



DUMB Goals

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP

We have all heard of SMART Goals. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Realistic, and Time bound. The term was invented by G.T. Doran way back in 1981 (Management Review, Volume 70, Issue 11(AMA FORUM), pp. 35-36).

I thought it might be a perfect time, 32 years later, to upgrade the thinking and add some DUMB Goals. DUMB stands for Doable, Uncompromising, Manageable, and Beneficial. Here are my thoughts on why DUMB Goals are important in our society today:

Doable - In our global economy, we have stretched resources in nearly every organization beyond the elastic limit. As leaders pull on resources in an ever-intensifying quest for more productivity, more and more people reach a burnout stage or just quit trying to stretch. What is needed is to go for quantum leaps in productivity. The incremental approach or Kaizen has served us well for 30 years, and now we need to find new afterburners to take us to a higher orbit. This additional thrust can be achieved by having a more robust culture based on higher trust. Trust within an organization has been shown to improve productivity by 2-3 times. Leaders need to seek higher levels of trust as a means to achieve seemingly impossible productivity goals.

Uncompromising - As everything has become ultra critical, the tendency is to slack off on some of the basics. We have seen several organizations slip backward on the quality principles that provided improvements through the last 2-3 decades. A classic example of this is Toyota. When they got so wrapped up in being the biggest, they took their eye off the very engine that was powering their rise to stardom. They paid a dear price for that mistake. If

organizations are so hell bent on productivity and profits that they forget to invest in the basic building blocks of quality and culture, they are sowing the seeds of their own demise.

Manageable - In most organizations today, the goals set out for people are too many and far too complex for human beings to manage. What you get is a watered-down approach to performance rather than the laser-focused and potent enthusiasm of the entire team. The answer here is better focus. I cringe when I see a strategic plan with 18 critical thrusts. It ain't going to happen folks! For a manageable array of critical result areas, keep the number of thrusts down to three, or four at the most.

Beneficial - It is time for a broader view of organizational output. We have become more environmentally conscious over the past decade, but we are still far off the mark if we are going to save our space ship. We need to dig a lot deeper into our environmental conscience to at least double our efforts to preserve the environment.

Social awareness is lagging environmental activities, although some organizations are starting to gain in this area. We need to encourage more socially-conscious corporate decisions. This means taking a hard look at where products are produced and not supporting socially irresponsible sourcing. That equilibrium may come at the expense of some short term profitability, so it is less popular with the insatiable companies who are intent on squeezing out every last penny. I believe the organizations that are moving in the right direction will ultimately prevail. We need a balance of organizations doing the right things for the right long-term reasons.

It is a totally different world in 2012 than it was in 1981. There is nothing wrong with pursuing SMART Goals, but I think organizations would be well served by also considering the DUMB Goals as well.



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