

Set Demanding Goals

The best way to predict the future is to create it. - Peter Drucker

In order to produce superior results, you must first decide what you want. Create a crystallized mental picture of it. *What do superior results for you look like?* Then write it, draw it, or find photos of it.

The most effective consultants, coaches and mentors help their clients identify goals. What they discover is that often the clients do not have a clear sense of what they want to achieve. For example, many professionals and business owners say their goal is to improve their success. However, they can't describe what "success" looks like.

In such situations, the following process is invaluable and is arguably the most powerful process on the planet for defining goals and getting results! It is a process borrowed from the world's great psychotherapists. What you get when you follow these steps is called a "Well-Formed Outcome." When the goal is important to you, and you want to make sure you achieve it, simply answer these questions:

What do you want to achieve?

This seemingly simple question is where many people create failure. The question looks for two things – possibility and direction. Possibility. Some goals are impossible to achieve. *Ever watch the Miss America contest? What do you hear every year as the number one goal? "Achieve world peace!" Now, is that doable by those lovely and talented young women within the next year?* Of course not. That's an example of a goal that is impossible to achieve because it is too big. A better answer might be, "Feed 300 needy children every week for the next year."

Direction. Some roads lead to success, and some lead away from it. Those that lead away are headed in the wrong direction. To a Roman optimist, all roads led to Rome. The point is, unless you state your goal or outcome in positive language, you're heading in the wrong direction. For example, if you're in sales, you might say, "I want to grow the size of my territory by 10 percent." You would not say, "I want to avoid market stagnation." A goal stated in the positive allows you to focus on opportunities to make it happen. A goal stated in the negative interrupts your thoughts and stops you in your tracks.

Is this a goal you can achieve on your own?

Who's in charge? Is the outcome of your goal under your control or influence? Your goal must be something that is within your control. For example, you would say, "I want to exceed my quota and earn my bonus." You wouldn't say, "I want my boss to give me a bigger bonus."

If your goal is to write a book, but you can't type, you might find that the goal is impossible. In that situation, a better goal would be to complete a class in typing.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of achieving this goal?

This is known as an "ecology check." It is the question that causes many people to modify their goal or scrap it altogether when they realize that in order to achieve the goal, they will have to give up something else that is more important.

If you want to become the top salesperson in your firm, it is likely to require you to be out of town every week. That could destroy your family. *Which one is more important to you?* If you want to write a book, and you complete the typing class, you will then be put to the test – can you write prose that people want to read? If you doubt your creativity, you might value the dream more than the reality.

This question forces you to make some tough decisions. Dick Vermeil was the coach of the Kansas City Chiefs. He was caught between his love for the game and his love for his family. In order to achieve his goal of winning the Super Bowl, he would have to sacrifice his family, and he was not prepared to do that. Coach Vermeil resigned from the Chiefs to spend time with his family.

On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is it for you to achieve this goal?

This question determines your motivation for achieving the goal. It could be a goal that satisfies every criteria, but one that you are not passionate about. If so, you're not apt to succeed at it. The TV show *American Idol* exposes many people who would like to become pop stars, but they don't have

enough desire to take voice lessons. It also exposes other people who would pay any price to win.

What is important to you about achieving this goal?

This question looks at your values in the context of that goal. Every goal has associated values. If you find that you can't answer the question, then the goal probably doesn't fit easily within your values. The goals that are most easily achieved are those that are perfectly in sync with your values.

Where does this goal take you next?

This question puts your success into perspective of a bigger goal and helps define the direction for your life or career. The most successful goals are next steps in a process of greater achievement. Achieving each goal takes you one step closer to the achievement of a much larger goal. When you look back at your goals over a five- or 10-year period, *did you achieve more and more each year?*

Many people discover that they achieve the same goals over and over. That's because the goal is not part of a process of improvement. For example, lose 20 pounds – then what? Most people find that they then gain those pounds right back. Get a big client – *then what?*

If you haven't written it down, then you haven't thought it through!

About the Author

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