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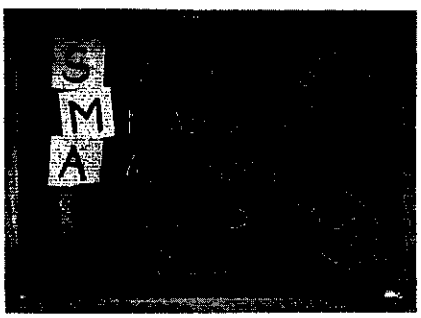
How to Set and Achieve Professional Goals



If you want to accomplish something instead of drifting aimlessly, you have to set goals. Nowhere is this more relevant than in today's workplace.

"Setting professional goals is a game plan for yourself and your company," says Frank Arnold, dean and associate professor of management at Saint Leo College in Saint Leo, FL. "Knowing precisely where you're going and what you want to achieve puts you in the driver's seat. It helps you plan for your training and educational needs."

Moreover, goal setting is important in a team-oriented workplace. "You help your work group by ensuring your skills are current," says Paula deLong, a licensed psychologist and a counselor in the employee assistance program at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia.

Goal setting is one of life's most difficult responsibilities-not because goals are so hard to establish, but because you may lack the motivation or courage to ask yourself what you want. "If you're like most people, you can't picture yourself outside of the safety and familiarity of your current comfort zone," Arnold says. Yet setting goals and achieving them can boost your effectiveness, increase your satisfaction in your accomplishments and deepen your self-confidence.

Keys To Success

Keep the following guidelines in mind when setting professional goals:

First, ask yourself what will satisfy you and make you happy. Self-reflection requires you to face your dreams, fears, limitations and obligations to others.

Identify which skills you're proficient in and consider whether they can be used elsewhere in the organization.

Research what's involved in meeting your goals. Get a clear understanding of the skills, information or assistance you'll need to attain them.

Identify the incremental steps and deadlines involved in attaining your goals. If you want to attend graduate school for additional credentials, for instance, you must study for the entrance exam, take the exam, then apply for admission to the school.

Set specific goals. Setting goals that are vague or too large can result in frustration and discouragement and cause you to give up. "To become an expert in computers is a broad goal that could be overwhelming. Narrow your goal to make it more manageable," Arnold says. "Completing one course in Microsoft Word at the local community college is more reasonable."

Make your goals measurable. "This allows you to see progress and keeps you motivated," deLong says. "Increase my sales quota by 10% this year, is an example of a measurable goal.

Set a time limit for achieving your goals, otherwise, you'll never see closure, only a long, pointless grind.

Stay Motivated

To stay motivated, acknowledge your progress and reward yourself along the way. Congratulate yourself for completing your first semester toward an advanced degree. Praise yourself for being promoted.

It's also important to remain flexible and positive. Your goals will change as you refine your career plan or as roadblocks appear that cause temporary detours, Arnold says, "goal setting is a dynamic, ongoing process that should always be part of your professional life."

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Start Some Healthful Holiday Traditions

The month of December can produce extra stress, a breakdown in healthy eating habits, even depression. But you and your family can adopt some new traditions that may help relieve the season's stress and make your holidays healthy and happy.

"Each December, millions of Americans find themselves spending more money than they can afford, taking on more responsibilities than they can handle and having less relaxed time with their families than they have at any other time of the year," explains Jo Robinson, co-author of "Unplug the Christmas

Machine." "Too many people attempt to celebrate someone else's holidays. They're taking their cues on what the holidays should be from television shows, ads, store displays or their own parents, rather than doing what would be most meaningful to them."

Your physical health

When the holidays become more than you bargained for, your physical health can be compromised because you may put aside healthy habits. And stress can put additional demands on your body. Here are some tips on maintaining your health during the holiday season:

- Don't do too much. Give yourself some time to relax.
- Share the workload. Let everyone play an active role; make the holidays a family affair so you're not burdened with all the work.
- Establish priorities. You can't do everything; say no to some demands on your time.
- Simplify your life. Be less elaborate this year. Relax your housekeeping and holiday preparations.
- Continue to exercise. Don't let your regular regimen lapse.
- Eat healthy foods and limit your consumption of high-fat holiday treats. Serve healthy fare at your family's holiday party.

Your emotional health

It's easy to become overwrought this time of year, especially if you believe something is lacking in your holiday celebration. Here are some ways to create new holiday traditions that will help level your emotions:

Ask yourself if you really enjoy all the rituals or whether they have merely become habits. Try adopting less elaborate traditions of holidays past.

- Don't be afraid to scale down gift giving. You'll probably receive a lot of support.
- If your annual party is too much to handle, postpone it until after the holidays when you have more time to prepare. This also will help alleviate post-holiday letdown by giving you something to look forward to.
- If you are unable to be with your family, get out around people. Plan to be with friends or volunteer to help others who also may be separated from their families.

Happy and healthy kids

Children are especially vulnerable to commercial stimuli during the holiday season. But basically, all kids really need are realistic expectations about gifts, an even-paced holiday season and strong, loving family traditions. Here are some ways to make the holidays special for your children:

- Spend more time with your kids. Entertain less and attend fewer parties that exclude children.
- Watch less television and do more activities as a family.
- Include your kids in all preparations. Let your children help you decorate and bake, even if it means your creations aren't perfect.

- Teach children the meaning of giving. Adopt a needy family and have your youngsters help you prepare a meal for them. Suggest that your children buy a gift for an underprivileged child with their own money. Or ask them to donate one of their own gifts to a less fortunate child.
- Teach your children that gifts don't have to be tangible. Trade intangible gifts with each other -- such as helping with homework, washing the dishes and polishing shoes. Let your children come up with their own ideas of what they can offer.

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Help for the Holiday Blues

The holidays are just about here again. And with them can come a range of stresses and anxieties, among them: holiday shopping, holiday finances, family stress, mailing seasonal cards, attending parties and the tendency to neglect everyday routines at this time of year -- such as eating right and exercising. These can lead to the phenomenon known as holiday depression or the holiday blues.

Will your holiday be blue?

According to the National Mental Health Association (NMHA), depression peaks over the holidays. The unrealistic expectations of the season, time and financial pressures, missing loved ones and reflecting on past events as the year comes to an end all contribute.

During the holidays, a person can experience depression, loneliness, sadness, isolation, anger and abnormal sleep. Those who don't experience depression can experience other symptoms such as headaches, tension, fatigue, excessive drinking and over-eating.

It is also common to feel a holiday let down after the holidays are over. The hectic holiday period, and the feeling of being physically and emotionally drained can leave you with the sense of loss or frustration, and then that can turn into the blues.

The holiday blues can range from mild sadness during the holidays to severe depression, and they are often a normal reaction to life situations.

Disagreement over the term

The holiday blues are not a diagnosable clinical disorder. In fact, there is no agreement among mental health experts as to whether the phenomenon actually exists, because there is no increase in the number of people who seek mental health services in November and December.

Holiday blues should not be confused with clinical depression. Clinical depression is a disorder that may need to be relieved with medication, while the holiday blues could require something as simple as a good listener. Clinical depression, however, can be triggered in a number of ways at or just after the holidays.

There is also a tendency to link the holiday blues with seasonal affective disorder (SAD). SAD, however, is a diagnosable disorder that is caused by fewer hours of sunlight during the winter. Although people

with the holiday blues can also be afflicted with SAD, the two are not directly related. Patients with SAD suffer the symptoms not only throughout the holiday season, but also throughout the autumn and winter seasons.

Keeping the blues away

The holiday blues may be alleviated with something as simple as getting enough rest. People actually lose sleep during the holidays and end up shortchanging themselves, so the brain needs to recuperate. Consequences of not getting enough sleep might be cloudy thinking, irritability and inability to deal with everyday stress.

Other ways to help ease the blues are to eat a diet rich in fruits and vegetables and to start exercising. Also, make an effort to be more positive.

Tips to ease the blues

If you are experiencing holiday blues, try to decrease or alleviate them by doing these things:

- Talk to someone honestly.
- Limit alcohol intake.
- Stick within your normal life routine as much as possible.
- Stick to a realistic budget.
- Establish realistic goals and expectations.
- Do not label the season as a time to cure past problems.
- Find time for yourself.
- Enjoy free holiday activities.
- Try to celebrate the holiday in a different way

The holiday blues can be quite common, but if you are feeling especially down -- for example, your sleep or your appetite is affected, contact your regular physician or visit the National Mental Health Association online at www.nmha.org for help and guidance. If you are thinking about suicide, call your health care provider immediately.

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BRUSH AWAY BAD BREATH MYTHS

DECEMBER 2016

MYTH #1:
Bad breath results from poor digestion in the stomach.

TRUTH #1:
The majority of bad breath comes from the back of the mouth where bacteria feed on mucus and food particles.

MYTH #2:
Brushing eliminates bad breath.

TRUTH #2:
Most people do not brush their teeth properly. Missing too much tooth surface where bacteria grows creates bad breath odors masking bad breath but not eliminating the odors caused by bad breath.

MYTH #3:
Mouthwash treats bad breath.

TRUTH #3:
Mouthwash contributes to the formation of bad breath by creating a dry mouth which is a perfect area for bad breath bacteria to grow.

Importance of Dental Care:

More than Just Bad Breath

- **Numerous studies have found that those who coordinate care for both medical and dental care have better overall health.**
- **A study found that those treated for periodontal disease had lower healthcare costs and fewer hospitalizations than those who went untreated.**
- **On average, non-dental healthcare costs for people with diabetes or stroke were almost 40% lower if their gum disease was treated.**
- **The risk of Cardiovascular Disease, Coronary Artery Disease, and Peripheral Arterial Disease are much greater in those who do not go to their dentist at least annually.**

MYTH #4:
Bad breath can be cured with the use of probiotics or hydrogen peroxide.

TRUTH #4:
There is no definite proof of their effectiveness; a person can damage the tissues in the mouth from rinsing regularly with hydrogen peroxide.

MYTH #5:
People can tell if their own breath smells.

TRUTH #5:
We become used to our own odors, since the bad smell comes from the back of our mouths when we speak, the only way to tell is to have someone smell it for us.

MYTH #6:
There is no cure for bad breath.

TRUTH #6:
You can cure foul breath if it is more than the case of morning breath, seek out clinics that specialize in oral hygiene as it may indicate another health problem.

— TRUST —
wellness

Sources: TheraBreath ; WebMD ; Mayo Clinic; Tufts, The American Journal of Cardiology Consensus report