

Setting Organizational Goals excerpted from *Truly Leading: Lessons in Leadership* by Del Suggs

Goal setting is the key to successful organizations. If you don't set goals, then you simply bumble along from day-to-day but never really accomplish anything of substance. Let's take a look at goals, and understand how to use them effectively.

Goals, as you likely know, are the outcome we seek in any endeavor. They are the reason we do what we do. There are basically three types of goals: small, medium and large. Actually, there is one more type of goal, but we'll get to that later.

Small goals are those things we do everyday. Sometimes it's just a "to-do" list, like the simple chores and functions that need to be done in order for an organization to exist. Scheduling a meeting, preparing the minutes and a meeting agenda, and booking the meeting room are all those small goals. Simple stuff, really.

Medium goals are bigger, and more important. These are the goals that contribute to the achievement of large goals. Here's an example: reserving the ballroom for your banquet. Just reserving it doesn't make the banquet happen, but it's part of a number of medium sized tasks that must be completed in order to make the large goal happen.

Large goals are the biggest, most important tasks that you under take. They might be planning the Awards Banquet, or they might be a larger service event like pulling together the winning team for the "Relay For Life" cancer walk. Again, these large goals are often the main reason your organization exists.

There are five steps in setting goals for your organization.

Decide. First of all, you need to decide what you want to do. This is the fun part. I'd suggest you schedule a meeting just for this purpose, early in the year. Brainstorm and discuss various ideas, and remain open to any possibility. At this point, there are no bad ideas or outrageous goals. It's all about getting input from everyone and just listing them. Don't be afraid to think big!

Clarify. Once you have your list of ideas, determine whether they make sense for your organization. Look at the list of ideas. Are the ideas important enough to achieve? Do they fit with your mission statement? Do they conflict with other goals?

Prioritize. After you have assembled your list of possible goals, then you have to narrow it down. You can't do them all. Here's the simplest way: it's called "dotmocracy."

Here's an example of how "dotmocracy" works: Imagine that you're seeking five large goals for the year. You begin by posting your list of fifteen goals suggested by your members. You give each member of your organization five sticky dots, the kind you can buy at an office supply store. Every member gets to vote by sticking their dots by the goal they support. If they like a goal a lot, they can stick multiple dots by it. They can put one dot by their five favorite goals. They have five votes, and they can use them in any way they want. Total the votes, and you will have your prioritized list of goals!

Commit. Write down those goals you've brainstormed, clarified, and prioritized,. Put them in big letters

on a banner, or on a poster. These are your goals for the year. Make sure you review them at every opportunity. Dedicate your organization's time and energy to achieving those goals.

Act. Finally, take action! Those goals aren't going to achieve themselves. You've got to make it happen. Break the large goals down into medium goals, and break those medium goals down into small goals. Work to achieve the small and medium goals, and the larger goals will become more and more attainable.

Remember that fourth type of goal that I mentioned before? It's known as a "BHAG": a big, hairy audacious goal. BHAGS are *really* big goals. They are possible, but not probable. They are goals you might achieve if you all worked really hard, and worked really smart. They won't be easy to do, but you might be able to do it.

Why would you want to set a BHAG? Because they have the power of inspiration. BHAGs are those really outrageous goals, the goals that seem just out of reach, but you know you could do them if you really tried. It's those BHAGs that lift your organization to the next level, help you win national awards, and lead to recognition for your leadership. Don't be afraid to set a BHAG for your organization!

You're likely familiar with the concept of SMART goals. It's a very popular method of goal setting, and you should consider it for your typical goals. It uses the letters of SMART as an acronym for an effective, attainable goal.

S stands for specific. Your goals should be concrete and not

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abstract. In fact, the more specific you can make your goals, the more likely you are to achieve them. If your goal is to raise money for a charity, state exactly how much you intend to raise. If your goal is a project, specify exactly what that project will be, including the date, time, place, activity, and more.

M stands for measurable. Make sure you set a standard for achievement. You will know you've reached your goal when you've achieved the measurable standard that you set for your goal.

A stands for attainable. Can your goal be accomplished? Is it something that your organization could actually pursue and obtain? That's important, because you will be extending your time and energy striving to achieve this goal. Make sure it's not impossible.

R stands for realistic. Make sure your goal can be accomplished with the resources you have. Think of the time, expense, and labor involved. Is it realistic to believe that you can achieve your goal in the time frame you've set? Do you have the funding to make it happen? Be realistic in your expectations.

T stands for time-based. Set a deadline for your goal. When can you accomplish it? Back that up with a timeline. That is a schedule of what action should be taken and when it should occur. I suggest a "timeline of deadlines." That's my technique of working backwards from the completed project, and setting deadlines along the way to mark important milestones. It's very effective, and will keep you on task.

SMART goal setting is the most popular method of establishing those outcomes you seek to

achieve. You'll find it to be a useful means of creating goals that your organization can support and strive to produce.

Goal setting isn't as difficult as you might think, and setting goals is the first step in achieving goals. Here are some final tips in goal setting.

1. Choose goals that are in alignment with your organization's values.
2. Choose goals that are within your organization's capabilities.
3. Don't be afraid of BHAGs.
4. Break a big goal down into a series of medium goals.
5. Never forget: you can achieve any goal you truly believe in.
6. Planning is not enough-- you must take action.
7. Achieving small goals is vital for developing your confidence.
8. Believe in your goals-- otherwise you'll never achieve them.

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