3 Common Goal Setting Mistakes

Setting and achieving goals is one of the best surefire ways to improve the quality of our lives. We commonly use goals to improve our health, relationships, financial situation, career or business success, and even happiness. Sometimes goals are set for us, as in a work situation, but most of the time we determine our own goals. Successfully achieving those goals is not only key to advancing our careers, but also to help us to grow as individuals. Unfortunately, when choosing our goals, we often unknowingly sabotage our success, by committing these three very common goal setting mistakes.

Thinking Too Narrowly

One of the biggest benefits of creating goals is that they force us to focus our time, attention, and energy on a specific objective, instead of scattering our focus and our resources among the broad range of possibilities vying for our attention. When we concentrate our efforts on a specific target, we’re more likely to accomplish our goals and less time.

That said, setting a goal that is too specific, while achievable, can lead to a goal setting mistake, by missing the true intention of our goal in the first place. We fall into this common trap by thinking too narrowly, and missing the bigger picture of what we’re really hoping to achieve. Unfortunately, this often leads, to wasted effort and frustration.

Setting a goal to lose 20 pounds for example, might be very valuable to a person who is otherwise healthy, but just carries a little bit of extra weight. For others, losing 20 pounds, while appealing, is misdirected effort, when the real goal is to achieve better health. When you look at the bigger picture, losing weight might not be the most effective goal. Perhaps quitting smoking would be more valuable. Lowering cholesterol and blood pressure or reversing heart disease might be better served by changes in diet or increased activity. Though losing weight might be a byproduct, it isn’t actually the true goal.

Another example of a too specific goal might be to increase the number of sales calls or project numbers, when the real goal is to advance our career, and a more valuable goal might be to attain an advanced certification or further our education to make us more valuable to an employer. Still another to specific goal might be to find the perfect mate, when the real goal is to be happier. Even if we find the perfect mate, we won’t necessarily be happier, because we have missed the true underlying need.

Quantity VS. Quality

In our zealosity for accomplishment, we unwittingly sabotage our forward movement by setting quantity goals rather than quality goals. Quantity goals may simply mean that we have set too many goals at one time rather than focusing our attention on a single, or a select few quality goals. But perhaps more important, is the distinction between a quality goal and a quantity goal.

Quantity goals usually deal with numbers while quality goals generally deal with an improvement in our overall quality of life and work. Unfortunately, quantity goals are easier and faster to achieve so they tend to draw our interest, but often quality goals have more impact on making important changes that address our most crucial needs.

When setting goals, focus on quality rather than quantity to avoid goal setting mistakes. Also, notice if you tend to automatically gravitate to “numbers” goals. Quantity, “numbers” goals are not inherently bad, and can be very useful
as long as they are also quality goals that address the bigger picture.

**Unrealistic expectations**

We see this common mistake time and time again. If we set a goal of finding a new job or getting a promotion but only give ourselves one month to do so, we’re just setting ourselves up for failure. Writing your first book generally takes more than six weeks, six months is a more realistic goal. Also, be sure your goals are within your control.

Being offered a new job, might not be within your control, but revising your resume, hiring a career coach, or sending out resumes and checking job postings every week is within your control. Finding an agent or publisher in a specific timeframe probably isn’t within your control, but completing a book proposal, and contacting potential agents is within your control.

keep these common pitfalls in mind When determining goals. Set goals that impact the bigger picture and address your true objectives. Don’t get caught in the trap of thinking too narrowly and concentrate on quality over quantity. Make sure your goals are realistic, within your control and have a reasonable timeframe. While you’re at it, take a look at past goals that you weren’t able to achieve, see if you can revise them, and try again.

**Pick SMART And Reach Goals To Motivate Yourself To Success**

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I’m sure you have all heard about setting goals that are “SMART”: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-Bound. It’s an incredibly effective way to set a goal as it keeps you accountable: it is realistic, it has a deadline, you first have to make sure it is attainable and within your abilities, and you must have a way to measure your success (or lack thereof).

However, some people have issues with SMART goals. They find them constraining and un-motivating as it does not leave room for the big life goals that move us forward. Goals that are not specific are incredibly motivating. Goals like: Become an expert on XX, Be a Famous Fiction Author, etc. These types of goals are necessary to give life passion, a fire – to propel you forward. The goal many not be measurable enough, but it feels amazing to have such a goal. That is where the REACH goal comes in.

A Reach goal is an ultimate end goal that moves you. It need not have a deadline or even be terribly specific, but it must motivate you – it has to get you going every day. It has to make you want it. And it is that drive that is often missing from the SMART goal, which often makes life just seem like an endless to do list. So, to make your goals more effective, couple SMART goals with a Reach goal.

This is what you do:

**Find a life goal that motivates you**

You can have more than one, but definitely less than 10. Usually 5 reach goals are enough for a lifetime. These are the goals you want to have accomplished by the end of your life. These are the goals you will the most proud. These are the goals to fuel you.

**Write the reach goals down – and look at them every day**

It’s easy to think that with such motivating goals, you’d constantly be reminded of them, right? But it’s actually pretty easy to forget our reach goals. It’s very easy that during the chaos of everyday life we get caught up in the motions and completely forget the goals that will move us to greatness. So write them down, and look at them. Every day. This is the motivation part.
Pick a couple of SMART goals for each Reach goal

Most people can easily pick a couple of reach goals. What is hard is making them happen and that is where the SMART goals come in. It's now time to write down the goals that will get you to take action. Go to your list of reach goals and under each of them, write down a couple of SMART goals that will help propel you forward. Follow the directions and make them Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-Bound.

Write the SMART goals down – and look at them every day

Your SMART goals will change constantly while your reach goals will remain the same. As you accomplish one SMART goal after another, you will add a new goal to the list. I recommend you carry a piece of paper where there is plenty of room to add and cross out your SMART goals as you go along, but not too big where it will be difficult to carry. Look at this list daily.

Make each goal work for you

The purpose of the reach goal is to motivate you. So when you look at the paper with the goals, imagine yourself attaining the reach goal. Visualize how amazing it will be to achieve the goal. Think of how good it will feel. Believe in your ability to accomplish the reach goal. Let it fuel and drive you. Feel the goal running through your veins.

Then, look at the SMART goal and let them guide you and narrow your focus. Make plans around the SMART goals, commit yourself to them. Believe you are capable of achieving these goals. Write any necessary steps in your daily to-do list. Look at the SMART goals constantly to make sure you’re on the right track.

Let the reach goals fuel you and then let the SMART goals take the wheel to drive you forward.

The more you visualize yourself achieving the reach goal, the more you believe you can do it, the more your life will steer in that direction. The more you focus on achieving the SMART goals, the more you guarantee the reach goals will happen, and the more motivated you will become to continue doing more.

So if you find yourself demotivated by your SMART goals, it’s time to think up some reach goals. If you find yourself constantly day dreaming about achievement but never getting any work done, it’s time to pick some SMART goals. If you combine both, your goal-achieving ability will be unstoppable!