# lifelines



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SETTING AND ACHIEVING GOALS



PG: 2

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

PG: 4

FLOW AND THE SELF: HAVE YOU LOST YOUR OWN MOJO?

PG: 6

WHAT DOES MOTIVATION REALLY MEAN?



PG: 8



# SETTING AND ACHIEVING GOALS

As a leader, you know how important it is to have a vision for the future. The best way to accomplish that vision is to set goals. You will need both long- and short-term goals, with short-term goals serving as the building blocks to reach your long-term ones. Follow the steps below to start defining and, more importantly, achieving your goals.

## STEP 1: DEFINE YOUR LONG-TERM GOALS.

Working toward and achieving goals in all aspects of your life is a great source of motivation and fulfillment. Long-term goals are the bigger goals that you set for yourself, such as to become a doctor, receive an advanced degree, or start a business. When creating goals, make sure you also define how you will measure success. For example, if your goal is to start a business, you might say you are successful if the business is still operational one year from the time you establish it.

A strong goal will be ***SMART***, which means that it follows these rules:

- ***S*pecific**—Define your goal in detail. It's hard to work toward a vague goal!
- ***M*easurable**—Identify the ways you will know your goal has been accomplished.
- ***A*chievable**—Make sure your goal is something you realistically can accomplish. Ending poverty may not be possible on your own, but providing educational opportunities for underprivileged youth may be.
- ***R*elevant**—Your goals should align with the direction you want your life to take and, if applicable, the needs in your community.
- ***T*ime-Bound**—Putting a deadline on your goals will keep you motivated and on track.

Give each goal the SMART test. If it passes, you have created an excellent goal for yourself.

*continued on page 3*



# SETTING AND ACHIEVING GOALS

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## STEP 2: DEFINE YOUR SHORT-TERM GOALS.

Short-term goals keep you on track toward achieving your long-term ones. If your long-term goal is to start a business, your short-term goals may be to conduct market research, make a business plan, meet with a mentor, and so forth. Based on the outcome of a short-term goal, you may need to reevaluate your long-term goal. Perhaps, when developing your business plan, you find out that the cost of starting a business is greater than you anticipated. Will this change your long-term goal? Are there additional short-term goals you can establish to help you work toward your long-term goal? Make sure you reevaluate your long-term plan as you complete each short-term goal. Remember that short-term goals do not need to be as ambitious as your long-term one may be. Developing your professional skills is a great short-term goal. If that's one of your goals, check out resources on how to write a biography, prepare for a job interview, and deliver a speech.

## STEP 3: IDENTIFY THE RESOURCES YOU WILL NEED TO ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS.

After you define your goals, make a list of the resources you will need to achieve each goal. Resources may include research and information, money or financial support, or help from others, such as your family, friends, members of your community, or your coworkers. By having a list of what you need, you will know where and to whom to turn for support. After you have defined your goals and what you need to achieve them, make sure you continue to review your established goals so you can stay on track. The best way to do this is to write everything down.

If you're looking for more resources to develop your personal, organizational, and business skills, complete the Young Leaders of America Initiative (YLAI) course, ***Strategies for Personal Growth and Development***!

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Young Leaders of America Initiative (YLAI). (n.d.). *Setting and achieving goals*. Retrieved July 7, 2020, from https://ylai.state.gov



# PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

## Performance Management Competencies: Setting Goals

Supervisors need to communicate organizational goals and how they link to individual and work group performance in order to energize their employees to accomplish desired results. While developing performance plans, supervisors and employees can talk about how employee accomplishments support organizational goals. By aligning employee performance with organizational goals, supervisors direct their employees' efforts toward maximizing accomplishments and supporting the agency's strategic plans.

Once the supervisor and employees make these connections, they can agree upon more specific, individual goals and can analyze individual responsibilities. Without the employee's agreement to perform at a certain level, it is very difficult to meet or exceed established goals.

## Steps for Setting Goals

In their book, *Goal Setting: A Motivational Technique That Works*, Edwin A. Locke and Gary P. Latham propose seven steps for effectively setting individual goals:[1]

- Specify tasks and results. Clearly describe tasks to be accomplished that produce fully successful results.
- Set targets or standards. Setting goals that are difficult but possible to achieve produces higher levels of performance than no goals or vague goals.
- Determine the measures. Using clear measures (quality, quantity, cost, timeliness, and frequency of completion) at all levels is necessary for successful performance management.
- Outline time frames. To maximize the benefits of goal setting, specify expected time frames for achieving goals.
- Prioritize goals. It is helpful to rank or prioritize goals so employees are aware of their relative importance.
- Rate goal performance. Employees need to know about the process of appraising elements and assigning a summary performance rating.
- Coordinate efforts for goal achievement. If goal attainment requires a group effort, make certain to plan and measure each individual's contribution

*continued on page 5*

# PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Goals have a directive effect on an individual's thoughts and actions. A goal focuses a person's attention on goal-related factors. It also regulates a person's energy expenditure. Setting hard goals increases an individual's persistence and thus transfers effort into commitment and motivation. This ultimately leads to increased performance, especially if the goals are set at a high level and are accepted by employees.

## Additional Advice

According to Lynn Summers and Elizabeth Hampson in their article published by Performaworks, "Setting and Attaining Goals: How to ACT BEST," supervisors need to be skillful at setting goals successfully. In addition to the steps listed above, these authors say that supervisors should be able to do the following:[2]

- Break apart organizational goals into manageable pieces, and delegate them
- Use multiple criteria to evaluate successful goal achievement using client satisfaction, quality, and value added, as well as cost and quantity
- Visibly track and update goals to maintain or increase employees' energy and drive
- Gain top management's support to overcome barriers, clarify goals, and free up resources

Goal setting can have far-reaching consequences for the organization and its employees. Research reports that productivity increased an average of 39 percent in organizations that practice systematic goal setting. Of those organizations, productivity actually increased by 57 percent when goal setting was supported by top management. In contrast, productivity increased only 6 percent in organizations with little top management support.[3]

**References**


1. Locke, E.A., & Latham, G.P. (1984). *Goal setting: A motivational technique that works!* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
2. Summers, L., & Hampson, E. (n.d.). *Setting and attaining goals: How to ACT BEST*. Raleigh, NC: Performaworks.
3. Grote, D. (2002). Performance planning (p. 37). In *The performance appraisal question and answer book: A survival guide for managers*. New York: Amacom, American Management Association.


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U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM). (n.d.). *Performance management: Performance management cycle*. Retrieved June 4, 2024, from https://www.opm.gov



# FLOW AND THE SELF: HAVE YOU LOST YOUR OWN MOJO?

## What is *flow*?

To be in a state of flow is to be utterly absorbed in an activity, with time seeming to pass in the blink of an eye. It is a mental state in which one's whole being is completely immersed, typically in an activity that one enjoys and is skilled at. While flow typically occurs when undertaking creative pursuits, it can also be found in physical pursuits, such as running, dancing, and playing sports.

The concept of flow was conceived by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, a respected psychologist whose work focused on the psychology of wellbeing, achievement, and a meaningful life. When people engage in an activity that promotes a state of flow, they derive many benefits, including

- Increased life fulfillment
- Increased happiness and joy
- Improved performance in that particular activity
- Further learning and development
- Feelings of serenity and a loss of self-consciousness

## Lost your mojo? Time to find some flow.

It is not uncommon to feel like you have lost your mojo in life and question where your life is going at times. It might be that you got to where you thought you wanted, but now that you're there, you feel unsatisfied. At times, you might feel this way when outside pressures and other people's expectations have dictated where to go.

To find happiness in life and rediscover your mojo, you have to act instead of sitting down and waiting for it to come to you. Often a lot of where you need to go comes from looking at the past and looking for moments of flow that might already be occurring. Asking yourself the following questions might help you identify activities that procedure a state of flow:

- What actions energized you over the past year?
- What actions inspired you the most?
- When did you feel the proudest, and what were you doing?

*continued on page 7*



# FLOW AND THE SELF: HAVE YOU LOST YOUR OWN MOJO?

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If you are unsure about what makes you happy and makes you flow, it might be time to try new things. You might want to pick up a musical instrument, try new sports, read some interesting books, or just start writing and see where you go!

## Tips for Achieving Flow

### Goals

Once you've found an activity you enjoy and feel relatively skilled at, it's important to follow some simple rules to get the most out of it. These include

- Setting clear goals as to what you are doing
- Eliminating any distractions (phones, etc.) to ensure your flow is not disrupted
- Adding elements of challenge (i.e. setting realistic but challenging goals)
- Selecting activities that provide immediate and unambiguous feedback

## Incorporating Flow into a Meaningful Life

In his work, Mihaly wrote, "If a person sets out to achieve a difficult enough goal, from which all other goals logically flow, and if [they] invest all energy in developing skills to reach that goal, then actions and feelings will be in harmony, and the separate parts of life will fit together—and each activity will make sense in the present as well as in the view of the past and of the future. In such a way, it is possible to give meaning to one's entire life."

Mihaly's work ties in nicely with the work of psychologist Martin Seligman and his *PERMA-V model*. This model gives insight into how and what people need to be doing to be in a state of thriving and wellbeing, which ultimately lead to a flow state. Seligman's PERMA-V model includes the following:

P—**P**ositive emotion
E—**E**ngagement and connectedness
R—Enhanced **R**elationships
M—**M**eaning and purpose in their pursuits
A—Sense of **A**chievement
V—**V**igor (vitality and energy through self-care)

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Veretis. (2021, November 17). *Flow and the self – Have you lost your own mojo?* (B. Schuette & E. Morton, Eds.). Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options (WPO).

# WHAT DOES MOTIVATION REALLY MEAN?



A lot of people engage performance-psychology services looking for keys to steely motivation. This is the type of drive and discipline that sees people leap out of bed at 4:30 a.m. rain, hail, or shine, then charge off on a 10-mile run and be the first into the office and last to leave. The problem is that these "keys" are a myth. They simply do not exist.

The platform of online video streaming makes it easy for people to access motivational videos screaming at you to be tougher, better, faster, and stronger. This leads you to believe in the myth of motivation and extreme overnight behavior change. A person's inevitable failure to replicate and sustain this level of extreme motivation often leads them to feeling disheartened and disappointed. Sometimes, you need to accept that your dreams or desires are simply beyond the capabilities you have and are meant for others.

## Why does this happen?

Motivation is a myth, because it is not a standalone concept. Motivation is the combination of both importance and belief. It is when you feel something is important and you believe you're capable of achieving success. Then, you see the follow-up discipline, prioritizing, and action, which is associated with motivation. So "motivated" people are those with a clear understanding of what is important to them and why, and the belief that they are capable of achieving success in these areas.

## Why does this matter?

Understanding motivation in this context helps you recognize that there is far more to it than simply "getting to work" and prior planning. Although less "sexy," this is necessary if you want to see long-term behavior change and increase your likelihood of success. Planning should revolve around understanding importance and setting achievable goals to build belief.

## So how do you stay motivated?

To understand importance, ask yourself five "why" questions to uncover the deep-seated meaning of why you want to begin this journey. For example, say you wanted to lose 20 pounds. At the first level of "why," this may be because you used to be able to run 10 miles nonstop and now you can't.

*continued on page 9*

# WHAT DOES MOTIVATION REALLY MEAN?



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Asking yourself why running 10 miles is important (the second "why") may produce the answer: "Well, I felt fit and healthy when I could run." This uncovers that health is important to you. Through asking yourself (the third "why") "Why is health important?", you might recognize that "Being healthy means I can physically do the things I want." It is important to contemplate exactly what you want to do (e.g. "Why is being physically capable important?"—the fourth "why"). You recognize that you want to be able to keep up with the kids while they are playing.

Again, reflect on why this is important (the fifth and final "why"). You discovered it's because you want to be an engaged and present parent who sets a good example for your kids around an active lifestyle. In this example, investigating the five "whys" led from "I want to lose 20 pounds" to "I want to be an engaged and present parent." This is a far more meaningful and important goal than just weight loss. You have moved the goal from losing weight for losing-weight's sake to being a good parent.

The five "whys" take time. In some cases, you may already know the fifth "why" before getting to that level. However, taking the time to be disciplined in thinking through and investigating each level will help align the desired behavior change you are looking for with truly burning inspiration.

## What else can I do?

In regard to the second aspect of motivation (belief), make sure you take the time to recognize the small steps on the journey to your overall destination. In the example above, losing 20 pounds is a long process that could seem overwhelming. But focusing on the first five pounds can be a good way to build momentum and set a more achievable initial goal.

Before setting off into action, make sure you spend time breaking your overall desired outcome into smaller "journey goals." Ensure they are relevant and in line with your overall goals. This makes them a true indicator of progress to build confidence and highlight any changes you need to make.

## So where to now?

Motivation is not simple. The video-streaming generation may make it look as easy as yelling a bunch of motivational words at yourself on repeat, but if it were truly that simple, then most likely you would have already started and succeeded.

Behavior change is far more complex than this, and therefore your understanding of what motivates you needs to match this. A firm understanding of why you want to change (importance) and what this would mean for your life is the key first step to motivation. This needs to be supported by a clear strategy on what progress looks like and the markers along the way that indicate progress. By breaking down these goals, the overall task will seem that little bit more achievable.

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Veretis. (Revised 2024 [Ed.]). *What does motivation really mean?* (B. Schuette & E. Morton, Eds.). Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options (WPO).