Skillbook

Setting Goals
for Members of Your Team

Team Management
Skills

MindTools

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1.   Introduction

The size of our goals largely influences how much success and satisfaction we experience.

Therefore, as managers, it's important that we set meaningful, ambitious and achievable goals for our team members, so that they can develop their skills and reach their potential.

If we do this, the workplace becomes an environment in which everyone can grow and flourish, which benefits individual team members and the organization as a whole.

In this **Skillbook**, we'll explore how you can help your people improve their performance by setting effective goals for them.

Many of the principles of **personal** goal setting apply here. However, there are a few key differences to consider when you help your team members define their goals to maximize success.

In around one hour you'll:

- Learn the importance of goal setting to overall performance.
- Identify three key goals that you want your team members to work toward.
- Write and evaluate specific goals to make them effective.

2.   Realizing Potential Through Goals

Management guru Peter Drucker first popularized the idea that managers need to take the time to develop carefully considered goals for their team members, and that these should be developed based on the organization's overarching strategic aims.

This theory is known as Management by Objectives (MBO) and managers use it to boost individual achievement and improve organizational performance and control.

MBO can boost **individual achievement** by:

- Helping people understand the connection between what they do and what the organization is trying to achieve.
- Helping people allocate as much of their time, effort and personal resources as possible to high priority areas.
- Providing a sense of achievement once people achieve a goal, which fuels their motivation.
- Challenging people and providing them with new experiences, which helps them learn.

It can improve **organizational performance** by:

- Motivating people to deliver their manager's desired outcomes.
- Letting people know what's expected of them.
- Pinpointing issues and motivating people to resolve them.
- Reducing ambiguity in assignments, and helping people focus their efforts.

It can increase **organizational control** by:

- Helping people get back on track if they deviate from agreed plans.
- Providing an objective way to measure performance.

In this Skillbook, we'll look at proven techniques that you can use to set effective goals and help your team members and your organization reach their full potential.

3.   Start With Your Objectives

Setting goals effectively can dramatically improve your team's productivity and motivation.

First, you need to determine the overall goals and objectives of your company, department or project. These should stem from organizational strategy, management aims, and any regularly occurring problems. For example, your organization might want to improve customer service ratings (a strategic objective), or streamline processes within a department (a tactical objective).

Most organizational goals are set by senior management and then filter down. However, individuals' goals can be set at any level, especially when they concern work-related problems, as long as they are agreed, are consistent between levels, and are communicated effectively. Individual and organizational goals should align and support a unified purpose within the company.

> ### Action:
>
> Describe three organizational, departmental or team goals that your people are working on, or that they need to work on.

Goal 1
Goal 2
Goal 3

4. Characteristics of Effective Goals

W e've looked at the factors that determine the **content** of your team's goals. Now we need to consider **how** to set them.

Using the mnemonic SMART is a popular and effective way to set goals for your people. In this context, SMART stands for "specific," "measurable," "accepted," "realistic," and "time-bound." (It stands for subtly different words when used in personal goal setting, but that's not what we're looking at here.)

S – Specific

It's important to set goals with **specific**, clear, well-defined targets because general, woolly goals are often too vague and don't motivate people.

Action:

Write a **specific** performance goal for each of the goals you described on the previous page. (Write goals for your team as a whole, or for an individual within it.)

Goal 1

Goal 2

Goal 3

Do these goals address the most important things that the team or individual do? Generally, people will work harder when tasks have specific goals attached. So, make sure you set people goals that include critical success factors relating to their role in the team and/or organization.

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Action: ✔

Rewrite your performance goals to include relevant critical success

</div>

Goal 1
Goal 2
Goal 3

M – Measurable

Every goal should include measurable amounts, dates and figures. This helps you and your team members recognize when they have achieved their goals. It allows you to provide them with meaningful feedback, so they know what they should be doing more of, what they should be doing less of, and how far they have progressed.

Including measurements in the goal statement means you can discuss performance objectively with your team, and avoid giving them subjective feedback.

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Action: ✔

Define at least two objective measurements for each of the goals you wrote on page 3. How will you track them? How often will you provide performance feedback?

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	Measurement	Tracking Mechanism	Frequency of Feedback
Goal 1	1.		
	2.		
	3.		
Goal 2	1.		
	2.		
	3.		
Goal 3	1.		
	2.		
	3.		

A – Accepted/Agreed/Attainable

Effective goals need to be **accepted** and seen as **attainable** by the people who will be expected to achieve them.

Managers generally gain "buy-in" by involving team members in goal setting. However, not all goals can be set this way. For example, managers are frequently given new assignments or deadlines that aren't negotiable – they're simply passed on and incorporated into team goals. Therefore, you need to encourage your people to accept these goals without being involved in forming them.

When your team members trust that you'll include them in setting discretionary goals, they're more likely to accept the non-discretionary ones you assign them. So, take steps to build a foundation of trust, and consider allowing them to control how they achieve their goals, which can increase their motivation and performance.

Make sure that you set achievable goals, because your team members are less likely to accept unattainable, incompatible or inconsistent goals.

Action:

Describe a time when your team members didn't achieve a goal because they didn't accept it. What could you have been done differently?

Action:

Think about how you can improve your goals from page 3. How can you measure the likelihood that they are accepted by your team or an individual? Write your thoughts, below.

Goal 1

Goal 2

Goal 3

R – Realistic (yet Challenging)

Difficult goals are more motivating than easy ones, and high expectations generally result in high performance, which is why it's important to make sure that your team members are suitably challenged.

However, they are unlikely to work to achieve unrealistically difficult goals, and they may give up without trying. Conversely, they may not fully commit themselves to achieving goals that are too easy and that don't challenge them, so you need to strike the right balance between the chance of success and the significance of the accomplishment.

To do this, you need to consider each person's characteristics, and match factors such as their ability, self-confidence and experience to the goal, and you may want to add an element of competition to it.

Tip:

Read our article on The Pygmalion Effect for more on the relationship between expectation and performance.

Action:

Evaluate your three goals and make sure that they have the right balance of challenge and realism. Then, make any necessary adjustments, such as adding challenging elements, or providing more support or resources to make the goal realistic

Write your updated goals, below.

Goal 1
Goal 2
Goal 3

T – Time-Bound (With Prioritization)

Goals should also have specific completion dates and deadlines so that it's obvious whether they've been completed or not. And, when someone is working on a number of goals simultaneously, it's important to set them clear priorities and make sure that their goals are consistent with other organizational objectives.

You may choose to rank the goals and work on them in sequence, or strive for balance among several key ones (which may be more feasible).

Action:

Think about your three goals, and set a sensible deadline for each.

Goal	Deadline
Goal 1	
Goal 2	
Goal 3	

5.   Goals and Feedback

O nce you've set your goals, it's important to provide feedback, so that people can modify their behavior and learn how they can improve, if necessary.

Your feedback needs to help your team members perform better. It should relate to their goals, be given in a timely manner, and be specific. This allows people to set new goals, learn from them, and improve their performance.

> **Tip:**
>
> Read our article on Giving Feedback or complete our Skillbook on the subject for more about giving feedback effectively.

6. Key Points

Goal setting is a powerful way to boost your team's performance and motivation.

While the types of goals you set depend on your organization, there are some common elements that you should incorporate into your goal-setting process.

First, effective goals should align with your organization's overarching aims. Next, they should be SMART: "specific," "measurable," "accepted," "realistic" (but challenging!), and "time-bound." Finally, you need to provide feedback that lets people know whether they are meeting, exceeding or falling short of their goals.

Goals that reflect these basic elements motivate people to achieve the performance you expect from them, and give them the best chance of success.