Following Through With Your Goals

How many of us set goals for ourselves that we never see accomplished? Has making goals become something that you always do, but never achieve? In our family, at the end of each year we each set a goal for the coming year. Now, I have a confession to make, I have missed my goal the last two years. I've come to the conclusion that my lack of success has little to do with my desire to fulfill my goal, but everything to do with how I go about working toward my goal.

A goal is a specific and measurable objective that will be achieved within a specific cost, time and level of performance. The purpose of goals are to give you a focused direction of where you want to be in the future. In the workplace, goals allow everyone to know where the organization is headed and what he or she is to do to help.

Every goal needs a solid foundation. If you have no game plan for reaching the goal, you're doomed. Here are five steps on which to build a solid foundation. First, determine what is needed to achieve the real goal. Clearly articulate to yourself and others the goal for which you are striving and how it is to be accomplished. Second, pursue goals which support your real purpose. Make sure that your goal aligns with the mission and vision of your organization. Next, analyze risks associated with pursuing this goal. Is the goal worth what it will cost to accomplish, or the cost if it is not reached? Then you must measure your progress. At regular intervals see how things are going. If your goal is to increase sales by 10% over the next year, be sure to watch your quarterly reports. At the end of each quarter, are your sales increasing? These are the times where you may need to make adjustments in the way you are working toward the goal. In addition, consistently monitoring your progress will keep the goal in the front of everyone's mind. This is especially important with long-term goals. Long-term goals are the hardest to see through. Usually people are excited at the beginning and work hard to achieve the desire results. As times goes by, however, other projects and responsibilities come into the picture and the original goal may be put on the back burner. Some may even forget what the goal was! Finally, take individual responsibility for the goal. Everyone involved must have a sense of ownership for where the organization is going and a desire to do their part.

Now that we've looked at how to build a solid foundation for attaining your goals, let's see how to go about actually accomplishing them. Listed below are seven keys to implementing goals faster.

Make a list of the goal in a detailed form
The more detailed you can make a goal, the easier it will be to accomplish. Outlining the steps you need to take will keep you on task and give you clear direction where you are to go next.

I don't look to jump over seven-foot bars. I look around for one-foot bars that I can step over.
Warren Buffett
Financier

The Mathis Group's
Messenger

Make the goal measurable and quantifiable

Ambiguous goals are often hard to complete. Just saying that you want to decrease expenses does not give any clear direction. Be specific in what you want to do and how you are going to do it. Saying you want to decrease expenses by $10,000 by making your own resources rather than outsourcing them is a precise way to show where you are headed.

Break goals into small actions steps

I don't know about you, but I am a list person. There is just something about crossing an item off my to do list that gives me motivation to keep going. Visually seeing my list get smaller and smaller is very exciting. By breaking your goal into small steps, you can see how far you have come and what still needs to be done. It also ensures that nothing is forgotten or left out.

Focus on the benefits of achieving the desired goal

If no one knows the point of reaching a goal, there is little motivation. Remind everyone what will be gained by achieving what you set out to do. Inform everyone involved as progress is made.

Set realistic deadlines for achievement

Give a definite timeline for the completion of the goal. Deciding that you want to add a new product line is a very real and achievable goal. However, saying that you would like this product line to be ready in three months may not be realistic. Don't set yourself up for failure.

Examine who else will be needed to help you achieve success faster

There are some things that we just can't do on our own. You may need to enlist the help of other employees or departments in order to get the job done. Asking for help is not bad.

Build in rewards along the journey

Having rewards along the way for reaching certain milestones is a great way to keep your employees motivated. If your goal is to increase sales 5% by the end of the year, you may want to give a small bonus when you reach 3%. This will show your employees how much you appreciate the work that they've been doing and make them want to keep it up.
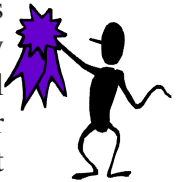
This year as I set my goals, I'm going to give myself a jump start by following these guidelines. I now understand that I can't set a goal and then forget about it until December. It's important to keep it in mind throughout the year. I'm going to create detailed steps to follow, set deadlines and definitely reward myself throughout the year for meeting milestones! My hope is that whether you are setting a personal goal or one for your organization, you can be successful in achieving it.

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