

# Setting Stretch Goals

## Development Guide



### Drive for Results

In order for a leader to be effective at setting stretch goals there needs to be some push or drive to achieve results. Asking a team to set a goal where everyone is comfortable and confident that the goal is achievable, will not be challenging, nor will it have a positive impact on your leadership effectiveness or the engagement of employees. Achieving something very difficult creates positive engagement. People want to accomplish something that feels impossible, and when they do, they feel special. Leaders push by setting the goal high, by establishing a deadline, and by holding individuals accountable for achieving their specific piece of the goal.

- Track your commitments. Record and track your personal commitments to others and ensure that you follow through.
- Stay on task. Begin each day with a review of your key projects. Make sure that important, highly visible work stays on course.
- Raise the bar. Identify one or two ambitious goals that, if accomplished, would make a positive impact on your team or functional area. Share your ideas with stakeholders.
- Keep team goals in view. Begin every staff meeting with a status review of the major projects within the group.
- Ask your direct reports to propose ways to shorten timelines or increase quality.
- Identify a direct report's or team member's project that has lost momentum. Evaluate reasons for the downturn and take steps to get things back on track.



### Inspire and Motivate

Without inspiration and motivation, employees can feel like galley slaves working hard to avoid punishment but having no vision of where they are going or why they are going there. The pull aspect is actually more important and more difficult than driving for results. Most leaders know how to drive for results. Leaders who know how to inspire share a clear vision and communicate that vision too others. Leaders that pull are quick to recognize people for their contributions. They are role models and lead from the front garnering cooperation across the organization. They provide coaching and development to others.

- Support team goals by adopting a difficult goal for yourself that supports a team goal.
- Keep focused on the goal. Remind yourself and others of the team goals and the payoff the team will receive. Enlist their help in keeping priorities top of mind. Your focus will be inspiring to others.
- Convey your passion. Frequently convey your personal passion and commitment for the work you are doing. Your emotions are extremely contagious.
- Set a goal as a team. Involve your direct reports in identifying and adopting a difficult goal. Nothing inspires organizations more than pursuing and accomplishing a challenging goal.
- Keep others informed. Communicate with others regularly so that everyone knows their current position and the future direction. Make sure your communications have the right mix of energy and excitement.
- Be a role model. Set an example of the kinds of behavior you need others to demonstrate. If others need to work late to meet a deadline, pitch in and help. If costs need to be cut, make sure you cut your costs also.



## Problem Solve

Without problem solving, a stretch goal can only be accomplished by working harder, faster or longer. Problem solving involves a clear understanding of the problems, trends, and opportunities. To accomplish stretch goals will require needed changes in how work is done, relationships, partnerships, and infrastructure.

- Clearly define the problem. Document a clear definition of the problem you need to solve. Share your definition with others and enlist their help. Other perspectives will help you be sure you have it right.
- Collect relevant data. Learn where your information resources are within the company. Develop a way to access all the relevant data available to you. If data is not available, develop a protocol for getting the data you need.
- Create three viable alternatives. When faced with a decision, identify three viable solutions before settling on one. Research suggests that working with three viable solutions will produce the best decision.
- Positively embrace change. Express your enthusiasm for change and convey that attitude to others. Keep moving forward on change efforts even when obstacles are encountered.
- Make mid-course corrections. No change plan is perfect, so quickly recognize when adjustments need to be made. Make corrections to the plan as needed.
- Sell your solution. Solving a problem is only half the battle. Getting others on board with your solution is as important as finding a good solution to a problem. Involve others, communicate necessary information, and set goals for implementation.



## Strategic Perspective

In order to get a team to accomplish stretch objectives a clear vision of the future is critical. Without a clear vision teams can get off track and head in directions that do not build the organization's purposes.

- Be current. Keep current and conversant on news and events that affect the organization. Talk to others, both inside and outside the company, about important external developments.
- Teach others. Take new employees on a tour of the company and introduce them to different parts of the organization. As part of the tour, explain how the organization functions to meet its strategic goals.
- Become a student of strategy. Seek out and listen to relevant podcasts, webcasts, books, and articles that will help you understand strategic planning and thinking.
- Be the informant. Inform your organization and direct reports about things happening with customers, competitors, and suppliers around the world. Share your perspective on how the organization might respond to the external environment.
- Discussions with colleagues. Engage in conversations with colleagues about the organization strategy, what needs to change in the future, competitors strategy, and disruptions that may impact the results of the organization.

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