



GOAL SETTING: THE SMARTER WAY



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*"If you don't know where you are going,
you might wind up some place else."*

Yogi Berra

How often do you get into your car and drive off without a clue as to where you want to go, not knowing which direction to head, and driving around aimlessly? Although this seems an irrational thing to do, it's the way many of us go through life, lacking any real kind of direction or purpose, and letting life take care of itself.

This may well be okay for some, but many more of us seek a greater guarantee that life will not only be okay – but that life will be great.

"Begin with the end in mind."

Stephen Covey

When we truly focus on something, we are much more likely to achieve it, whether it is gaining a job, buying a house, acquiring a qualification, or having a harmonious relationship. By sending a message of desire to our brain, we start to make pictures of what we want and in turn we begin the actions to make it happen.



Just as an architect having an idea of what a project will look like when it is complete, or a hairdresser knowing what style they want to create before they start cutting, we can all design the future we want – and then set out to obtain it.

A supposed 1979 Harvard MBA study on goal setting analysed the graduating class to establish how many had set goals and planned for their future. The graduating class was asked a single question about their goals in life. The question was this:

Have you set written goals and created a plan for their attainment?

Prior to graduation, it was determined that:

- 84% of the entire class had set no goals at all
- 13% of the class had set written goals but had no concrete plans
- 3% of the class had both written goals and concrete plans

The results?

10 years later, the 13% of the class that had set written goals but had not created plans, were making twice as much money as the 84% of the class that had set no goals at all.

But the 3% of the class that had both written goals and a plan, were making ten times as much as the rest of the 97% of the class. Whilst goal setting and happiness are not all about money and whether or not the Harvard MBA Business School study on goal setting is true, this anecdote shows how powerful our goals can be when they are written down, planned out and we focus on them.

“You control your future, your destiny. What you think about comes about. By recording your dreams and goals on paper, you set in motion the process of becoming the person you most want to be. Put your future in good hands – your own.”

Mark Victor Hansen

It is never too late to start planning and changing the life you live in order to live the life you will love. To get the process started, consider the following four questions.

What do you want and why do you want it?	GOAL
Where are you on this today?	REALITY
What are your possible options?	OPTIONS
What action will you commit to?	WAY FORWARD

This process will hopefully provide you with an overview of what you wish to focus on and more importantly how much you are prepared to work at it. Perhaps you could work through these Q & A's with a partner or friend, as they may help you identify areas of strength or weakness and prompt you to be 100% honest with yourself. They may also be extremely useful in revealing new perspectives and possible solutions that will help you create a purposeful and focused direction.

What motivates us and drives us forward can help us to achieve our goals. However, when there is disparity between desire, motivation, and resources available, the possibility of achieving our outcome successfully is substantially diminished. Additionally, if we do not believe we can achieve, then we will not succeed and remain unfulfilled. Only by being aware and understanding what is driving our behaviour, can we be properly equipped for change in pursuit of a more fulfilling life.

*"Without goals, and plans to reach them,
you are like a ship that has set sail with no destination."*

Fitzhugh Dodson

One fail-safe way of reaching your goals, is to use the S.M.A.R.T.E.R. method. This 7 step process provides a framework in which you create **specific** goals which are meaningful and time sensitive. The more specific you are about your goals, the more likely you will accomplish them no matter what method you use. When you commit to this with pen and paper in a clearly defined way, the mind sees it and believes it.

Everything you see around you is simply the products of someone's thoughts. Conceived in the mind, then written on paper, and worked upon daily. Whether that be your Dyson Hoover, your TV, your mobile phone or the internet, someone had a thought, wrote it down and took action on it.



What is your why?

The second step in setting S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals is to set goals that are **meaningful**. When your goals have a profound meaning to you, you are more likely to do whatever it takes to achieve them. Attaching a robust meaning to your '**specific**' goals further increases your chances of achieving them. For example, your goal may be money orientated, but what will that money give you? Maybe more time with your family, security, opportunity, or freedom, whatever it is, write it down and keep your focus.

Be realistic

Set short-term goals that are within your reach. Make sure that they are **achievable**, but not so easy that you do not need to apply yourself, the intention is to build on your momentum. Having achieved your short-term goals, you have ignited the flame that can spur you on to greater things.

Be relevant

Ensure the goals you set are congruent and aligned with the direction you want your life and career to take. If your goal is the same as everyone else's, you probably have other people's goals. Keeping your goals aligned with your 'path' will help develop the focus you need to get ahead and do what you want. Setting vague and inconsistent goals may lead you to squander your time and leave your life to chance.

Set a deadline

When your goals are **time sensitive**, they bear greater significance, keeping you more accountable and on track. A simple example could be, if your goal is to lose 8kg this year, start by breaking this down into smaller 3 monthly amounts of 2kg. Then measure those goals on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. By keeping your goals time sensitive and quantifiable, you will be able to see and monitor your progress.

Evaluate

I have never flown a plane, but I have had many flights and each one has landed at the desired destination. When a plane takes off and heads for its journey's end, the pilot does not switch off and read a book or catch up on a box set until it is time to land. They and the co-pilots are always checking the course, evaluating and re-checking their course.

Although you may have planned your goals, if you are to successfully achieve them, it is vital that you constantly **evaluate** them to determine whether they are still meaningful, and that you are still making headway in achieving them. In other words, "scrutinise to realise."



Re-adjust

Rearrange, readapt, realign, but whatever you do, do not resign. Sometimes the methodology you are applying is not working, leaving you feeling like you are continuously hitting a brick wall. Do not give up! Keep trying different approaches until you find yourself getting closer to your goals. This reinforces the need for constant daily evaluation, without which, you are unable to measure your progress.

One final thought...

"I haven't failed, I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."

Thomas Edison

It is okay to fail. Thomas Edison, the man credited with the invention of the light bulb, invented many light bulbs along the way that did not work. He could have seen each one as a failure but instead he saw it as just another way of not making a light bulb. Every failure brought him closer to his goal.

We have all been frustrated by obstacles and setbacks. For some, when the going gets tough, they give up and feel like a failure and will go to great lengths to avoiding getting something wrong again. But believe it or not, once upon a time we did not mind failing. We all learned to walk by falling.

Did we give up? Did we think, 'I can't do this. Walking just isn't for me.'?

No.

We fell down, we got up, we got frustrated, but our burning desire was to walk and play. No matter how many times we fell down or how many times we felt like giving up, we persevered, we learnt from our failings, tried another way and eventually succeeded!