

EFFECTIVE GOAL SETTING

GOALS SERVE AS ROAD MAPS TO PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS.



JIM L. SMITH

It's that time of year again. Whether we make formal New Year's resolutions or not, most of us find the beginning of a new year to be a time of reflection about what has passed and what we want to achieve in the coming year.

Goal setting is a powerful process for thinking about your future, motivating yourself, and turning your vision of the future into reality.

The process of setting goals helps us choose where we want to go in life. By knowing precisely what we want to achieve, we know where we have to concentrate our efforts. We'll also quickly spot the distractions that would otherwise detract us from our course.

More than this, properly set goals can be incredibly motivating. As we get into the habit of setting and achieving goals, we will find that our self-confidence builds immensely from recognizing our own ability and competence.

Achieving goals is like a sporting event. It makes little difference if the playing field is a basketball court or the offices in an organization. Those who score are the ones who move ahead and stay in front of the competition.

You need to ask yourself, "Will I be one of those successful people? Do I have what it takes to succeed?" There are some key steps you can take to ensure you are prepared for success. One of these steps is to put together a list of objectives for both your professional and personal lives.

Goals serve as road maps. They give us a long-term vision and short-term motivation. They focus our acquisition of knowledge, and help us to organize our time and resources. Goals are the plans detailing how to get from point A to point B in a logical sequence.

There are a multitude of references on the subject of setting goals but the steps boil down to a few basics. From my perspective, here's the primary list of rules to follow when developing goals.

1. Create the "big picture" vision. It is a good idea to have a big picture view of what you want to accomplish in your life. Where do you want to be five, 10, 20 years in the future? Identify the large scale goal(s), and then break those down into smaller objectives.
2. Goals should be specific and measurable. Instead of a plan to "take a quality course this year," say "take an ASQ CQE course in the second quarter and take the CQE exam on June 1, 2013."
3. Goals should be difficult, yet realistic. After all, if we can easily do something, there's little need to make it a goal. Yet goals need to be grounded

in reality. Goals too far removed from an honest assessment of one's abilities can be disappointing in the long run. Goals should keep us motivated. They should challenge us to step up to the next level of performance. We may not always reach a particular goal, but that's part of the process. It's better to reach high and progress than to aim low and never test our capabilities.

4. Link individual goals to group goals. In this manner the individual and team efforts work together and enhance everyone's success.
5. Goals should be within your control. As much as possible, set goals that you have control over. This essentially means to focus more on performance- and process-related goals than outcome-related ones.
6. Goals should reflect critical success factors. Critical success factors are those issues, behaviors, performance standards and other elements that spell success or failure. Put primary focus on these goals.
7. Goals should be mutually reinforcing. One goal should not have to be achieved at the expense of others. Goals must be taken as a whole in order to be really successful.
8. Goals should focus not only on ends but also on the means. The way goals are accomplished should not be separated from how they are accomplished. Maintain integrity and honesty and ensure that you protect your core values.
9. Developing oneself and helping others should be part of your goals. We should devote goal setting to include self-development but also focus on helping or mentoring others. Not everyone is a manager, but sharing with and mentoring others is a critical part of everyone's responsibility, and especially critical for those in positions of authority.
10. Goals should be documented and monitored. Write down your goals. If they aren't written down, they won't really serve as goals. They certainly won't be shared goals if they aren't recorded and communicated. And schedule regular dates for their evaluation. The feedback you gain from these evaluations will allow you to adjust your effort and stay on course.

The journey toward any goal is as important as the goal itself. It is NOT the trophy or reward, but the journey and the things learned along the way that is important.

Jim L. Smith has more than 45 years of industry experience in operations, engineering, research & development and quality management. You can reach Jim at faceofquality@qualitymag.com.