

WORKFORCE HORIZONS

Planning Tomorrow's Workforce Today

Louisiana Department of Civil Service

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SOME TIPS ON GOAL SETTING AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT¹

A big part of any leadership development program involves helping employees set and achieve meaningful goals for personal change. Such goals usually involve changing behaviors such as becoming a more effective listener, a more effective public speaker, a more effective coach or mentor, etc. Yet all too often people start out with great plans but never achieve the desired outcome. Somewhere along the way, they give up on their quest for self-improvement. Why is that?

Marshall Goldsmith, recently named by the American Management Association as one of the top 50 great thinkers and leaders in the field of management over the past 80 years, has a great deal of experience in coaching employees and has done extensive research on goal setting. He has identified six primary reasons why people give up on their goals. Whether you

WORKFORCE PLANNING MAXIM OF THE DAY

“Try not to become a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value.” – Albert Einstein

are a professional leadership coach, a supervisor or manager developing your direct-reports, a mentor advising a younger colleague, or just working on your own development, you can benefit from an understanding of these roadblocks to achieving goals and learn how to take some preventive steps to make it more likely that behavior change goals will be achieved. Here are the six roadblocks.

Ownership: A common mistake is to rely solely on imposing change objectives from outside. A classic example would be developing a “new and improved” performance appraisal form and promising that this form will lead to more effective feedback and productivity. How often have such changes failed to achieve expectations because managers were confused, resistant, or considered them exercises in futility. No real change occurs unless the person is committed to changing. Telling someone that “this program or that process will change you” places too much emphasis on the program or process and not enough on the “you.” As Marshall Goldsmith states in his article “only *you* can make *you* better.”¹ Successful people have a high need for self-determination. When setting goals, you need to make certain that the change objectives come from within the person and are not just imposed from outside with no internal

commitment. Ultimately a person is responsible for his own behavior.

Time: People tend to underestimate how much time it takes to make meaningful changes in behavior. This is especially true for busy professionals and executives. People will start out with good intentions but when the expected results have not been achieved in the timeframe expected, there is a tendency to give up. But habits a person has formed over a lifetime don't go away overnight. When setting goals it is important to be realistic about the time needed to produce a positive long-term change in behavior. People should also realize that even after they change their behavior positively, it may be months before subordinates or co-workers seem to realize it or give them credit for changing. This is because we all tend to regard people consistent with pre-conceived stereotypes based on our long-term relationship with them and we see what we expect. It takes a while to recognize that a real change has occurred. So you need to stick with it. The payoff does occur in the long term with improved relationships and effectiveness.

Difficulty: Behavior change requires hard work and self-discipline in addition to time. Understanding what change is needed is not the same thing as executing the change successfully. For example, most dieters understand that they should eat healthy and exercise. The challenge is not in understanding what is needed but rather in doing it. This takes hard work and discipline. Similarly an executive trying to become a more effective listener may have to discipline himself to listen to things he doesn't want to hear and restrain himself from cutting people off. If you are coaching an employee to change, don't mislead them or try to get buy-in with false statements about how change will be easy or "no problem." This will backfire later.

Distractions: The unexpected always happens. Despite the best laid plans, crises or opportunities will come up that will interfere with behavior change plans by offering distractions or competing goals. There will be a tendency to want to put aside working on behavior change "just for the time being" to

work on an urgent problem. But there will always be urgent problems. Coaches must help goal setters assume unexpected problems will occur and build in time to deal with them as part of the behavior change program.

Rewards: Employees should realize that behavior change as a part of leadership development is a long term investment that will help them become more effective over the course of their career. Improving leadership skills will not necessarily bring short-term rewards such as immediate pay raises or promotion and participants in leadership development should not expect this.

Maintenance: Marshall Goldsmith¹ refers to leadership as "a *process* – not a *state*." Leaders are on a continuous journey but they never arrive. Once a person has changed her behavior to develop new leadership skills, she must work hard to maintain those skills and to continue to change to meet new demands. Leadership development is an ongoing process that never stops.

¹Adapted from "Helping People Achieve Their Goals." Goldsmith, Marshall and Goldsmith, Kelly, Leader To Leader, No. 39. Winter 2006

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." – **Eleanor Roosevelt**

CREATING A HIGH PERFORMANCE GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION

Traditionally, government organizations have not been regarded as highly effective or efficient. Therefore, there is great interest in transforming government organizations into high performance organizations. How can this be done? The general philosophy is to get all employees involved in improving organizational performance. The U. S. Department of Labor as part of its SCANS³ initiative has defined high performance in government as "a comprehensive

customer-driven system that aligns all the activities in an organization with the common focus of customer satisfaction through continuous improvement in the quality of goods and services.” Seven key operating practices were identified as necessary to high performance in government organizations.

1. Leadership and support from top levels of management: Management must create and support a climate where innovation and risk-taking are encouraged and rewarded in employees and must have the fortitude to keep going and continue supporting them when mistakes or setbacks occur.
2. Strategic Planning: Strategic planning makes the cultural change ensuring that pursuit of excellence and customer service are ongoing and part of the day-to-day management and actions of the organization.
3. An ongoing commitment to training and development for all employees: Training commitment must be ongoing even in lean budgetary times and should be available to all employees, not just top management and supervisors.
4. A focus on the customer: Find out customer needs by survey, interview or focus group rather than by assuming you know what they want. Strive to always exceed customer expectations rather than simply meeting them. Treat internal “customers” the same as you would external ones. Realize that you are a team and when you hand off something to another section or employee, make sure you are meeting their needs so they can handle their part of the job effectively and efficiently
5. A focus on quality: Focus on the front end of the process and try to prevent errors from occurring or at least detect them early in the process rather than correcting them afterwards.

6. Empowering frontline employees and emphasis on teamwork: Allow frontline employees to identify and solve problems on the spot rather than passing everything up for approval or handling. Support their decisions; recognize and reward outstanding efforts.
7. Developing measures of progress: These measures are of two kinds. First are regular assessments of customer satisfaction with goods and services in terms of such factors as ease of access, reliability and responsiveness. Second are continuous measurements of work processes to reduce processing times, eliminate waste or unnecessary steps, etc.

³ SCANS refers to the Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills of the U.S. Department of Labor. Data for this article was taken from *Government as a High Performance Employer - A SCANS Report for America 2000*.

CREDITS

Editor: Max Reichert, Workforce Planning Assistant Division Administrator (email: max.reichert@la.gov)

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Purpose: The purpose of the Workforce Horizons is to educate readers about workforce planning issues and best practices, inform them about upcoming Civil Service workshops and training related to workforce planning and to provide practical job aids to assist agencies with workforce planning.

Comments and submissions: We welcome questions about workforce planning and suggestions for improvements to the newsletter as well as submissions of articles about what your agency is doing in workforce planning. Questions, comments, and requests to be added to the distribution list for the newsletter should be sent to the editor.

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