

# SETTING GOALS

I don't know about you, but I'm not a long-term goal setter. I'm just a short-term goal setter. When you break things down into their smallest parts, everything becomes easier. Just spend your time and energy doing the right things every day. Set *activity* goals for yourself, not results goals, and the results will take care of themselves.

## *Set goals that are reasonable*

Set goals for yourself that are reasonable and well within reach. When you're trying to achieve something that's way beyond your immediate grasp, you're likely to give up long before you have a chance at achieving your goal.

Yes, you should certainly have big dreams, goals, and desires, but if you want to make those dreams come true, you'll have to successfully complete a lot of little dreams along the way. So start by setting modest goals for yourself, ones that are within your grasp, ones that are easy to achieve. Then when you reach that first goal, set another, slightly more difficult goal for yourself.

Look at the goals you set for yourself in the same way that a high jumper approaches the challenge of a jump over the bar. He doesn't get up one morning and decide to jump 7 feet when the best he has ever done is 5 feet 9 inches.

This high jumper may dream of clearing 7 feet, but for the time being, the immediate challenge is successfully clearing 5 feet 10 inches. After clearing this height, he can raise the bar another inch, or a fraction thereof, and try again. With each success, the high jumper challenges himself a little bit more and raises the bar higher and higher.

You should approach your goals in the same manner. You should be setting goals — achievable goals — for yourself, accomplishing them, and then setting another goal, one that's slightly more difficult. You shouldn't expect to make quantum leaps in your achievements overnight. That's not being realistic.

But you should be able to move forward a little bit at a time, day in and day out. And after a while, if you take the time to look at where you are today and compare that with where you were when you started, you'll see that you accomplished more than you ever dreamed.

The winning time in the 1948 Olympic marathon would just be good enough to qualify for this year's Boston Marathon. Over the past 50 years, runners have gotten stronger, faster, and better, but it didn't happen at once; it happened a little bit at a time, over a long period of time.



## **I could lose a few pounds**

Here's an example of goal setting that we all can relate to: losing weight. I don't know about you, but I could stand to lose a few pounds, and I know that I would like to lose it immediately. So what would happen if I starved myself for a week? Yes, I would lose my ten pounds, and would probably gain it back within a month, maybe even sooner.

But look at how the dynamics of goal setting change when I break my big goal into a lot of

little ones. Instead of trying to lose ten pounds as quickly as I can, what would happen if I changed my goal to lose a pound a week?

If I lost a pound a week for ten weeks, I will have lost my ten pounds. To make this goal even easier, what do you think would happen if I tried to lose a quarter of a pound every two days? Is that reasonable? You bet! And after I lost the weight, do you think I would regain it? I don't!

## *Give yourself enough time*

An important part of goal setting — the one that many people often overlook — is the part that pertains to time. Most people don't give themselves enough time to accomplish their goals. They always think that they can accomplish their goals in a shorter period of time than is reasonable. Then they feel that they failed because they didn't make their self-imposed deadline.

In the end, they aren't being fair to themselves, and it's unfortunate. Had they given themselves more time, they could have accomplished their goals with flying colors. But because they're in such a hurry, they shorten their time frames and place an unnecessary burden on themselves. Somehow, they believe that a goal that would normally take a week to accomplish should be completed in a day, and a goal that would take a month to accomplish should be completed in a week.

## *Set many short-term goals*

The shorter the time frame of your goal, the more real it becomes. It's okay to set long-term or annual goals, but if you want to achieve them, you have to create a plan that breaks them down into smaller and smaller goals. Annual goals should become quarterly goals; quarterly goals should become monthly goals; monthly goals should become weekly goals.

Now don't stop at weekly goals. Break them down even further. Have some fun and play some games with yourself.

- ✔ What is your goal for today?
- ✔ What is your goal for this morning?
- ✔ What is your goal for this afternoon?
- ✔ What is your goal for the next 30 minutes?

After you've broken your larger goals down into very small goals, they should appear to be within your grasp. If they aren't, then maybe you've got to rethink your entire plan and start over again.

And when you've accomplished your short-term goal, take a moment to pat yourself on the back and congratulate yourself for a job well done, and then keep going.

## *Write your goals on paper*

The most important part of the planning process is to write your goals down on paper so that you can see them. Identifying your goals and then putting them down on paper will take some time, thought, and consideration on your part, but as I've said before, the more time you can spend thinking and planning your course of action, the easier it will be.



When you write down your goals, always remember to date that piece of paper.

Writing your goals on paper serves several purposes. First, it shows that you are committed to accomplishing these goals, and by putting them down on paper, it gives you a point of reference from which you can compare your progress at any given point in time with your original plan of action.



After you've stated your overall goals, keep a copy of them on display, where you and your family, friends, and colleagues can see them. Tape a copy of your long and short-term goals on your bathroom mirror so that you can see them every morning and evening. And post a copy of your goals on the wall in your office.

## *Review your goals regularly*

At the end of each week, spend a few minutes reviewing and analyzing your progress during the past week. This information can be very helpful as you plan your activities for the coming week.



Review and analyze your progress every Friday afternoon. This will enable you to prepare yourself mentally for the challenges that lie ahead in the coming week. When you arrive on Monday morning, you'll know exactly what you need to do. Just sit down and do it!

## *Sharing your dreams with your friends*

Share your goals and dreams with your friends, colleagues, and coworkers, and discuss your plans to achieve them. Many of your friends will have thoughts or ideas that can help you accomplish your goals, and they would certainly like to be kept abreast of your progress.



Maintain a daily record of your activities, and keep a daily list of the things you accomplished. These sheets of paper should be placed in a file folder labeled "Things I Accomplished." When you want to see how far you've actually come, just pull out the file and look at your list of accomplishments.

Source: Time Management for Dummies by Jeffrey J. Mayer