

The What, When, How and Why of Effective Goal-Setting

By Joe Rosenlicht

Goals are more than a to-do list. Effective goal-setting entails not only *what* we want to achieve, but also by *when* we want to achieve it, and *how* we go about it (i.e.) the intermediate steps. It should also involve the *why* - why we want to reach a particular goal. What will it bring to our lives?

Once we know the what, when, how and why, that's really half the battle. The next step is to write down our goal(s). Don't only write them down, but also display them prominently throughout the home and/or office - on the refrigerator, on the bathroom mirror, above your desk, and on the nightstand so we can see them right before we go to bed at night and first thing in the morning. The point is that the more places we see our goals in writing, the more mindful we are of them, and the more likely we'll be to stay committed to them.

It's also important to set compelling and challenging goals - ones that will make us stretch and grow. The usual and understandable fear is failure to reach them, at least not in the time frame we set for ourselves. If this happens, it simply means that it's an opportunity to reevaluate if we're truly committed to those goals. It's also a good time to assess whether the actions that we've taken are the most effective, appropriate and productive.

The other fear with setting compelling goals is that we're suddenly taken out of our comfort zones. And that can be a little scary for anyone. But with the support, encouragement and motivation from a coach, for example, the process is made that much less painful. Someone once said, "Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you'll still be among the stars."

When it comes to reaching our goals, one of the most critical things that a coach can create is momentum - the sense of consistently moving forward in pursuit of where we want to be or want to have. Without this important element, it's all too easy to become complacent and comfortable with where we currently are, or to get off track, which only delays reaching our goals.

Goal-setting provides the necessary structure we need to live the lives we envision. And the key to effective goal-setting and achievement are:

- Defining the what, when, how and why.
- Setting challenging and compelling goals.
- Writing down and displaying our goals.
- Enlisting the help of a coach for motivation, accountability, clarity, structure and momentum.

Putting all of these approaches into practice will virtually ensure success. And in the immortal words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The reward of a thing well done is to have done it."

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