

The Importance of Goals and 3 Critical Factors Affecting Goal Achievement



*“The tragedy of life doesn’t lie in not reaching your goal.
The tragedy lies in having no goals to reach.” - Benjamin Mays*

Imagine you invite a friend for lunch and he happens to be a darts champion. After lunch, you go out in the garden and ask him to demonstrate his skills; He asks you to bring out a few darts and a dartboard. You come back with three darts but no dartboard. Irrespective of how brilliant he is, it would be impossible for him to demonstrate how to hit the bullseye if there were no dartboard at which to aim. Similarly, you are capable of great things in life, but if you have no goals, you will be like the darts champion – unable to showcase your talent. On the other hand, if you set goals, you will be able to embrace life and achieve your full potential.

All achievers are goal-driven people who know what they really want. They set clear goals, commit them to writing and pursue them until they are achieved. And yes, I did say commit them to writing. Written goals are extremely powerful. You may have come across the 1979 Harvard study in which the graduating class was asked whether or not they had set and written down their goals. 84% had no goals, 13% had goals (though they were not in writing), and only 3% in the class had written goals. The graduates were interviewed 10 years later in 1989 and the researchers found that the 13% with unwritten goals earned twice as much as the 84% with no goals. More interestingly though, the 3% with written goals earned 10 times as much as all the other graduates combined.

Goal Achievement - 3 Critical Factors

To build a house, you need a plan and a solid foundation to support the structure. Similarly, to attain your goal, you first need a plan, but more importantly, you need a foundation to support the goal achievement process. If you do not have a solid foundation, there is little chance that you will achieve your goals. For example, when people set a goal to exercise daily, they actually do start exercising, but after a few days or weeks, they lose momentum and give up. What is the reason for this? Well, there is no foundation to support the goal. The foundation is your vision, your values and self-awareness.

Vision

A vision is what you want to accomplish in life; it is your dream life. People set goals but very often feel that they are somehow lacking direction; they feel an important piece is missing. A vision is the crucial element that glues together the goal setting and goal achieving-process. A vision enables you to create a clear picture that encompasses all areas of your life, from your lifestyle to your career, to your family to your finances. It gives a sense of direction to your life, and once you know where you are heading, your goals will become clearer. A vision is like an ultimate goal and your actual goals are like steps leading to that highest goal. It articulates your purpose in life thus providing focus and motivation. While your vision will drive your life, your goals will serve as milestones. For example, your vision may be to inspire and empower people, enabling them to live to their full potential. One of your goals, however, may be to become a life coach.

Values

Successful people set goals that are congruent with their value system. Values represent what's important to us. They act as our compass – they guide us in the direction of our target. Some examples of values are love, creativity, freedom, peace, inspiration, happiness, personal growth, financial security, contribution, family, honesty and laughter.

If you face stress and frustration while pursuing your goals, you have to ensure that you are not compromising your core values. Let me share Paul's story.

Paul used to work in the IT sector, traveling to different cities to deliver training. One of his goals was to become a top IT trainer. He loved his job, but he was very unhappy. For some reason, achieving his goal seemed to be an immense struggle. Although upon examining his values, Paul realized that he was not honoring one of his core values which was maintaining a close relationship with his wife and children. Being away often from home for work contradicted one of his most important values: his family. What this story is meant to illustrate is that it is important to clarify your values before setting your goals. Once you ensure that your goals are aligned with your values and vision, you are on your way to achieving your goals.

Self-Awareness

Currently, your life is a reflection of your personal philosophy, mindset, habits and behaviours. If you want to achieve more than you have, you need to have a sense of self-awareness. You cannot expect more in your life if you are not in harmony with yourself. Your outer reality is a direct reflection of who you are and how you feel about yourself. That's why people who set goals to lose weight actually do lose a few pounds, but they end up regressing to the same weight as when they started. The source of these people's weight problem is not actually the extra pounds; the issue goes much deeper than what's visible. It is like adding more ingredients to a dish gone wrong. You just have to start over from scratch with the dish, not add more ingredients. If you create change within yourself by integrating empowering beliefs and habits, this shift will gradually affect your outer life. As Jim Rohn said, "If you want to have more... you have to BECOME more."

So, when you set a goal you have to ask yourself: “Who do I have to *become* to achieve this goal?” For example, if you weigh 160 pounds and your goal is to weigh 120 pounds, your question should be: “Who do I have to become to achieve my target weight of 120 pounds?” Well, the answer might be, “ I need to become a disciplined, committed, positive and energetic person. I need to wake up every morning at 6:30 to exercise. I need to eat nutritious food and lead a healthy lifestyle.” Obviously, you will achieve your goal because not only you are backing up your goal with action, but there is also a significant shift in your habits and mindset. If you combine your vision and your values with a sense of self-awareness, you will be well on your way to achieving your full potential.