

Goal Setting is Essential.
SMART GOAL SETTING IS BETTER.

**A Step-By-Step Guide To Smart Goal Setting And Achieving
Personal, Professional and Micro Business Goals**

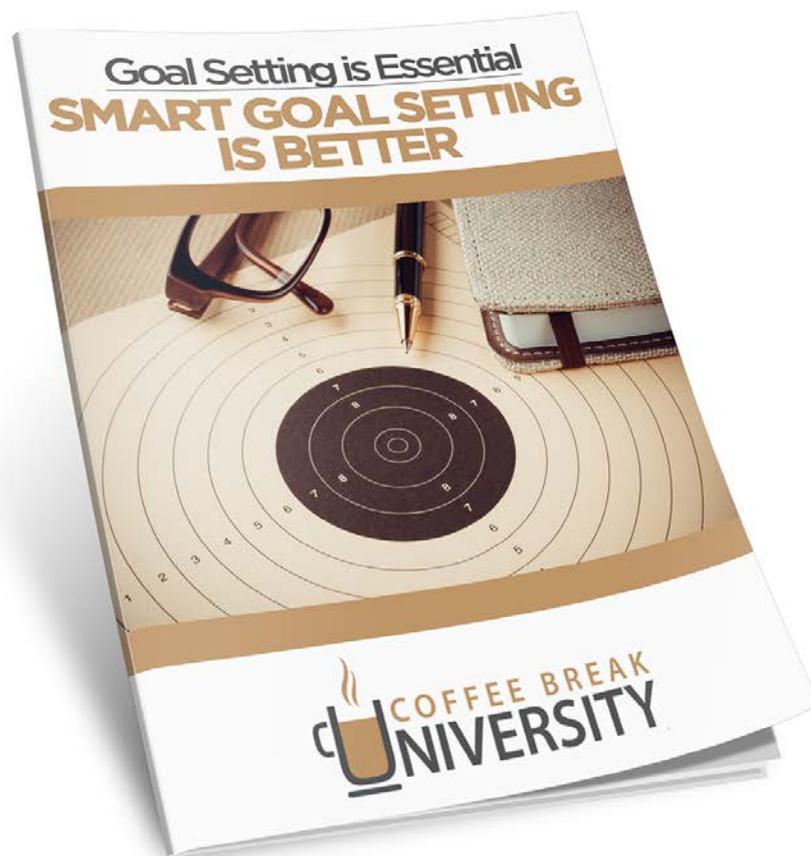


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In Coaching and Leadership, Mastering Goal Setting Is Essential for Success in Life and Business

Whenever you're coaching individuals or teams, providing firm leadership or setting your personal sights on important achievements, learning a rational and sustainable goal setting process is crucial. There is simply no better way to produce real lasting change.

Most of our members find it's helpful to *sharpen the goal setting saw* from time to time. If your goal setting practices deserve a tune up, this step-by-step guide is for you:

Look closely at most anything you've achieved in your life and you'll discover that there was probably a thoroughly planned and well executed goal behind it. Here are the reasons why goal setting is so important.

Clarity

Goal setting gives you clarity about what you want. Most of us have vague desires floating around in our heads. If you don't set down in concrete terms exactly what you want, you'll end up spinning your wheels and getting nothing done. You actually create your goals twice - once in your mind and once later in reality. The clearer the vision in your mind, the easier it is to formulate concrete steps that will get you there.

Responsibility

When you set down a goal and start working toward it, you give yourself a sense of responsibility to see it through. You can easily understand that whether or not you attain your goal has little to do with outside influence and everything to do with your attitude and actions. You can no longer blame others for your failure to get what you want. You become solely accountable.

Action

If you set your goal well, it will give you a concrete action plan. Wishing for things to happen doesn't do this. You know that you have to get started today

and take small steps toward your eventual target. An important part of the goal setting process is breaking up your goals into smaller goals and a daily action plan that will get you there.

Motivation

Without a goal, how do you stay on target, especially when things go wrong? Making daily progress toward your goal through your action plan gives you the motivation to keep going. You can see how far you've come and you know that it would be a shame to turn back. For many people, simply putting your goal into words and getting started is a great motivator.

Focus

Without laser-sharp focus, you're unlikely to ever achieve great things in your life. Having a goal and plan for achieving it keeps you completely focused on what you need to do in order to get there. It's much harder to be distracted or led astray by shiny objects. If you set goals, you know exactly where to put your energy each day to get it done.

One Goal at a Time

Goal setting is important but there's a right and wrong way to do it. Like any skill, it's something you need to learn and practice. Most people don't learn from their goal-setting mistakes and they continually struggle to attain the goals they desire. You're motivated and you've got lots of changes you want to make in your life or business, but slow down. Take it one goal at a time. Choose which is most important to you and focus on it. Let the others wait. Once you're in the groove with the first goal, you can think about adding something else. Most of us are too busy to tackle more than one and there's the risk of burning out.

Make the Goal Setting Process SMART

You can do just about anything if you know how to set goals, but most of us don't. It takes quite a bit of planning and if you're not a planner, it can be tough. That's why we have the SMART method for setting goals. SMART means that a goal should be:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Action-oriented
- Realistic, and
- Time-based

Is your goal SMART? Let's take a closer look at this method and what these words mean.

Specific

Being specific helps you focus on exactly how you're going to reach your goal. Start by creating a statement that explains what you'll do. Use the phrase 'I will'. Now, ask yourself the what, why and how of this goal to refine it. Make it as detailed as possible. This will help you generate the sub-goals and steps that you need to take to get there.

Measurable

There needs to be some way to know when you've reached your goal. The results have to be measurable. If you want to make more money, for example, choose a specific dollar amount that you'd like to be making per year. The great thing about making goals measurable is that you can easily see your progress and this keeps you motivated to work on it.

Action-oriented

Without action, goals are never attained. Break your goals down into smaller goals, and then specific actions you can take to make them happen. Think about things you can do today that will bring you closer to achieving your goal. Also plan actions you can take when things don't go as planned. During the course of working your way toward your goal's attainment, set aside time to reflect on

your actions and assess the results. If you're not getting the results you want, make the necessary changes.

Realistic

Goals only work when they're realistic. What this really means is that you can see the big picture of what you need to do. Ask yourself whether or not this goal is something you can do - or even *want* to do. Take some time to think about your strengths and weaknesses. Which parts are going to be easy and which will be difficult? Develop a plan for the challenges you're going to face.

Time-based

Set up a detailed timeframe for when your goal and all of your sub-goals are going to be achieved. Since this is hard to estimate if you've never done it before, make the best guess possible and change your timeframe slightly if you need to. We often find that it takes longer than we planned. However, you need to have a definite deadline to add urgency to it.

A great way to plan out your goal is to use mind maps. Mind maps are visual tools used for brainstorming and setting out tasks. At the center is your main goal and all of your sub-goals branch out from it. You can then define timeframes and exactly how you're going to reach all of your sub-goals. Mind maps put goal planning in a visual format that makes it easy for you to see the big picture.

Make Goals Specific and Action-Oriented

In order to be achievable, goals must be specific. How can you reach a goal when you're not sure exactly what it is? Goals need to be clear and as detailed as possible. One way to clarify your goals is to ask yourself the what, when, who, why and how.

What's Your Goal?

When you're deciding what it is exactly that you want, make a statement that includes all of the specifics. Instead of saying that you want to save money, decide on a certain dollar amount. If you want to lose weight, decide how many pounds. Take a simple statement like 'I will have more self-confidence' and turn it into a detailed plan of action.

When Will You Reach It?

It's equally important to make a specific timeframe. This is the deadline when your goal will be completed. You should do this not only for the main goal, but also for all of the little steps you need to take in order to get there. Create a clear timeline and as you work toward your goal, reflect to see if you're keeping up. If you're not, make a few adjustments until it's more realistic.

Who Do You Need to Help You?

There are very few goals that you can reach completely by yourself. You'll find that there are some people whose help, expertise, or support you're going to need. If you're trying to quit smoking, you're going to need support and encouragement. If you want to become an online entrepreneur, you'll need mentors to learn from and assistants to handle tasks you can't do yourself. Decide who you need and reach out to them before you get started.

How Are You Going to Get There?

When you're looking at a specific goal that you'll reach on a certain date in the future, you might be wondering how on earth you're going to get from here to there. The way people do it is to take their big goal and break it up into smaller ones. If the smaller ones are still too big, break them up further. In fact, it really helps to break your sub-goals into daily actions that will get you closer to

achieving them. After you've broken it all down into small steps, you've got your roadmap for how to get there.

Why Do You Want It?

Ask yourself honestly why you want to attain this goal and make sure that you understand the true reasons. Keep these reasons in your mind as you work toward making it happen. They'll give you motivation and inspiration, which will really help you stay on track when things don't go according to plan.

A great way to discover the answers to these questions is to visualize. Imagine yourself in the future after you've achieved your goal. Picture yourself also taking the steps you need to take to get there. This will help you come up with realistic answers to the questions above.

Staying on Track with Goals - How to Measure Goal Progress

One of the most important parts of goal setting is measuring your progress. When you measure your progress you can see how you're coming along, and this is a powerful motivator to help you stick with it. It gives you a realistic picture of the situation and lets you know when you need a change of strategy. Here are some good ways to measure your progress.

Facts and Figures

No matter what type of goals you've set, find a way to quantify progress. If you're saving money or dieting, this is easy to do. You can keep track in pounds lost or dollars saved. If your goal is something that's not easily quantifiable, like spending more time with your family, track it as a number of hours. For example, 'I spent 15 hours this week with my kids.'

Stay on Schedule

In order to reach a goal, you need to break it into sub-goals and put them into some kind of timeframe. This is how you stay organized. It's also a great way to chart your progress. You can see if you're hitting your targets or not. Sticking to your schedule is important, but give yourself some flexibility. The real point of setting these deadlines is to monitor progress. Change them as you go if you need to.

Keep a Journal

When you decide on your goal and you have the specifics worked out, write it down on the first page of a notebook. This notebook will be your goal journal. Set aside a little bit of time each day to write about how it's going. Imagine that you're writing a letter to your future self. Your journal entries don't have to be long or incredibly detailed. Just write about what you did today and how you feel about it.

Tick It

Another even easier idea than a journal is to keep a simple tick sheet. When you complete a task, simply tick it off. You can create a tick sheet or find one online that you can download. Using a calendar is another way to do it. Tick sheets are

great for marking off your daily tasks and sub-goals. They give you a visual representation of how far you've come.

Ratings and Rankings

You can keep track of your progress by creating your own rating and ranking system. Make a system that goes from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest. If, for example, you want to become more confident, you can monitor your confidence each day and rate it. A rating of 5 might mean you're ready to take on the world; 1 means that you want to crawl into bed and hide!

Who's Got the Time?

All of the above suggestions take time out of your busy schedule. When you're working toward an important goal, you may feel that you don't have much to spare. However, the little bit of time that you take to measure your progress benefits you considerably. The key is to decide how much time you can devote to measuring goal progress and choose a system that fits it.

Actions Speak Louder Than Words – Goal Planning and Taking Action

How do you achieve your big goals in life? You break them up into smaller goals that are easier to reach. How do you reach these smaller goals? By breaking them up into action steps. These are things that you do to get closer to achieving them. Goals are reached in stages, not all at once.

Turning Goals into Actions

When you're breaking your goals into action steps, pick tangible targets. This means making the action step something that you'll know you've finished. In other words, it has to be measurable. Each of these steps may be a task that once completed gets you closer to the goal. Choose one or a handful of actions to take each day.

You and Your Cluttered Garage

As an example, let's say that you want to clean up all the random junk in your garage. What sub-goals would you use? One tangible sub-goal with a measurable outcome is to put everything away. Another sub-goal to having the garage organized is to label your storage containers. Getting rid of extra stuff you don't need would be another.

You'd then break each of these sub-goals into action steps. Remember that the end result has to be achievable. For the first sub-goal of putting things away, you might break it into an action step for each area of the garage. Divide the garage into smaller areas that can be de-cluttered within an afternoon (or however much time you choose to designate to it).

The Devil's in the Details

Tangible means something that can be measured. Depending on the type of goal, you should use facts and figures. If you're trying to lose weight, decide on an exact number of pounds. If it's money, break it down into dollar amounts. Use action words to define your tasks. On your list of things to do, don't write 'gym' or 'garage sale.' Instead, write 'go to the gym' or 'have a garage sale.' The verb is important because it reminds you that this is an action that needs to be taken.

Keep It Realistic

Don't forget that the reason we break goals down into steps is to make them more realistic. Any goal is achievable if you break it into bite-sized chunks and affix realistic timeframes to these chunks. Goals that revolve around learning a new skill are especially daunting, but when you break them down in this way, they become possible.

If your action steps seem more like giant leaps, this doesn't mean you should give up. It just means you need to break them up into smaller actions that are easier to achieve.

Monitor Your Progress

A journey of a thousand miles starts with one step. Once you're several hundred miles on your way, it doesn't seem so far at all. Monitor your progress and log it in a journal or computer file. This shows you how far you've come in working toward your goal and that adds more motivational fuel to the fire.

How to Tell Whether the Goals Are Realistic

You can make anything happen if you know how to set goals, but they need to be realistic. This might seem like a contradiction - sort of like saying dream big but not too big. When we talk about goals, being realistic simply means looking at the big picture. With enough commitment, planning and determination, you can achieve nearly anything.

Be Specific

The first step in creating realistic goals is to be as specific as possible. There's no way to reach a goal like 'lose weight' or 'gain more self-confidence.' It needs to be something concrete and measurable. What would work is something like, 'Lose X pounds so that I can fit into the swimwear I wore five years ago' or 'Gain enough self-confidence to get up in front of a group and speak without losing my mind completely.'

Evaluate Your Skills

Is your goal something that you've got the skills to achieve? For example, let's say that your goal is to become an online entrepreneur. Can you build websites, do social media, create content, and network with other businesspeople? If you don't have all the skills it needs, that doesn't mean it's impossible. What it means is that you've got skills to learn. Learning these skills provide you with sub-goals that get you closer to reaching your main goal.

The Resources Your Need

Along with skills, do you have the resources you need to reach the goal in question? If you want to get into better shape, you're going to need a place to do that. You may have to find information resources on how to eat better if that's what you want to do. First of all, brainstorm all the resources you'll need and take stock of what's available. If you don't have access to what you need, make a plan for getting it.

Time Considerations

When it comes to being realistic about goals, time is probably the biggest consideration. All goals take time to reach. Do you have the time it'll take? A

good way to figure this out is to read about it or talk to others who have done what you're getting ready to do. Use this information to create a timeframe for yourself.

Research Your Roadblocks

There's a chance that you'll come across a roadblock that, no matter how you try, you just can't get over. It's good to know about these before you invest lots of time in reaching your goal. The best way to avoid this is to do your homework before you get started. Learn from the experience of others that have done this before. For example, if you want to become a lawyer, educate yourself well on what it takes to become one. Talking to others who have done it before also helps you find out whether or not it's a goal that's worth pursuing.

Deciding whether or not a goal is realistic is a test for you. What you're actually asking yourself is whether or not you're able and willing to work for it. Identify your natural strengths and weaknesses. Your strengths will make it easier for you and your weaknesses will tell you what you need to work on. That's what being realistic is all about.

Attach a Timeframe to the Goals and Make Them Happen

Have you ever heard of SMART goal planning? This stands for: Specific, Measurable, Action-Oriented (or Achievable), Realistic, and Timely. The last is probably the most important. Your goals need a timeframe because without one, you can easily spin your wheels and never reach them. A timeframe adds a sense of urgency to your goals and that's just what they need.

How to Set Deadlines

Creating a timeframe is based on setting deadlines. Just like a deadline for work or school, this is the day when you'll reach that goal. The first step in creating deadlines is to define the overall timeframe. Will this goal take a few years, months, weeks, or days to reach? Choose a day in the future that you think is realistic and don't worry, you can go back and change it later.

Once you've got your deadline, break your goal into small action steps that will get you closer to it. These should all be tasks that can be finished and clearly defined. In other words, you know exactly when they're done. You'll take these sub-goals and affix deadlines to them as well. These deadlines will gradually get you to your big one.

Example - Eating Better

For example, your goal might be to eat better. You'd first decide exactly what 'eat better' means - more veggies, less sugar, smaller portions of meat, etc. To do this, take your overall goal and break it into these smaller and more specific sub-goals.

You might choose to make one change per week. By Friday, you'll be eating three portions of green vegetables per day (remember that it has to be specific). By the next Friday, you'll be consuming half as much sugar per day. You've now got an action plan and a solid timeframe for it.

How to Make Your Deadlines More Efficient

There are several ways to make your deadlines more efficient. First of all, the key to success is to be realistic. Look at each of your sub-goals and ask yourself if you can really reach it in that time. How do you know if it's realistic? At first,

you don't. But a safe way of guessing is to pad all of your deadlines. Give each an extra day in case things don't work out as planned (and they rarely ever do).

You can also monitor along the way. Check your progress periodically and see if you're still on target for reaching that goal. For example, if your goal is to save money, you should have a dollar amount and a deadline. Every week, check your stash to see if it's piling up the way it should be. If it's not, push your deadline back accordingly.

Stay Flexible

Do you see a common theme here? It's flexibility. Deadlines help you get things done and your timeframe gives it all a sense of urgency. But you don't want to put yourself in a perpetual state of panic. Flexibility means that you're willing to change course and adjust if needed, but not stray from your overall dream. Life happens sometimes, so let it; but don't let it stop you from reaching your goals.

4 Surefire Ways to Fail at Reaching the Goals

Napoleon Hill said, 'A goal is a dream with a deadline.' Are you great at dreaming but not so good at attaining your goals? If so, something is holding you back. Here are four of the most common reasons why people fail to reach their goals.

The Reason Gets Away from You

It takes a long time to reach your goals. During that time, it's easy to stray from the real reason why you ever wanted to achieve it in the first place. In fact, you may very well forget it entirely.

How do you keep from doing this? A great way is to write this reason down. Ask yourself why you want to make this change and answer it as honestly as possible. Take that piece of paper and keep it with you constantly.

You may also find your motivation to reach the goal waning, especially when you encounter challenges along the way. Keeping a written statement of why you want to achieve your goal keeps that initial excitement with you to push you forward.

Too Much on Your Plate

The expression 'Jack of all trades, master of none' applies to goal planning as well as many other things in life. If you try to take on too many things at once, you'll be spending your energy all over the place. You won't have the focus that you need to reach even one, and you'll most likely burn out quickly.

But what can you do if you're an ambitious person with lots on your plate? The solution is to make a huge list of goals and just pick one. Work on one until you get comfortable with it and start seeing results. Then, you can add the next goal to your already busy schedule.

Choking on Negativity

Often, we fall short of what we want because we focus too much on negatives. You think about what you don't want or where you don't want to be, instead of visualizing yourself in a good place in the future.

For example, if your goal is to get a better job, stop thinking about the lousy one you have now. Sure, it may be a good motivator to get you job hunting; but the negative thinking it's causing you can stand in your way. Instead, focus on the wonderful new job you're going to get.

Kill the Fear

Many of us fail to make progress on our goals because of fear, which is perfectly natural. If you've got a big goal you're working toward, there's a good chance it's something you've never done before, and that can be terrifying.

When you're afraid, it's usually because you doubt your abilities. But with proper planning, this isn't an issue at all. If you break your goals down into sub-goals and daily actions that will get you closer to them, it just becomes a matter of logistics. A good plan with concrete steps helps you overcome fear.

Take Action Today

Ultimately the main reason we fail at goals is that we fail to take action. This could be because of the fear mentioned above or for other reasons, but it's essential to do something each day that gets you closer to your goals. This helps you understand your own abilities and skills better, and it gives you more confidence when you see yourself getting closer to getting what you want.

Why People Resist Setting Goals!

Do you have a goal that you want to achieve but something is standing in the way? The first step is to set your goal and clarify it as specifically as possible. If you're having trouble doing that, here are some questions to ask yourself.

Are You Afraid?

Often, it's fear that's stopping you from getting started. In order to reach your goal and make a big change in your life, you need to get out of your comfort zone. You may also be afraid of failure. Surprisingly, many people are afraid to succeed and attain their goals. The way to handle fear is to plan well, stop negative self-talk, and focus on your past achievements rather than what *could* happen in the future.

Do You Really Want It?

When you answer this question honestly, it can be an eye-opener. You may discover that you're not ready yet to make the change. Sometimes we like the idea of attaining our goal better than the reality. The best way to find out if this is the case is to realistically consider all that you'll have to do to achieve your goal. Listen to the stories of others who have done it and ask yourself if it's worth it to you.

Is It Somebody Else's Goal?

Is the goal actually your own or is it someone else's? It's very common for us to internalize the things others want for us. The other person may be a family member, a romantic partner, or people at work. When the goal isn't really yours to begin with, it's much easier to buckle under pressure when things get tough. Ask yourself if it's what you really want or what *they* really want.

Are You Too Busy?

Do you really have the time to fit this goal into your life right now? Attaining any worthwhile goal takes a considerable amount of time. Many of us are 'time poor' and just don't have room for it. You can learn how to manage your time better and shift your schedule around, but sometimes even that doesn't help. Set a realistic timeframe for your goal and figure out what you'll need to do

each day in order to achieve it.

How to Get Started

Probably the biggest thing that stops people from starting on their goals is that they don't know where to start. Goal planning is a skill just like any other and most of us aren't good at it.

Start by clarifying what you want and then set a timeframe for when you want to achieve it. Next, break your big goal into small sub-goals and make a list for each of the actions you need to take to achieve them. Organize your goal setting but leave some room for flexibility too because things change along the way.

How People Stick to Goals and Stay Motivated

Have you ever been working your way toward a goal that you really wanted to achieve, only to suddenly lose your way? How does that happen?

When you're working toward a goal, it's not enough to simply want it. Even if it's the attainment of your life's dream, you have to keep yourself constantly motivated or else you won't stick with it. Here are some tips on how to stay on course and make it happen.

Keep Your Momentum

An object at rest stays at rest. That's what Isaac Newton discovered and it's just as true about human beings as it is with physical objects. It's easy to give up a goal when you take too long of a break from it. The momentum you need to keep going comes from taking action toward your goal daily.

Faltering Confidence

If you have a big goal, the fear of failure might be lurking somewhere in the back of your mind. This can cause problems with your confidence that can result in you falling out of step and giving up. The best way to keep your confidence up is to remember your past successes and achievements. Write these down and keep them handy in case you need them.

Consider the Evidence

In just the same way, it helps keep you moving when you can see how much progress you're making. Keep track of your progress and every time you feel like giving up, look at the evidence. If you're losing weight, keep records of how much you've lost. If you're saving money, look at the growing pile of cash.

Make It Positive

Positivity is a much better motivator than negativity. If your goal is to get out of your current job, quit smoking, or break your bad habits, try to put a positive spin on it. For example, instead of saying you'll quit smoking, make your goal to become a non-smoker or to make healthier lifestyle choices. Negative motivators can help, but it's much better to make the main overall goal a

positive one.

Get Around Obstacles

There are always going to be roadblocks along the way and these obstacles can stop you dead in your tracks. It's easy to let them. But an obstacle is really nothing more than a challenge. What it requires is a change of strategy and that's all. When you get stuck and feel that you can't move forward, review your goal and the process you've created for getting there. Brainstorm some small changes that you can try out.

Learn from Mistakes

When you mess up and make a mistake (or you're weak and let yourself slip), don't beat yourself up about it. Instead, separate yourself from the situation and look at it objectively. Why did the mistake happen? Where did it come from? Look closely at it and use it as a learning experience.

Ask for Help

Lots of people try to do everything themselves and avoid asking for help even when they need it. It's incredibly hard to achieve a goal without any support whatsoever. When you first get started, identify some people who can help you. When you have tough times, turn to them.

Don't forget as you work your way to the attainment of your goals that you need rewards. It's not enough to always anticipate the big day when the goal is reached. Schedule rewards for yourself after you complete your tasks or reach your sub-goals. Rewards are the best motivators. Besides, you deserve them.