

# SETTING GOALS

Draw your road map to success and achieve your business goals with these tips **By Claire Sykes**

IT'S WONDERFUL TO WANDER if you're rambling down country roads or strolling leisurely through the mall, open to whatever catches your eye. When it comes to your framing business, however, you probably won't get far if you don't know where you're going.

Successful business owners set goals for themselves. They know where they're headed and why, and they know exactly how to get there. When you set specific, realistic, and measurable goals, you create a road map for yourself. With it, you can steer your business in the direction that you want it to go, and you'll be more likely to reach your destination.

## WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

You may think that your framing business is cruising right along, but it could be merely coasting—or even stalled—without your realizing it. Setting goals gives you a more focused view. If you want to achieve certain goals, you tend to notice those things that can help you and those that can hinder you.

Goals give you control so that you can drive your business forward, instead of drifting aimlessly. They also help you set priorities, making you more aware of what tasks to take on and when, given what you ultimately want to accomplish. All of these goals feed your motivation by providing the vision of a desirable

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outcome. Even the most mundane tasks take on meaning if they help you reach your goals.

When you set goals, everyone associated with your business benefits. Employees feel encouraged to set their own job goals that can in turn help you achieve those of your business. This technique stretches staff members' capacities and allows them to feel that they are part of a team. Setting goals contributes to more effective interactions with customers and vendors, who will enjoy doing business with energetic and organized companies.

### WHAT IT TAKES

Along with ambition and a sense of purpose, setting goals that yield successful results requires the following qualities:

▶ **A positive attitude.** Attitude begins with supportive self-talk about your abilities and dreams. Write your affirmations in the present tense and read them aloud daily. This exercise trains your subconscious to accept your statements as true.

▶ **Imagination.** Each day, take quiet time to visualize yourself reaching your goals. Look at magazines and newspapers for pictures of your desired results and display them next to your written affirmations.

▶ **Compatible goals.** It's not appropriate to ask staff about their personal goals. But if they're saving for a car, an engagement ring, or a vacation—and they enjoy working with you—they will likely feel motivated to do their best, which only helps further the success of your business.

▶ **Motivation & commitment.** The drive to succeed requires desire and perseverance. Find ways to build and encourage these qualities in yourself and in your staff by providing the right support, motivation, and rewards.

▶ **Incentives.** Know what gets you and your staff going. Maybe it's going for a quick run before you tackle those invoices or playing upbeat music for your warehouse staff. Contests and games also create fun and encourage everyone to work as a team toward their goals.

▶ **Positive reinforcement.** Reward your and your staff's successes with praise, cash bonuses, dinners out, or days off. Give employees public recognition by posting their accomplishments on a break-room sign or by awarding an employee-of-the-month title.

▶ **Organization.** Successful goal-setters keep strict track of their progress and wisely manage their time and tasks. Help yourself achieve this organization by running your framing business in a systematic, standardized, and orderly fashion.

▶ **Independence & self-confidence.** Are you and your staff self-directed and self-assured? Those qualities help you maintain the motivation and resolve to stay on course, especially when the going gets tough.

▶ **Flexibility.** If you're poised for change, you can adjust your goals in response to uncontrollable obstacles and unexpected opportunities that any business may face, such as a weak economy or a large-volume customer.

▶ **Perspective.** When you can manage and respond to the smallest details while maintaining a focused view of the big picture, both within and outside your business, you have the vantage point from which to better achieve your goals.

### BREAKING THROUGH THE BARRIERS

In any journey, you're bound to come up against some roadblocks. Whether they're mere potholes in the pavement or

## READY, SET, GOALS!

Your personal goals, such as starting a family or traveling the world, can influence those of your business. Your business goals support your personal ones and reflect what you consider to be successful for your company. Your staff members' personal and professional goals motivate them toward their own definitions of success and can help you reach your own goals.

With those points in mind, use the following steps to achieve your goals:

**LOOK WITHIN.** Identify where you are, so you have a starting point on which to base your goals. Determine what you really value, how you can improve, the impediments in your path, and how you can overcome them.

**VERIFY YOUR VISION.** Make sure that your vision reflects your values and connects with your core goals without conflicting with related goals. Imagine accomplishing your goals and the success that doing so will yield.

**LOOK AROUND YOU.** Imagine yourself responding to threats, such as an economic downturn or increased competition, and opportunities, such as a financial windfall or increased industry support.

**SET YOUR GOALS.** You'll never reach your goals if you don't name them. Afterward, you can figure out how to attain them.

**PRIORITIZE.** Define long-term goals that you can reach in one to five years and short-term goals that you can achieve on a monthly, weekly, or daily basis. Manageable steps will enable you to master skills to push you forward.

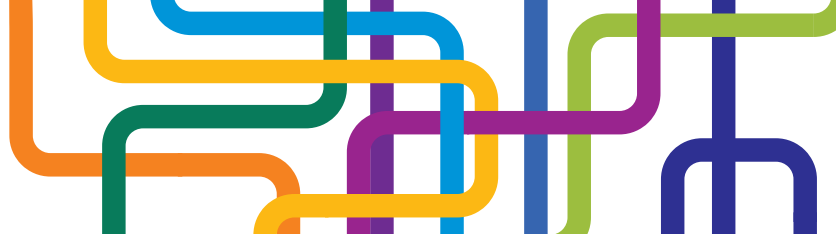
**BE SPECIFIC.** Write your goals with enough detail so you're sure about what you want to achieve. Doing so will give you a clear and complete map to lead you along a focused route right to your destination.

**BE REALISTIC.** Don't overwhelm yourself with too many goals. Your goals should stretch you beyond your comfort zone so that the challenge feels exciting—but not so far that you can't reach them.

**ESTABLISH A TIMELINE.** Choose daily, weekly, and monthly deadlines for each step to motivate you to stay on schedule. Set aside time during the day to work toward your goals.

**MONITOR YOUR PROGRESS.** Note whether each step brings you closer to your goals. Keep track, giving yourself rewards as you go. Revisit your goals daily so you can adjust them as you face changes.

**MEASURE YOUR RESULTS.** Your results may come in the form of monthly revenues or favorable customer comments. Whatever your goals, document tangible evidence of the outcome so it's clear whether you've reached them.



extensive detours, you need to know how to navigate them.

From faltering faith to fear of defeat, self-doubt can make for a bumpy road for even the most determined of goal-setters traveling through unknown territory. Therefore, fortify your affirmations, restock your imagination with fresh views of your vision, and distance yourself from anyone who doesn't share your belief in your dreams.

Family issues and illness, a struggling economy, and business problems can all obstruct your path. Accept them, work toward a resolution, and adjust your goals accordingly. Then, with eyes forward, maneuver around any boulders ahead and don't let them do you in.

If these barriers prevent you from attaining your goals, re-evaluate your goals. Decide whether they are unrealistic and evaluate any miscalculations you may have made. Perhaps you didn't start with the right resources, and you need to seek out people and information that can better support your efforts.

No matter how you arrive at your conclusions, remember that all your efforts still count. Taking any reasonable risk strengthens you because doing so shows you where to make changes. This attitude helps you turn a potentially negative experience into a positive one.

## A NEVER-ENDING ROAD

There's no single route to achieving your goals. If one road reaches a dead end, take another. Just before you arrive at your goal, set new goals that push your limits and prod you forward.

When you and your staff successfully reach your goals, savor the satisfaction that comes with achieving what you've set out to accomplish. Then, ask yourself why you were so successful, so that you can apply that knowledge to future goals. Finally, reward yourselves with that dinner out or day off.

Make goal-setting an integral part of your business. Enjoy the journey, stopping occasionally to take in the view. And be ready to swerve in an unexpected direction should an opportunity inspire you. With your goals in sight, you can transport your business forward, driving your dreams and those of your business toward your desired destination. ♦

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