



Dreams Ain't Goals

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP

A long term goal is a vision of the future that pulls you toward an objective. You can sail in a ship without a rudder, but you will have little chance of getting to an interesting place. You will just sail around aimlessly wherever the wind blows, like many people do with their lives.

But, given a goal (also called vision) of your destination, you now have a rudder and can steer the moments of your life to keep you moving toward the goal. You have a much greater chance of reaching it. Oh sure, there are going to be stormy days and nights. There will be times where there is no wind at all to propel your boat, but since you have the goal, no matter what comes up, you are always heading in the right direction. Maybe you are not going as fast as you like, but at least it's in the right direction. That is why goals are so important in our lives.

Brian Tracy once wrote, "People with clear, written goals accomplish far more in a shorter period of time than people without them could ever imagine." It is because the goal becomes like the pull of a magnet on a piece of steel. Once you get the proximity roughly right, then the end result is a foregone conclusion. You instinctively accentuate those things that are aligned with your goal and de-emphasize those things that are not compatible with it. Problems are obstacles in the pathway, but they do not stop you, they teach you.

Having a goal actually shapes behavior as described very well by Jim Rohn when he said, "If you go to work on your goals, your goals will go to work on you. If you go to work on your plan, your plan will go to work on you. Whatever good things we build end up building us." Goals help align the atoms and molecules in our body to enhance our chances of accomplishing great things in our lives.

With all of these advantages of goals, it is still a fact that most people do not have specific, written goals for their lives. They have dreams to do things, but they miss the true power of goals. That represents a huge opportunity for many people to enhance the

quality of their lives by simply doing some planning. Here are 10 things that can move you from hazy and wishful dreams to productive goals.

1. Make your goals tangible

Vague goals or mental wish lists are a dime a dozen. We all have good intentions and dreams, but to really engage the power of goals, you simply must write them down. The act of committing goals to paper or keyboard means that you can no longer push them aside later on when the going gets tough. Write your goals! Write your goals! Write your goals!

2. Goals should represent reach

Easy goals are not powerful because we can accomplish them without effort. Pie-in-the-sky goals are also not very powerful because we see them as impossible. To be effective, goals must be difficult to accomplish, but possible to achieve with great effort.

3. It is better to err on the side of too great a goal than too small

Since goals pull us in the direction we want to go, having an aggressive goal is much more valuable than an easy goal. As Henry Ford once said, "If you think you can or you think you can't, you are right." He actually did pretty well in his time, if you recall.

4. Tell other people your goals

Sharing your goals with people you respect and love has a way of legitimizing them in your mind. It also helps garner friend's support and creativity as you work toward your goals. "I'll let you be in my dream if I can be in yours" (Bob Dylan said that).

5. Refine the goals to just a vital few

Avoid having a long shopping list of goals. One or two good goals are enough. Reason: Goals help us focus critical energy on what must be done. If we have 15 goals for the next increment of time, we will get confused and discouraged. "One solid goal is more powerful than 10 dreams." (I said that.)

6. Repeat the key goals every morning and evening

Letting your goals sit idle on the shelf like a hoary old book renders them quaint, but useless. You must engage your subconscious mind continually to consider all the things you can do to pursue your goals. The best way to do that is to make a conscious affirmation in the morning and evening. Some people say, "I don't need to do that, I will not forget my goal." They do not understand the power of affirmation. As you restate your goals daily, you call up the power of the universe to help you align your thoughts

and actions to be consistent with your goals. This amazing power allows a magnet-like attraction that draws you toward the things you seek.

7. Form a group of people who understand and agree with your goals

Unless your goal is to be a hermit, you are better off with a Mastermind Group helping you. The concept of a Mastermind Group was generated by the work of Napoleon Hill as he prepared his philosophy called "The Science of Personal Achievement."

Napoleon later summarized his findings in the book, *Think and Grow Rich*. Come to think of it, growing rich is usually a pretty good idea.

8. Celebrate the small steps along the way

Achieving a challenging goal is often a lot of work. For example, if your goal is to obtain a PhD degree, you will have to endure countless hours of study, writing, and even taking exams to verify your knowledge. For most people, the work involved in achieving a worthy goal is often tedious and unpleasant, but winners gladly engage in the effort because the smell of success is so alluring.

It is wise to celebrate the baby steps on the way toward your goal because it helps remind you why you are subjecting yourself to all the work in the first place.

9. Enjoy the ride

The ride is really the prize. Most people think the achievement is the big deal, and they are often deflated to find out that the most exhilarating part was during the struggle. They look at the house they just built for the past 15 years struggling all the way to juggle the bills and buy the materials, and they have a tendency to say, "Is that all there is?" Well, yes and no. The real fun was in the struggle, and the accomplishment was just the icing on the cake, but you do get to live in a nice house now.

10. Look back with pride

Every once in a while look over your shoulder to see how far you have come. The progress is often slow enough that we do not even recognize it: like watching a child grow up. We need to remind ourselves of what is really happening.

The best way I have found to do this is to list my accomplishments each year. I typically do that on New Year's Eve. I am often blown away with the things that were accomplished that I never would have thought possible, yet the vast majority of them were enabled by my following the steps above.

Could I have done better? Of course! Did I do better than I thought possible? You betcha! Am I energized to do better next year? Just throw down the puck, and watch me go.

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