
Remarkable Leadership: Unleashing Your Leadership Potential One Skill at a Time

**Excerpt of Chapter 16:
Remarkable Leaders Set Goals and
Support Goal Achievement**

Goal-Setting Basics

When you are ready to take action, follow these steps to set a goal and, more important, develop a process you can use to reach those goals you set. Once you have these components in place, creating the complete plan (or for a larger goal, one part of the new plan) will be easy.

Step One: Consider Your Dream, and Write It Down

The best question I know to start with is, “What is my fondest wish?” Let’s say you need a new car. You should start with the fondest wish question. If your fondest wish is a jet black BMW 540i, then make that your goal. Too often people make the goal “buy a new car” or “buy a Buick.” Why do they pick a Buick? (And before you write me a letter about your Buick, know that I don’t think there is *anything* wrong with Buicks—unless your fondest wish is a BMW.) Is it because they think the Buick is possible, or practical, or (insert your own excuse, or the rationalization you’ve heard from someone else here)? The best goal-setting process starts with what we really want. The same applies in business. If you are setting a goal for service times, what is your fondest wish? What service time would make a real difference with customers, your team, or the bottom line? Regardless of the type of goal you are setting, get your dreams written down.

Step Two: Create a Specific, Tangible Goal Statement

Dreams are not goals. Rather, they are like a purpose and are motivating and inspiring. Goals are the specific statements that, when achieved, help you reach your dreams. This step is the translation of dreams into tangible, clear, actionable, and measurable statements. They should always be written as a present-tense description of a desired future state. Here are a few examples:

- On October 30, 2008, I will weigh 178 pounds.
- I smile as I turn the ignition key in my new jet black BMW 540i on September 10, 2008.
- I enjoy the feeling as I walk across the stage to be awarded my M.B.A. in spring 2009.

Notice that although each statement follows a slightly different format, all are desired, all are specific and tangible, and all are stated in the present tense. Why are these factors so important?

Your brain is designed to solve problems. When you state your goal in this way, you are setting up a gap between what you have and what you want. The more clearly defined this gap is, the easier it is for your brain to close the gap. So you have to build a picture—a description of what it is that you want, what it looks like, what it feels like, what it tastes like, and what it's like to really achieve this goal.

You've probably heard or read about processes that say that if you have a goal to acquire something, have a clear picture of it: put a picture of that car on your refrigerator, or post the blueprints for your remodeled kitchen on the kitchen wall. Those great suggestions are related to this idea of clearly and specifically visualizing a picture of what you really want.

The more specific you can make it, the more your brain's conscious and subconscious efforts will be put in motion to close that gap. Make it detailed, make it specific, and make it about what you want, not about what you don't want.

STATING YOUR GOALS POSITIVELY

When my children were younger, I didn't want them to play in the street (I don't really want that now that they are older either!). One day I found myself saying, "Don't go in the street, don't go in the street, don't go in the street." Unfortunately, this was not the best possible approach.

Our brains are not designed to think about the negative of an idea. So when I said, "Don't go in the street," what my children's brains were hearing was, in effect, "in the street, in the street, in the street." When I recognized what I was doing, I started saying some variation of, "Stay on this side of the sidewalk." If they stay on this side of the sidewalk, will they achieve the ultimate goal? Absolutely. I've put it in a positive frame of what I want as opposed to what I don't want.

If your goal is to lose weight, don't say, "My goal is to lose twelve pounds," because then the focus is on twelve pounds. Instead, set the goal to describe what you want to weigh. What is your desired future weight? Or what is your desired future revenue for the business? What is your desired future profitability for that product line? What is your desired future in terms of team productivity?

State your goal in terms of what you want, not what you don't want.

Step Three: List the Benefits You'll Acquire

Technically after step 2, you have set your goal. The rest of these steps are actually about goal *getting*—planning for and achieving the goal that you've set. A lot of people never set goals or don't set them successfully. Setting them is important, but it is only one step in the process. Next, you need to build a plan for getting them. The first step in that process is to think about how you will benefit from achieving it. What will the benefits be when you reach your weight loss goal? How will you feel, look, and be different as a result? When setting a personal goal, most of these benefits will likely be personal. When setting a professional or business goal, make sure to consider benefits to the business, the team, the customer, and anyone else who is relevant. This builds your motivation to achieve the goal; thinking about this ahead of time sets you up to succeed. Write down a list of these benefits.

Step Four: Identify the Barriers

Now it's time to roll up your sleeves and get started. If all your goals were easy to achieve, you would already have the results. If they were easy to achieve, there would be few obstacles and challenges. But when you identify those challenges up front and see what the mountain ahead looks like, you put yourself in a much better place to get past it. At this stage, you may hear yourself saying things like, "You can't reach this goal because of this, this, this, this, and this." Once you hear those voices, write down all of the this, this, this, this, and thises. Then you will recognize which are real and which are perceived. Either way, once they're written down, they are exposed and identified, and you can purposefully build a plan to eliminate or overcome them.

Step Five: Identify the Resources Required

Just like President Kennedy when he set the goal of a man on the moon, you must identify the resources required to succeed. What will you need? How much money will be required? The nature of the resources will vary greatly based on your goal. But asking this question is an important part of your goal-planning process.

Step Six: Identify What You Need to Learn

I'm guessing that the most important resources you will need are new knowledge and skills. Identify what those skills are, and recognize what