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Goals and Productivity

Concepts for Increased Productivity

We are challenged everyday to meet targets, achieve more, and make do with fewer resources. This is true of both our work and personal lives. Work projects abound and we volunteer for more at home and in the community. Our families are busier than ever with multiple jobs, school, sports, and other extra-curricular pursuits. It has never been more important for a person to set goals and to pursue them intelligently. This article will help you set appropriate goals, and then guide you in the conscious pursuit of them.

The Power of Focus

It is an error to create more goals than can be effectively focused on in a given time period. While the intention may be to complete a large number of projects, the reality is that dilution of effort occurs when attempting too much. By spreading your efforts too thin, the ability to focus your power is weakened; many times to the point of ineffectiveness.

Here are some key concepts that can help in setting goals that are meaningful and attainable:

1. Set goals that contribute only to the most important responsibilities
2. Goals must not conflict with one another.
 - For example, do not set a goal to spend more time watching your kids play soccer while agreeing to take over the management of a project in another state or country

3. Do not set goals so large that they are unattainable
4. It is advisable to subdivide a large goal into a series of smaller “sub-goals” or milestones that can be focused on.
 - Teach family and work teams to think of large tasks in this manner. It will make the total task manageable and will encourage them to complete the milestones

Focused efforts achieve maximum results. The sun provides us with illumination and warmth, but when focused with a magnifying glass, it can start fires.

5 Steps Toward Great Achievements

To make any long-term or permanent changes in our actions or behaviors, we should answer these questions for ourselves:

1. Why am I doing this?
2. When do I want to reach the goal?
3. How will I know when I achieve it?
4. What am I willing to do, or stop doing, to accomplish it?
5. What has limited my progress toward similar goals in the past?

The insight gained from analyzing our motives, strengths, and shortcomings can be very powerful. These data are necessary to create a plan for successful transformation. Without a plan, the goal cannot be attained.

Documenting Your Goals

It would be a great waste of time, effort, and talent to fail simply because the goals were unclear. I would like to suggest some guidelines

for the documentation and communication of your goals whether the audience is your family, your boss, or just yourself.

I recommend creating a document that contains the following four sections for each goal. I provide two examples to show how simple goal setting, tracking, and reporting can be. The first is business oriented. The second is personal.

1. State the Goal
 - a. Example 1: “Achieve \$1.3M in new revenue by November 30, 2013 for the new product category Y”
 - b. Example 2: “Lose 15 pounds and achieve a 32” waist line by July 1, 2013”
2. Explain why we are working toward this goal
 - a. Example 1: “To meet our division’s portion of the global sales plan for the new product launch”
 - b. Example 2: “To look great at the beach during summer vacation”
3. Measurements of Success
 - a. Example 1: “Use the guidelines provided by the finance department on February 1, 2013”
 - b. Example 2: “My weight will be measured on the bathroom scales at 6am each morning. My waist measurement will also be taken at 6am, using the yellow tape measure, standard posture, breathing normally”
4. How are we to report the progress toward the goal?
 - a. Example 1: “The finance department will provide a standard report every Monday showing our results”
 - b. Example 2: “I will record my weight and waist on the calendar stored in the vanity in the master bath”

Determining and then understanding what we want to become and achieve in our lives is a key to success and to happiness. Making progress toward these ends is what keeps us engaged in our lives and our work. The concepts set forth here are straightforward, uncomplicated, and effective. Use them to your benefit and to the benefit of those around you.

[Doug Ringer](http://www.dougringer.com) is currently a product manager for a large, global Tier 1 automotive firm. Doug has held global roles in marketing, manufacturing and R&D at General Electric, Ericsson, Honeywell and in a small private firm. He also served on the board of directors and president of the board of a civil rights organization based in Kentucky. Doug lives with his family near Louisville, Kentucky. Follow him at <http://www.dougringer.com>.