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2013 Goal Setting - A Success Formula for Peak Performers

The world makes way for the man who knows where he is going, - Ralph Waldo Emerson

Peak performers set short- and long-term goals, define missions, take educated risks, and work in teams for top achievement.

Peak performers function individually, in much the same way as groups involved in large-scale projects; a mission must be broken down into smaller, more achievable goals.

The peak performer tackles his mission by setting a series of short-term goals, which require approximately two or three months to complete, intermediate goals, which take about one year to achieve, and long-term goals, which require two to three years. He first determines and then concentrates his efforts on those goals that are significant, that will advance his mission. The peak performer's goals must matter deeply; they must get you out of bed in the morning. For goals to be truly motivating, you must know exactly how they contribute to your mission.

Goals and Missions

The long-term goal serves as a major stepping stone leading toward the eventual expression and actualization of your personal philosophy. If, for example, you are the manager of a small department in a large corporation, your long-term goal might be to obtain additional

management training and to assume additional responsibility and exposure outside the department, as a stepping stone for actualizing your mission of becoming the general manager of the corporation. Or, your goal might be to insure better management techniques, financial strategies, and marketing practices, thus establishing a stepping stone for actualizing your mission of being a CEO of a highly successful, financially sound corporation. The long-term goal you choose should embody those experiences you find intensely satisfying and which you feel a strong desire to experience again.

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As you think about your long-term goal, you should feel yourself becoming excited. You should feel that this goal is something you want very much to achieve. You should also feel that accomplishing this goal will greatly contribute to actualizing your sense of mission/purpose (a passionate belief in a

personal philosophy establishes the basis for setting goals).

You may feel that committing yourself to this long-term goal is taking a risk on your part, because it requires from you to do something that is beyond what you presently know to be your limits. Remember that peak performers are, by their nature, educated risk-takers, and they know what engaging the risk itself becomes a source of excitement, with its own positive force for activating the powers of volition.

A peak performer's long-term goal should be clearly defined. Its definition should include a timetable: when you will initiate your plan to achieve your goal and when you plan to achieve it. As you define this goal, be aware that rewards are an inherent factor; however, these rewards are always highly individualized. For example, becoming the vice-president of a large organization may be a reward desired by one person, while developing a new skill is the reward sought by another. Rank the rewards inherent in your long-term goal according to their importance or priority to you. When defining a long-term goal, a peak performer keeps in mind that his performance will be influenced by the clarity of his goal statement.

General Guidelines

Here are some guidelines for goal-setting:

- Have a clear understanding of why you have chosen a goal; know exactly how it will further your mission.



- Determine who can give you feedback as you progress toward the goal.

- Know what rewards you can expect when you achieve it.

- Classify those goals that contribute to the success of your mission. Determine which of your goals are short-term, intermediate, and long-term in nature.

- Picture the attainment of each goal in your mind's eye. In other words, see yourself involved in the process of getting there. Imagine the sights and sounds—even the smells—associated with the attainment of each goal. Create all the necessary details in your imagination.

Put aside any doubts, fears, or other inhibitions and establish goals that truly challenge your potential.

- To help define goals, try the blue-sky technique: take a large, blank sheet of paper, and write down everything you have ever passionately wanted to happen in your life. You can type vs. write, but putting pen to paper makes it more personal. Don't hold anything back.

As we grow out of childhood, experience teaches us to tone down our expectations in life, or to refrain from “placing all our eggs in one basket.” However, it is essential that you put aside any doubts, fears, or other inhibitions and establish goals that truly challenge your potential.

Risk-taking peak performers know how to take educated risks. Thus, they avoid remaining in the “comfort zones” that trap lower-level achievers and they rise to ever-higher levels of achievement.

Leaving Comfort Zones

A comfort zone is a range of predictable productivity and performance. When an individual is in a comfort zone, his work is no longer a challenge to him. People remain in these comfort zones because they have unconsciously imposed limitations on themselves; often they do so out of fear of failure or success.

- The fear of failure—the fear of not meeting prescribed personal or professional standards and of disappointing themselves, their families, or their business associates determines the lower limit of their performance level.

- The fear of success—the fear of attaining performance levels at which they will be expected to perform consistently and of alienating

colleagues whose professional image may suffer by comparison determines the upper limit of their performance level.

The peak performer seldom sets limits for himself; he has learned to overcome the fear of failure and the fear of success. He is committed to the development of his potential at the highest level. This commitment, by its nature, demands carefully considered, creative risk-taking. The peak performer does not take personal or professional risks casually, carelessly, or frequently. He realizes that major decisions—those that may have a life-changing effect—are not required of us daily.

The peak performer seldom sets limits for himself.

The art of educated risk-taking prepares people to make, rather than avoid, critical decisions when opportunities arise. One of the most important techniques commonly employed by peak performers is the use of a catastrophe report. That is, as an integral part of the decision-making process, they consider the catastrophe—the worst possible consequence of the decision to be made—and what they would do in that situation.

This explains why peak performers do not seem as anxious as many other individuals when they are taking major risks. Peak performers already know, far in advance, how they will recover should their decision result in a severe loss. They can engage the risk as though it were no risk at all.

Working in Teams

Peak performers recognize the need for collaboration, for teamwork, both in their personal lives and on the job.



In fact, many peak performers report that teamwork is essential to the success of their mission. Each of us needs other people. We all need the emotional support of others, their feedback and their assistance in solving problems. This is true for leaders who aim to achieve their goals within complex organizations as freelance writers or artists who work alone.

“Although we are a corporation, our people show intense loyalty to each other and to the firm. We are in this for the sake of one another.”

I attribute the success of our company largely to the effective teamwork. With a staff a fraction of the size of some multi-national rivals, our company generates an equal or larger revenue volume. We attribute this to close cooperation among employees.

“Although we are a corporation, our people show intense loyalty to each other and to the firm. We are in this for the sake of one another.”

Leaders and team members who understand the overall mission and how their work contributes to the success of that mission are better able to pool their energies and efforts and, therefore, share in the rewards and gain satisfaction from their jobs.



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