

pledges from a year ago. They were clueless as to whether the resolutions had been accomplished. As the conversation continued it became clear that in order for people to be successful, goals must be written with specific action steps.

Why Have Goal Statements?

Goal statements provide you with excitement, motivation, energy, and enthusiasm. Weldon (1984) relates this story about a championship basketball game. Both teams were ready and fit. As they were waiting to take the floor, one team gathered around the coach and began to shout, "Who's gonna win? We are! We are!" The teams thundered onto the court. Immediately, the home team took possession of the ball. A quick pass to a speedy guard, the ball went up, arching perfectly toward the basket . . . but it fell to the floor. There was no hoop on the backboard! Everyone was confused, then frustrated. After a few minutes of chaos, the game was canceled, because without hoops the referees could not keep score, the players would not know if they hit or missed, and the fans would never know how well their teams played.

Playing a championship basketball game is like playing the game of life. It provides you with excitement and motivation; however, life without goals is like a basketball game without hoops. "You not only can't keep score, but you probably won't even play the game" (Weldon, 1984).

Goal statements establish your direction and keep you on track. For Dave Thomas, growing up during the depression meant growing up hungry. By the time he was eight years old, Dave told people he wanted to own a restaurant so he would never be hungry again. Orphaned at birth, he never had a stable home life, but he remained faithful to his goal. When he was 12, Dave Thomas got a job in a diner. He worked his way up to busboy and eventually became the manager. Throughout his life he remained in the restaurant business, but always working for others. He turned around four failing chicken restaurants, and eventually became a CEO of a national restaurant chain. Finally, he opened his first restaurant in Columbus, Ohio, and named it after his daughter Wendy. By 1992, Dave Thomas owned over 3,800 restaurants all over the world. When asked about the key to his success, Dave stated that he just concentrated on his goal and kept on track (McGarvey, 1992).

Goal statements ensure greater success. A recent study of college graduates who have been out of school for 10 years attempted to determine how graduates were progressing toward achieving their goals (Givens, 1993). The study showed 83 percent of the graduates had set no goals at all. This group reported that they were working hard and staying busy, but they had no specific goals. Another 14 percent had goals, but their goals were mental, not written. This 14 percent was earning, on the average, three times the income of those who had no goals at all.

Only 3 percent of the entire graduate group had written goals. They were earning ten times as much as the group who had no goals at all.

Goal statements create self-confidence. Henry Ford was one of America's most successful entrepreneurs. He is often called the genius of mass production; however, some of his early Model Ts were not dependable. Early in this century many new car owners, stuck in muddy ruts, were assailed with remarks like, "Get a horse!" Most thought the car was just a passing fancy and could never replace the more reliable horse and buggy. But Henry Ford had a vision. He thought the car was the wave of the future. Henry Ford also had a goal: Mass-produce cars so every family could afford one. Ford's empire moved into high gear, and his Model T became the most popular car in America. Within a few short years, however, Ford came under attack by critics who said his cars lacked imagination and creativity. After producing 15,000,000 Model Ts, Henry Ford closed his factory doors.

People were shocked. Ford said his doors would not reopen until he created a new model. People said it couldn't be done and Ford would be bankrupt within a year. They said he could never regain the market or create a car as great as the Model T. Within 18 months, a new Ford, the Model A, rolled off the production line, and within a few months it was the number one selling car. Reporters who interviewed Henry Ford about his new success asked how he found the confidence to close his factory for a year and a half. Ford said, "If you think you can, or you think you can't, you are right." He said he never had a doubt about his success, because if you find success one time, you will always find it again.

Henry Ford truly believed that success is not a matter of luck, but of effort and strategy. As you write goal statements and take your first victorious step, the next step becomes much easier. Success is doing those things you know need to be done, and doing them to the best of your ability. Achievements and accomplishments are not accidents; they are outcomes of a pattern of success. Careful planning, thoughtful strategy, and faithful execution are the main features of this pattern (Rouillard, 1993).

Goal statements increase opportunities. Opportunities are everywhere, but you need to see them. Givens (1993) asks you to imagine yourself in a 10 × 10 room. Every minute a \$100 bill floats down from the ceiling, and all you have to do is reach out, grab the bill before it hits the ground, and the bill is yours. Within a five-hour time period, you could have \$30,000. It sounds easy, and seems a nice way to walk away with a large sum of money. The only hitch to this story is that you are blindfolded! You cannot see the opportunities, and for most people the bills would float to the ground untouched.

Goal statements help you remove the blindfold. Goal statements help you know exactly what you are looking for. Goal statements help ensure

your success. Goal statements give you the vision to increase your opportunities to catch the \$100 bills. Goals create dynamic personal growth; without goals people are only half alive (Robbins, 1991).

How to Write Goal Statements

When water turns into steam, it expands to about 1,700 times its original size. Steam has tremendous potential. When steam is directed purposefully it can generate enough power to light city streets or to pull a train over a mountain. However, if steam is left to boil on its own with no aim or purpose, the water will eventually disappear and the potential for greatness evaporates into thin air. Goals in people's lives are like focused steam—the full power and potential can be realized only if there is direction and purpose.

When writing your goal statements, let the word STEAM suggest five basic guidelines.

- S** = Specific
- T** = Time Determined
- E** = Ensure Success
- A** = Action Oriented
- M** = Measurable

Goal statements need to be **specific (S)**. They should be clear and concise.

Goal statements need to allow the proper **amount of time (T)** to accomplish a goal. If you allow too much time, you won't be challenged. If there is not enough time, you will be frustrated.

In order to achieve success your goal statements need to be realistic and achievable. The purpose of goal statements is to **ensure success (E)** by knowing that with your time and energy you can accomplish your goal.

Goal statements indicate that you are willing to take detailed **action (A)** to accomplish your goal.

Goal statements should be quantifiable. You need to know when you have reached the goal, and you must be able to **measure (M)** or evaluate the success of your efforts.

Example: Angela is a member of her college golf team. After graduation, Angela's goal is to play on the women's professional golf tour. Currently Angela has a five handicap. Her goal is to lower her handicap to a three.

Using the *STEAM* guidelines, Angela wrote the following to create her goal statement:

S = I will lower my current golf handicap by two points (specific).

T = I will follow my plan for six months (time determined).

E = I have the energy and I am willing to invest the effort to achieve this goal. I am a good golfer with great potential. With dedication I am capable of achieving this goal (affirmation that the goal is realistic and achievable; success is ensured with determination).

A = I will accomplish this goal by practicing 20 hours each week and playing a minimum 100 rounds of golf in the next six months. My chipping and putting need greater attention. During practice I will spend 75 percent of my time on my short game (detailed action).

M = I will know I have accomplished my goal when my computerized golf handicap printout is a three (measurable source of evaluation).

After Angela completed the *STEAM* process she wrote the following goal statement: In 6 months I will lower my golf handicap from 5 to 3. I will accomplish this goal by playing 100 rounds of golf in 6 months devoting extra attention to chipping and putting. I will know I have succeeded in accomplishing my goal when my handicap is 3 on the computer readout sheet.

Persevering on the Road to Success: Step Three—Committing Energy to Strategic Action Steps

How Do People Accomplish Goals?

Wilma Rudolph overcame many obstacles on her way to winning three Olympic gold medals. Many people initially questioned her abilities and doubted her resolve, but she remained focused and determined. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the people who worked with him in the civil rights movement in the 1960s endured horrible resistance, but nothing could deter their efforts. You must recognize that you, too, will have to overcome obstacles to achieve your goals and will need persistence and tenacity. One way to ensure that you accomplish your goals is to keep them visible and focused in your mind.

The value of keeping your goals in the forefront of your mind instead of letting them become obscured by obstacles is illustrated by the story of Florence Chaddick, the first woman to swim the English Channel both across and back. On a foggy day in July 1952, Florence set out to accomplish another swimming feat: To be the first woman to swim from Catalina Island to the coast of California. The going was rough. The cold water made her muscles ache, and sharks had to be frightened off by rifle shots. As the fog became increasingly dense, Florence could barely see the support boats alongside. She could see nothing but endless water. She began to doubt she could meet the challenge, even though her mother and

trainer kept telling her she was close to completing the goal. The obstacles seemed too overwhelming. She finally asked to be pulled from the water.

Sitting in the boat with her body still shaking from the cold, Florence was shocked to learn that she was only half a mile from the California shore. The fog had defeated her. She simply could not see her goal. Florence was convinced she could reach her goal if she could just keep the vision clearly focused in her mind. Two months later in dense fog, Florence set out again. The vision was clearly set in her mind, and even though she struggled against the same obstacles that defeated her the first time, this time Florence Chaddick made it. Her hand touched the California coast in record breaking time—beating the men's record by two hours (Weldon, 1984).

Florence Chaddick, Wilma Rudolph, Martin Luther King, Jr., and many other successful and dedicated people and organizations all recognized the importance of keeping goals clearly focused. The odds against achieving some goals may seem overwhelming, but with endurance and persistence the goals are within reach.

A second way to accomplish goals is to write and follow strategic action steps, the short-term procedures that help ensure success. For some people the first step is the most difficult to take. Strategic action steps help people overcome hesitancy and inertia. Each completed action step builds confidence and dedication by diminishing doubts and uncertainties and reaffirming commitment and belief in the goal.

Strategic action steps, written after you write your goal statement, detail the step-by-step procedures you plan to follow to accomplish the goal. Return for a moment to Angela who wrote this goal statement about lowering her golf handicap to three: *In 6 months I will lower my golf handicap from 5 to 3. I will accomplish this goal by playing 100 rounds of golf in 6 months, devoting extra attention to chipping and putting. I will know I have succeeded in accomplishing my goal when my handicap is 3 on the computer readout sheet.*

Angela can now begin to devise a specific plan with more details. Her first strategic action steps might be to: (1) talk to coach on Tuesday for some hints on improving putting; (2) practice one hour on putting after instruction; (3) play first round (out of 100), record score, and evaluate.

Strategic Action Steps Keep People Motivated

Strategic action steps keep people motivated because completing one small step provides an immediate sense of accomplishment. (A clear illustration of the saying, "by the yard it's hard, by the inch it's a cinch.") Keep your action steps realistic. Just as you wouldn't eat a 12-ounce steak in one bite, but would cut it into small pieces, each life goal must be cut into a manageable bite size (Waitley, 1994).

Two other features of strategic action steps keep people inspired:

Why do I want to do this? When writing your strategic action steps, also write down the answer to the question, "Why am I doing this?" to help you stay motivated and renew your energy.

celebrate the
small stuff

Plan small celebrations. Every so often you need to celebrate your accomplishments. The type of celebration you plan is up to you; the important thing, however, is to do something to reward yourself.

Completing the Process

Goal setting follows this simple four-step process: Write your goal statement; answer the question "Why do I want to do this?"; write your strategic action steps; and plan your celebrations.

Here is a simple illustration of the goal setting process:

Goal Statement: I will lose eight pounds (specific) in two months (time determined). I have the energy and determination to accomplish this goal. I have proven willpower and the weight loss is important to me. With my efforts, my plan is realistic and achievable (ensure success). I plan to accomplish this goal by eating low-fat, low-calorie foods and by exercising. I will limit my fat intake to 35 grams per day, and my caloric intake to 1,500 calories each day. I will exercise a minimum of three times a week (action). I will know I have reached my goal when two months from today I get on the scale and it reads eight pounds lighter (measurement).

<i>Why I Want to Do This</i>	<i>Strategic Action Steps</i>	<i>Celebration</i>
1. Look better	1. Buy low-cal snacks	1. Rent favorite video
2. Feel better	2. Eat 3 fruits a day	2. Go to the park
3. Improve health	3. Walk all stairs	3. Browse the mall
4. Build confidence	4. Drink 8 glasses of water a day	4. Visit friends

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Conclusion

If the Chinese proverb "The longest journey begins with a single step" is true, then the first step of the journey to a successful life is to create a vision statement. The vision statement will clearly help you design the type of future you want. The second step is to write goal statements to direct you on a path toward commitment and success. The goal statements will make your vision a reality. The third step is to write strategic action steps—the things you can do daily, weekly, and monthly to make your goal statements become reality. When writing goal statements answer the question, "Why do I want to do this?" and grant yourself minor victory celebrations.

The small decisions people make create their destinies. You are in charge of your life. You are in charge of your decisions and actions. By following these three steps you can realize your full potential. And when you reach the end of your road of life, you can look back and say, "This was a job well done."