

The Art of Goal Setting

By Rob McKelvey

When I talk about goal setting I am talking about setting goals that will accomplish things that you want to accomplish; goals that you set for yourself so that you will be successful... whatever success means to you. A goal is a specific measurable result that you achieve in a determined time frame. Some people refer to goals as dreams with a time stamp. It may apply to areas in your life such as career, financial, health, spiritual, personal, community, or family. The important thing is that the goals need to be related to your priorities. They need to be related to what you value in life to have a fighting chance of being achieved.

Let me give you an example of what I mean. If you make a goal to lose weight after the New Year, as many of us did, but health is not a priority or value to us, then there is less chance of the goal being achieved. If the goal is not really important to us, then it has little meaning in our life. Why work to achieve something that has little importance to us.

How you think about something creates a belief or expectation in your mind and this belief will dictate the outcome of your goal. If you don't believe that the goal is achievable then it won't be. It is like that old saying, "Whether you think you can or you can't, your right." It is useful to remember the reasons why you want to succeed in achieving the goal and focus on the outcome that you want. After all, we get what we focus on. If we focus on the positive outcome, and visualize it, we can accomplish it.

To set ourselves goals we need to make sure that they are:

- *Clear* (not vague) and understandable, so we know what to do and what not to do.
- *Challenging*, so we will be stimulated and not be bored.
- *Achievable*, so we are unlikely to fail.
- *Time Based*.

I don't know who came up with the concept but I am happy to borrow it. It is the SMART approach to goal setting.

S – *specific (well defined), significant, stretching*

M - *measurable, meaningful, motivational*

A - *attainable, achievable, acceptable, action-oriented, agreed upon*

R - *realistic, relevant, reasonable, rewarding, results-oriented*

T - *time-based, timely, tangible, trackable*

Goal setting is a personal activity and it is important that you find a method with which you are comfortable. Having said that, I would like to offer you the following 8 step approach to goal setting as a suggested way to get the process started.

1. First determine what it is that you want to accomplish in an area of your life. Ensure that it is of value and priority to you. Understand the reasons why you want to accomplish this goal.
2. Write the goal(s) down. Writing it down helps to crystallise it. Be very specific about what you want to achieve and by when. It may be helpful to write it in the present tense. “It is now (future date) and I have/am....” Be realistic about what you can achieve. If it is not achievable there is no point in pursuing it.
3. Create action items for each of your goals. Break them down on a monthly, weekly, daily basis if necessary. Sometimes a goal can seem overwhelming but by putting them into “bite size” steps it becomes easier to achieve.
4. Plan the time for the action items. Actually put them in your calendar or diary. This will help them to be real and assist in accomplishing each step. Remember you have 168 hours to work with each week. (But don’t forget to sleep)
5. Make a list of obstacles that may get in the way of you achieving your goal. The purpose of this is to understand what could stop you from achieving what you have set out to achieve. If one of the obstacles is your mindset then you may have to make some changes to either the goal or your belief system. (a coach can help with this)
6. Make a list of the resources that are available to help you with achieving your goal. This could be people, courses, publications, associations, or anything else that can help you achieve your goal and/or overcome obstacles.
7. Share your goal(s) with others. This helps to make them more real and accountable for them. You may also find more support from these people to help you accomplish your goal(s).
8. Review your progress on a regular basis. (at a minimum monthly) Make adjustments as needed to get back on track. And celebrate major accomplishments.

Remember,

“Success is not the key to happiness, happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing you will be successful”.