

How to set goals, how to score them

Keith Hatter has some advice to help you stick to those tricky New Year's Resolutions.

'Many people fail in life, not for lack of ability or brains or even courage but simply because they have never organised their energies around a goal.'

Wise words indeed from author Elbert Hubbard, and having worked with the elite in sport and business over the last 20 years, one thing is clear – setting effective goals is a vital component for success – those who set effective goals excel, those who don't usually under-perform.

The good news is that goal-setting is a science and there are some key steps to making them work for you:

Step 1: Constructing the goal

The 'triangle of fire' is a phrase used to explain that a fire needs three things – oxygen, fuel and a source. Without any one of these, the fire will simply not work, and goals are just the same – they also need three vital components:

- what you intend to do
- how you will do it
- by when you will do it

Without all three of these things, it is more of a vague aspiration rather than a goal. "Giving up smoking" is not effective – there's no 'how' and no 'when'!

Step 2: Checking your goal

It's also vital to ask yourself key questions about your goal:

- Is it expressed positively?

A positive goal is much more powerful than a negative one. "I want to be more confident presenting to clients" is much better than "I don't want to feel so anxious when I have to present."

- Do you own the goal?

Personal responsibility is a vital factor. "I want my boss to be nicer to me" is unlikely to work as there's no personal ownership. "I want to learn how to communicate better with my boss" is far better.

- Is it realistic?

Setting fantastic goals that are completely unreasonable is another common pitfall – a desire to cross the Arctic on a skateboard in a pair of swimming trunks is wonderfully ambitious, though probably unreasonable.

So don't set yourself up to fail!

- What's the first step?

Initially you might feel overwhelmed by the scale of the goal. So if it's "I want to run a marathon", the first step might be "I'm going to walk for 20 minutes each day."

- Is it adjustable?

Great goals are adjustable. "I'm going to go to the gym three times a week" can be adjusted so if you miss out on one session then the entire goal doesn't fall apart

- How could I sabotage it?

Being aware of how you might sabotage your goal is useful in helping you select the best course of action – knowing that you might choose to slump on the sofa and watch TV rather than go for that

walk can help you prepare for how you might deal with it.

Step 3: What sort of goal is it?

Goals can be divided into two types – process and outcome. An outcome goal focuses on the end result, eg "catch a big trout" (see page 12). A process goal focuses on what you need to do in order to achieve the outcome. An outcome goal is the 'what', a process goal is the 'how'.

Process goals are the key to



successful performance. Most people focus only on outcome goals where an overemphasis can have a disastrous effect on performance.

Learn to think less about what you want to

accomplish and more about how you'll accomplish it.

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