



SETTING GOALS FOR YOUR FUTURE

GOLDEN RULES OF GOAL SETTING

Five Rules to Set Yourself Up for Success

Have you thought about what you want to be doing in five years? Are you clear about what your main objective at work is at the moment? Do you know what you want to have achieved by the end of today?

If you want to succeed, you need to set goals. Without goals, you lack focus and direction. Goal setting not only allows you to take control of your life's direction, but it also provides you a benchmark for determining whether you are actually succeeding.

Think about it: having a million dollars in the bank is only proof of success if one of your goals is to amass riches. If your goal is to practice acts of charity, then keeping the money for yourself is suddenly contrary to how you would define success.

To accomplish your goals, however, you need to know how to set them. You can't simply say, "I want" and expect it to happen. Goal setting is a process that starts with careful consideration of what you want to achieve and ends with a lot of hard work to actually do it. In between, there are some well-defined steps that transcend the specifics of each goal. Knowing these steps will allow you to formulate goals that you can accomplish.

THE 5 GOLDEN RULES FOR GOAL PLANNING

1

Set Goals That Motivate You

When you set goals for yourself, it is important they motivate you. This means making sure they are important to you and that there is value in achieving them. If you have little interest in the outcome or they are irrelevant given the larger picture, then the chances of you putting in the work to make them happen are slim. Motivation is key to achieving goals.

Set goals that relate to the high priorities in your life. Without this type of focus, you can end up with far too many goals, leaving you too little time to devote to each one. Goal achievement requires commitment, so to maximize the likelihood of success, you need to feel a sense of urgency and have an "I must do this" attitude. When you don't have this, you risk putting off what you need to do to make the goal a reality. This in turn leaves you feeling disappointed and frustrated with yourself, both of which are de-motivating. You can also end up in a very destructive "I can't do anything or be successful at anything" frame of mind.

2

Set SMART Goals

You have probably heard of SMART goals already. But, do you always apply the rule? The simple fact is that for goals to be powerful, they should be designed to be SMART. There are many variations of what SMART stands for, but the essence is this – goals should be: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time Bound.

3

Set Goals in Writing

The physical act of writing down a goal makes it real and tangible. You have no excuse for forgetting about it. As you write, use the word "will" instead of "would like to" or "might." For example, "I will reduce my operating expenses by 10% this year," not "I would like to reduce my operating expenses by 10% this year." The first goal statement has power and you can "see" yourself reducing expenses. The second lacks passion and gives you an excuse if you get sidetracked.

4

Make an Action Plan

This step is often missed in the process of goal setting. You get so focused on the outcome that you forget to plan all of the steps that are needed along the way. By writing out the individual steps and then crossing each one off as you complete it, you'll realize you are making progress toward your ultimate goal. This is especially important if your goal is big and demanding, or long-term.

5

Stick With It!

Remember, goal setting is an ongoing activity, not just a means to an end. Build in reminders to keep yourself on track, and make regular time-slots available to review your goals. Your end destination may remain quite similar over the long term, but the action plan you set for yourself along the way can change significantly. Make sure the relevance, value, and necessity remain high.

SMART Goals

SPECIFIC

Set Specific Goals

Your goal must be clear and well-defined. Vague or generalized goals are unhelpful because they don't provide sufficient direction. Remember, you need goals to show you the way. Make it as easy as you can to get where you want to go by defining precisely where you want to end up.

MEASURABLE

Set Measurable Goals

Include precise amounts, dates, and so on in your goals so you can measure your degree of success. If your goal is simply defined as "To reduce expenses" how will you know when you have been successful? Without a way to measure your success, you miss out on the celebration that comes with knowing you have actually achieved something.

ATTAINABLE

Set Attainable Goals

Make sure that it's possible to achieve the goals you set. If you set a goal that you have no hope of achieving, you will only demoralize yourself and erode your confidence. However, resist the urge to set goals that are too easy. By setting realistic yet challenging goals, you hit the balance you need. These are the types of goals that require you to "raise the bar" and they bring the greatest personal satisfaction.

RELEVANT

Set Relevant Goals

Goals should be relevant to the direction you want your life and career to take. By keeping goals aligned with this, you'll develop the focus you need to get ahead and do what you want. Set widely scattered and inconsistent goals, and you'll fritter your time – and your life – away.

TIME BOUND

Set Time-Bound Goals

Your goals must have a deadline. Again, this means that you know when you can celebrate success. When you are working on a deadline, your sense of urgency increases and achievement will come that much quicker.