Goal Setting

It's pretty well documented that setting clear goals is an attribute of most successful people.

Not everyone works the same however, so how you set goals and measure your progress has to be tailored to how you like to work. Some people like structure, others don't. Goals don't have to be one or the other, they just need to be created in a way that motivates you.

Here are some tips to help you develop your goal setting skills

Setting your goal compass
Identify your biggest, farthest away goal – you may call it your vision, or super goal. This doesn't have to be detailed or specific, but works by giving you an internal direction, just like setting a compass. Then, if you come across the career equivalent of mountains or oceans, you will have to go round them, through them or over them, but will still be able to pick up your original direction when you have navigated the detour.

Learn to chunk down to take action
Once you have your vision, or some felt sense of your overall goal, start to chunk it down by asking, what needs to happen for this goal to be achieved? Then, for each of the things you identified ask, what needs to happen for that to be achieved? In this way you can keep cascading down until eventually the things that need to happen will not be smaller goals, but will be actions steps, which you can go off and do! This is a great way to transform an overwhelmingly large goal into smaller manageable goals with concrete action steps.

Learn to chunk up to tap into your motivation
At the opposite end of the scale, it's possible to get so bogged down in the detail that you lose sight of why you are doing it all! When this happens it is important to be able to chunk your goal back up.

Take whatever it is you are working on and ask yourself: "If I achieve this goal, what will it give me?" Whatever the answer to this is, ask yourself the same question: "If I achieve this goal, what will it give me?" Keep going and eventually you will get back up to your big goals, and ultimately your vision. Once

you have reconnected to those, your motivation should come flooding back. If it doesn't, then you need to spend a bit of time working out how you need to change your big goals so they do motivate you.

Make sure your goal is stated in the positive

Your subconscious mind needs something concrete to aim for. If you state your goal in the negative, you create a mental vacuum. It's like jumping into the taxi and instructing the driver that you don't want to be here! It's not really possible to do anything with that. It's one of the reasons why people setting goals to stop smoking, often have so much difficulty: "I want to stop smoking," has no direction, unlike: "I am going to book a holiday in six months time with the money I would have spent on cigarettes." So think about how you word your goals and make sure they are stated in a way that can actually happen.

Make sure your goal is within your control

As well as being possible, goals have to be things you can do something about. For example: "I'm going to get five commissions in the next year," is not really within your control unless you are actually dishing out the commissions. What is in your control is how much effort you make to win those commissions. So to form your goal in a way that you have control might be more like: "I will allocate one day a week for networking activities, cold calling and social media activity, with the aim to secure five commissions this year." You can then track how successful this strategy is, and amend what you are doing if necessary.

Make sure it's your goal

Sometimes we find ourselves wondering why we are not motivated by our goals. This can happen when we are working towards goals that aren't really ours. Perhaps we are trying to fulfil goals that our parents or teachers had for us, maybe we once thought we wanted that but have now moved on. If you think this may the case for you, be honest with yourself, because if you are not really committed to your goals, you will find subtle ways of self sabotage. Much better to direct your energies towards something you really want.

How will you know you've got it?

What will it be like to achieve this goal? What will change? What will stay the same? What will other people notice about you when you have this? Asking these questions really firm up what it is you are working for and will help you be more precise and detailed about what it is that you want.

What might you lose if you get it?

You may have some concerns about the impact achieving your goals might have in some areas of your life. Often people worry that they might lose friends, or have to live in a different place, or will not have time to do something that's important to them if they achieve their goal. It's important to get these concerns out in the open.

To have a worry about this in the background and not address is, will probably result in you making sure you don't achieve your goal. If you bring it out into the open, you can either address it, by taking steps to make sure that the negative thing is less likely to happen, or perhaps you need to modify your goal, to protect an important area of your life.

Reward the effort, not just the successes

Staying motivated is a key part of goal setting, so make sure you factor in rewards for doing what you said you were going to do. If you say you are going to cold call 10 people in a week and you do it, you deserve a pat on the back, regardless of whether any of them delivered any benefit. It takes a long time to cultivate a relationship, and it is inevitable that some efforts will fall on stony ground. So make sure you celebrate the effort.

Be your own yard stick

There is not much point in comparing yourself to the best in the business, especially if you are just starting out. We are each on our own unique journey and comparisons with other people are completely meaningless.

Instead measure your progress against where you were six months ago. That way you will see what you have learned, the experience you've gained, the contacts you have made. This will give you a useful way to measure your progress that is meaningful and motivating.

Last but not least

If something's not working – try something else!

QUICKTIPS