate), Measurable (don't eat until you become dull or drink until you feel elevated), Actionable (it was completely within Benjamin Franklin's control), Realistic (he felt so) and we'll come onto the timed aspect in a moment.

Silence – Speak not but what might benefit others or yourself. Avoid trifling conversation.

Specific (to be more silent), Measurable (only speak if it is going to benefit you or others and don't get involved in trifling conversation), Actionable (he felt so), Realistic (no reason why not) and again we'll come onto time in a moment.

Order – Let all your Things have their Places. Let each Part of your Business have its Time.

Specific (order), Measurable (everything has a place or time), Actionable (no reason why not), Realistic (yes) and we'll look at time below.

By carefully defining each virtue Franklin made it specific and measurable. It can be difficult to measure something such as temperance, but by saying “Eat not to dullness. Drink not to Elevation” he set an upper limit that could be measured. If he became dull through eating or elevated through drinking then he had not met his goal – plain and simple.

You might have noticed that none of the above include a time scale. There is a reason for that.

Franklin believed that his list of virtues should be constantly at the forefront of his thinking and so every one of his virtues was a daily goal. So for example the second virtue could be reworded as:

For the next 24 hours I will not speak unless it benefits others or myself and I will not spend time in trifling conversation.

Each of his goals was logged on a simple chart in a small book he carried with him. If he managed to get through the day without breaking a goal (or virtue) he congratulated himself and if he failed he made a mark next to that particular goal so that he would know to double his efforts on it over the coming days.

What goals do I need?

"In the long run, men only hit what they aim at."

— Henry David Thoreau

To have a well balanced life you need to have well balanced goals. If all your goals are business related you need to be asking yourself whether your home life will suffer. Likewise, if your list of goals is made up of nothing but family and social objectives your chances of business or work related success might be lowered.

Having a balanced list of goals requires considerable thought as what constitutes balance will vary massively not just from person to person, but also for the same person during different stages of their life. If you have a young family the chances are that many of your goals will relate to your family life and other areas may take a back seat during this important phase in your life. In this case having balanced goals may mean that you have five family related goals and only one goal in each of the other major categories.

Similarly, if you are in the process of starting a business you are likely to find that many of your goals revolve around business related issues. This doesn't mean that your goals are not balanced, it just means that what's important at that stage in your life is different to at other stages and you have recognized this and reflected it in your list of goals.

However, even though you will usually find that one category of goals usually dominates the list at any one time, it is always healthy to have at least one goal in each of the main areas as otherwise it is easy to become obsessive about one area of your life such as your job and that could easily be detrimental to another area of your life such as health or family life.

There are many ways you could categorize your goals. I've found the following seven categories to be particularly effective.

- **Home** – Including your immediate family, your relatives, and hobbies and interests.
- **Social** – Everyone from close friends through to clubs and societies your involved with.
- **Business** – Either your own business interests or your job.
- **Financial** – Investments, savings, pensions, loans, etc.

- **Community** – Residents committees, school governing bodies, local politics, etc.
- **Charity** – From donating money through to donating time and skills.
- **Health** – Overall health, fitness, diet, etc.

Now that you have learned the skills for effective goal setting let me share with you a trick that goes completely against almost all of what I have said above.

To reach the stars you need a BHAG

"We aim above the mark to hit the mark."

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

In addition to your SMART goals you need to set yourself a BHAG (pronounced BEE-Hag).

The concept of a BHAG was dreamt up by Jim Collins and Jerry Porras in their best selling book *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*.

BHAG stands for Big Hairy Audacious Goal and it is something that Collins and Porras discovered was at the heart of almost all companies that lasted over the long term.

On the flip side they discovered that most companies that don't have a BHAG tend to flounder along the way, ie. They don't last over the long run.

So, what exactly is a BHAG?

Leo Burnett, the famous advertising executive, said “If you reach for the stars, you might not quite get one, but you won’t end up with a handful of mud, either.” Well your BHAG is like the stars. You might never reach your BHAG, but by always shooting for it you will create a forward momentum that helps you to get a lot further than you could possibly have done without having your BHAG.

Your Big Hairy Audacious Goal can be absolutely crazy and almost totally unattainable. It might be to be the richest man in your town, the best-selling author in America or it could be a business goal such as 100% increase in productivity for three years in a row or the best company in the world for mega-widgets.

As long as you have your SMART goals to keep you focussed on your short to medium term objectives you can have a BHAG that lets you shoot for the stars. You might only ever reach the moon, but if you didn’t have your BHAG you might not even have achieved lift-off.

The author of Little Women, Louisa May Alcott, summed it up beautifully when she wrote:

“Far away there in the sunshine are my highest aspirations. I may not reach them, but I can look up and see their beauty, believe in them, and try to follow where they lead.”

In conclusion

1. Setting goals isn't a luxury.
2. Setting goals is a discipline that almost all successful people and corporations do religiously.
3. Always use SMART formula for setting your goals to make sure that they are well-formed.
4. Keep your goals in mind each day and you are sure to move forward far faster than you ever could had you not set any goals.
5. If you plan on setting some resolutions for the New Year make sure that they are SMART resolutions.
6. Make sure you have a well-balanced set of goals.
7. Give priority to what is important in your life at this moment in time without neglecting the other area of your life.
8. Follow the example of many leading corporations and set yourself a BHAG to make sure that you are constantly aimed at the stars.

SMART GOAL SETTING SHEET

Goal	CHECK LIST					Date Achieved
	S	M	A	R	T	
Business Goal						
Financial Goal						
Home Goal						
Social Goal						
Community Goal						
Charity Goal						
Health Goal						
Other Important Goal						
Other Important Goal						
Other Important Goal						
Other Important Goal						

INSTRUCTIONS:

In column one enter your goal in less than 20 words. Put a check in the appropriate column of the checklist to make sure that each criteria is met. If any column of the checklist is left unchecked it means your goal is NOT a SMART goal and so you need to reword it accordingly.

S = Specific M = Measurable A = Attributable R = Realistic T = Timed

Try to choose goals for each of the major categories and then select four additional goals (or as many as are necessary) to reflect what is currently most important in your life.

Inspirational Quotes for Goal Setting

'It's a funny thing about life: if you refuse to accept anything but the very best, you will often get it.' — **W. Somerset Maugham**

'An aim in life is the only fortune worth finding.' — **Robert Louis Stevenson**

'High expectations are the key to everything.' — **Sam Walton**

'We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars.' — **Oscar Wilde**

'Too low they build who build below the skies.' — **Edward Young**

'You've got to be very careful if you don't know where you're going, because you might not get there.' — **Yogi Berra**

'Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss it you will land among the stars.' — **Les Brown**

'The moon is the first milestone on the road to the stars.' — **Arthur C. Clarke**

'Obstacles cannot crush me. Every obstacle yields to stern resolve. He who is fixed to a star does not change his mind.' — **Leonardo Da Vinci**

'Hitch your wagon to a star.' — **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

'Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off your goal.' — **Henry Ford**

'You can't rest unless you set goals that make you stretch.' — **Tom Hopkins**

'Aim at heaven and you get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither.' — **C. S. Lewis**

'Many are stubborn in pursuit of the path they have chosen, few in pursuit of the goal.' — **Friedrich Nietzsche**

'Give yourself the freedom to explore the possibility of life without limits. Goals are dreams with deadlines, a means to an end but not the ultimate purpose of life.' — **Glynis Nunn**

Paul Smithson is the inventor of XSitePro and the CEO of Intellimon Limited. For more information on XSitePro and how it can help to take your online business to the next level visit:

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