

★ Five Reasons to Set Goals and One Reason Not To ★

“Setting goals is the first step in turning the invisible into the visible.” – Anthony Robbins

Imagine setting off on a journey to sail across the ocean without a set destination. You may have a sense of the general direction you are headed, but no specific path to get there. You may find yourself in England, realizing you wanted to get to Africa. As Yogi Berra would say, “If you don’t know where you are going, you might end up someplace else.”

Now imagine you have decided you want to get to Africa, but you have no compass to guide you. How will you know whether or not you need to correct your course? How will you know whether the efforts to correct your course are fruitful or futile? When will frustration set in?

Not having company goals can be akin to sailing across the ocean with no particular destination or road map to guide you. Organizations that lack clear goals are not taking full advantage of employee commitment and performance potential. As a result, organizational success is hindered.

By setting goals and measuring their success, employees are able to see where they are going, what they have accomplished, and what they are capable of. With each success, they should be able to accomplish more.

Here are five key reasons why business leaders need to set goals for their organization, teams and employees.

1. **Goals are motivational.** If someone asked you to sail the ocean with them, what image comes to mind? Can you visualize yourself on a boat in the middle of the ocean? Did you have a sense of purpose or direction? What if they asked you to sail to Africa within 90 days and go on a safari? Can you visualize yourself on a boat, heading towards Africa, with a clear purpose in mind? The difference between these goals is that the latter one creates a clear sense of purpose and direction. It is more likely to spur action. The former seems more like a dream or a purposeless adventure. Thus, well-stated goals provide a sense of meaning, purpose and direction.
2. **Goals provide clear expectations.** Setting clear goals is an excellent way to focus attention on what you want others to accomplish. The clearer the expectation of the goal the more likely buy-in will occur. People will focus their actions and effort towards achieving the goal.
3. **Goals drive employee performance.** When goals are clearly set, measured and monitored, they provide employees with a sense of forward progress in what might previously have seemed like a pointless grind. It gives them a sense of pride in their accomplishments and identifies what they may need to do to improve performance. Recognition for milestones achieved builds employee confidence towards long-term goals. This is especially important when goals are more challenging.
4. **Goals enable teams to work towards a common purpose.** A common understanding of the team’s purpose helps everyone understand what the team is aiming to achieve and why. This reduces the likelihood that team members will be pulled in different directions, working on needless activities, or getting into unnecessary conflict. Goals also challenge teams to innovate and set higher standards for themselves and the company.
5. **Goals support company culture.** Setting goals is an opportunity for the company to strengthen their work culture. For example, if team work is important to your organization, then goals that

enable and encourage teamwork will support company values and drive respective behaviours. If quality is important to your organization, then quality goals will foster a quality minded culture.

By setting goals, your organization will increase its ability to meet goals, build employee confidence, improve team communication, and increase overall pride and satisfaction.

However, we would be remiss if we did not advise you on an important reason why not to set a goal.

People want to work in an environment where they can contribute in a meaningful way. They do not want to waste their time, talents and effort on something that doesn't make a difference. If a goal is not imperative to your company strategy and you do not intend to monitor or measure it, don't set the goal. Nothing frustrates an employee more than working on something that lacks purpose. They want to know that their job contributes to company success.



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