

Goals: The key to reaching your full potential



For the past few years, we have been writing articles on human factors that affect our judgment and how to guard against them. I have reviewed a number of human factors that can cause us to make errors and discussed approaches to reducing or preventing these errors.

Some of these human factors can become an issue in our day to day lives, depending on both our attitude towards the day and the task at hand.

The countermeasures to these human factors may require us to set some personal goals. In my human factors workshops, we discuss goal setting as a way to make changes in our habits and lifestyle. With any occupation, career or lifestyle we should always be setting goals.

Recent studies show that only two percent of North Americans ever set goals in writing and of those goals set in writing, 60 percent of those goals were achieved in the first year. What a success rate!

A goal is "an aim or purpose". It is a plan. Something you expect to accomplish according to a typical dictionary definition. I prefer the following definition: "A *goal is a dream with a deadline*". We need goals to reach our full potential in life. Once we establish goals, we have to be excited about our dreams. Only with the excitement of realizing your goal will you be able to do your best.

To create the excitement and an attitude to achieve your goal write down your dreams, set the goal. We have to set goals that challenge us, but they have to be reachable.

Here is an easy to remember method for setting goals. In setting goals we have to be **SMART**:

- **S** - *Specific* - goals must be specific and clearly identify your target
- **M** - *Measurable* - determine how you are going to see progress
- **A** - *Attainable* - it is within your capability
- **R** - *Realistic* - goals should be just beyond your immediate grasp
- **T** - *Timely* - create time lines

In order to achieve our goals, it may be necessary to change our attitude, comfort zone, people we associate with, and even our jobs. Some of the changes are quite critical. We have to admit we need to get out of a rut and make the necessary changes.

Setting Goals

1. Decide what you want.
2. Make a list of everything you would like to accomplish with no limitations.
3. What would you go after if you were guaranteed that you could not fail?
4. Write out a detailed explanation of why you want each of your goals and what achieving them will mean to you.
5. Build a plan for accomplishing your goals.
6. Read it three times a day.
7. Set the date of accomplishment.
8. Think of it often (start asking yourself: Is the direction I am taking today helping achieve my goal?).
9. Dream and imagine.
10. Do three things everyday towards the goal.
11. Stay positive (read and listen to positive things daily).
12. Act as though you have achieved it (conceive – believe - achieve).

So for some, a deterrent to setting goals is change. If we have been working with the same company for years, associating with the same people, and don't seem to be able to achieve what we want out of life, then it may be time for some radical changes. We need a new lease on life, a paradigm shift if we want to achieve some of our goals. You'll have to take it the next step beyond putting down your goals in writing if you want to achieve the results you want.

Set a time line with a clear definition on how to achieve the goals you made. Imagine trying to earn a college degree while attending evening classes without a goal. We need a clear idea on what degree we want and why. We have to chart out a clear course we need to take to get there. If we do not have this clear vision, as you can imagine, we could be wasting a lot of time and effort.

I encourage you today to read the previous human factors articles and think about which human factors may be negatively affecting your judgment. Establish countermeasures in your work habits to prevent their negative influences on your work. And, set some new goals for yourself that will help you in your profession. To set exciting, challenging and productive goals, pick a goal, and dream a dream because life has more in store for you than you could dare to imagine.