

## **Goals: Building Blocks of Success**

In the way that cells are building blocks of the human body, goals are the building blocks that propel a company or individual to succeed. Goals, if created in an effective manner, give somebody a clear path or direction to end up where they want to be. The key words in the last sentence are “if created in an effective manner.” Many people who create goals have a tendency to make them too vague, too easy, or unattainable. It is important to realize that there are many important steps to creating goals that will actually motivate people. According to a study done by Edwin A. Locke, an organizational psychologist, it is important for goals to be clear, challenging, the individual needs to be committed, and also the individual needs to receive feedback during the process of achieving these goals.

The first and probably most important issue in regards to setting personal and professional goals is making sure that each goal is very clear and precise. This means that specific numbers and deadlines should be assigned to the different things an individual is trying to achieve. According to Locke’s study, people respond and are more motivated by clearly defined tasks. For example, if an employer tells its sales people to increase sales, it gives everyone an idea of what direction the company wants to head in, but it does not really paint a very clear picture. By adding amounts like, “increase sales by 50 percent,” it allows the employees to visualize the number that they are trying to achieve.

Another good way to establish clarity is to set long term goals and the required steps to achieving them, or short term goals. It is always good to see the bigger picture when it comes to setting goals. This could mean setting goals that you are not expecting to achieve until at least five or ten years down the road. Although goals of this length can be important to the success of your company, the only way to motivate fellow employees is to provide them with short term steps to strive for. People that do not have well defined short term goals tend to procrastinate on the things they are trying to accomplish in the long run. Think back to the time when you were in high school and you always wanted to save that essay for the night before it was due. What did your teacher do to try and create some short term goals so that you did not end up writing that essay the night before it was due? She had you write an outline and a rough draft that were due before the final draft. Establishing strict deadlines for an employee may not be the best way to go about this in the workplace, but encouraging employees to create short term steps is definitely a beneficial idea.

As well as being very clear, goals should also be a challenge for the person undertaking them. For most people, the benefit of accomplishment is the most rewarding experience that a person can feel after achieving their goals. The problem occurs when goals are either not challenging enough or too challenging, because this can dilute or totally eliminate the feeling of achievement. With this in mind, it is important to establish goals that are within reason, but will take some hard work and dedication to achieve. For example, as a salesman it may be feasible for you to double your income after a few years of beginning a new job, because you are honing

and improving your skills. After having this job for around ten to fifteen years this goal becomes less and less feasible. It is important to come up with attainable goals in order to feel that sense of accomplishment after the goal is completed.

Before an employee can feel the benefits of accomplishing their goals they must first be committed to those goals. There is much debate on how to get employees to commit to certain goals, and here are a few tips. One of the easiest ways to get employees to commit is to include them in the goal setting process. Allow employees to voice their opinion about their abilities to accomplish certain tasks and establish where they think the bar should lie. As long as these goals are headed in the same direction as the overall goals of the company, it should help to empower the employee and make them feel like they are adding to the common good of the team.

Another good way to keep employees motivated is to provide feedback for them during the process. Feedback is important so that employees know whether or not they are on the right track. It will also allow the employee to know the quality of the work that they are doing because feedback helps to regulate this. It is good when an employee is able to increase his/her numbers, but not when it has a negative effect on the quality of the work that is completed.

Other methods that can be used to help increase quality and productivity in the work place are to actually have employees write down their goals on paper, or type them up. This will instill the goals in their minds and will not allow them to forget what direction they are headed in. When goals are not written down the specifics are often forgotten. When they are written down everything is always remembered and it is a lot more likely that they will be completed on time and with the specific requirements. This also allows employees to put their goals in a place where they can be seen on a daily basis, as a reminder of what direction he/she and the company are headed in.

Employers should also encourage employees to create personal goals because life is not all about work. Employees who have a strong feel of accomplishment in their personal lives are probably going to be happier, and more likely to be productive in their work place. Encouraging employees to pick up hobbies that they enjoy, and are willing to commit to, will allow them to feel more successful in their personal lives. Simple things such as committing to go snowboarding, biking, surfing or even restoring that old car in your garage can be great for an individual's morale.