

Set goals and achieve them

HIT BULLS-EYE A successful career starts with the setting of goals early in life. **V Pradeep Kumar** walks you through the various stages of goal setting, and provides tips on working towards them

Imagine you are going on a trip. What would you need? Definitely, a pack of clothes, money, and a mode of transport. What else would you require?

There are those who travel with a road map and those who are just going somewhere. If you don't know where you are going, any road will get there. However, if you are indeed going on a vital trip, the most important thing you require is knowledge of your destination.

In the same manner, where do you want to reach in your career? Where do you want to be in ten years' time? Where do you want to be in your personal life? Questions such as these are crucial to your professional and personal life. People with goals in life succeed, because they know where they are going. Three things are essential to become successful: Goals, a strong desire to achieve them, and an action orientation. A goal is therefore like a destination you want to reach and the process of setting, planning and achieving, is the journey.

Goals are not to be confused with intentions, as this story reveals. Students of Harvard Business School were once asked if they had written down their goals. It appeared that only three per cent of the students had their goals down in writing. After 25 years, students who had written down their goals were found to be far more successful and happier in life than those who hadn't. Written goals can transform your wishes into wants, dreams into plans, and plans into reality.

Being in college, dream and fantasise about your future life. American businessman and actor Donald Trump, puts this appropriately by saying "Think big! You are going to be thinking anyway, so think big!"

Decide what you want and write down your goals. Then convert those goals into positive, affirmative statements. Make these affirmations a daily habit, until they become a part of your subconscious mechanism.

Set smart goals

Use the power of your imagination as well as skillful planning to set your professional goals. Shiv Khera, the author of the book, *You Can Win* emphasises that goals must be smart.

Specific goals: A college or an institution is your learning platform preparing you for a chosen career. Career goals have to be set early, generally when you finish Class 10 and 12, and after understanding your aptitude. An aptitude test will indicate a few career options appropriate for you. Evaluate these short-listed options by researching the job market and growth



prospects. Finally, depending on the career you want to pursue, select the right course and the institute.

For example, your long-term career goal could be, 'To attain a technical qualification such as Engineering in IT, followed by a Management course, and then to work towards becoming a CEO in a small or medium scale enterprise in 10 years'.

Measureable goals: Since a career lasts for a lifetime, you must evaluate your progress periodically, vis-à-vis your goals. In the long-term career goal illustrated

above, you would need to know your progress in engineering; progress towards the CAT entrance exam for the Management course and so on. Therefore, goals must be measureable to keep track of your progress.

Achievable: Goals channelise your energy into action utilising your potential to the fullest. Aiming to head a company in ten years in a small or medium enterprise is certainly an inspiring goal. Highly inspiring and achievable goals act as strong motivators to overcome difficulties.

Realistic: How do you know that the goals are realistic? Consider the capabilities and resources required to set realistic goals. Importantly, the chances of achieving must be reasonably strong. For instance, it may not be a realistic goal to become a CEO in a large IT enterprise in a short span of 10 years, though it's possible to achieve this goal in a small or medium enterprise. In addition, goals must be relevant in the larger aspects of your life.

Time bound: Goals have to be time bound, in terms of when to begin and when to achieve them. The key to achieve is to work on the goals as soon as they are set.

Games and championships

Cricketers often say, "We take each game at a time". What do they mean? Short-term goals help win games while long-term goals help win championships!

In terms of academics and career planning, think of your long-term goals and work backwards to set short-term goals. For instance, if your career goal is to become an aeronautical engineer in NASA, break this long-term goal into short-term goals for your 12th/Pre-University and for the entrance exam to gain admission into an IIT. After completing Engineering in Aeronautics, you may need to do a Masters in an institute specialising in Aeronautical Engineering to get into NASA. These goals are like games you need to win, to win the championship of a career in NASA.

Integrate goals

It's a good strategy to have multiple goals in different areas such as your professional career, personal life, financial and asset creation, health and fitness. These goals in different aspects of life should comple-

ment each other and not contradict them. Therefore, set your first priority on career goals and ensure that you integrate all other goals around the career. A balanced approach to goal setting helps you to progress in your career as well as enjoy the fruits of your hard work in your personal and family life.

Review your goals and achievements every few years to set newer goals in the direction of long-term goals. For example, it's possible to think of retiring at fifty and think of an alternate career or pursue a hobby seriously. Review such futuristic goals at a later stage, depending on your progress, by setting reminders.

Remember, a college equips you with the right knowledge, which is fundamental to success. Nothing can stop you from succeeding if you develop the right skills and a positive attitude.

Life is all about making the right choices and goal setting is the process of making those choices. Goals enable you to focus, act as strong motivators and improve re-

sults. Follow your dream; but be sure you love the profession. You may start with a job; turn that job into a passionate career.

Career success is a destination you want to reach. Let the goals be specific like setting a needle in your compass. From then on, the compass knows only one point, faithfully guiding you through the journey ahead. Look forward to the destination, but appreciate and enjoy the journey.

Steps towards goal setting

- Identify your dreams
- Understand yourself through a personal SWOT analysis
- Translate dreams into smart goals for career and personal life
- Write down your goals
- List down skills and knowledge requirements
- Prepare an action plan
- Review your progress periodically
- Upgrade your skills and set higher goals (The author is a management and career consultant.)

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