

GOAL-SETTING

THE COUNTDOWN BEGINS TO A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

BY TERRI-LYNN LEVESQUE



There is always something about this annual tradition that brings a feeling of peace. It's similar to the feeling when you close your eyes and take a deep, cleansing breath. For a moment, a weight is lifted, as you reflect on the year that is now behind you. At the same moment, you feel the promise of something new, building on the successes and failures of the previous year.

At some point, we all will start to brainstorm what the goals are for the year ahead, both professionally and personally.

In today's business world, setting goals is critical. Setting clear, specific, and obtainable goals is key to growing a successful business. Yet, only 8 percent of people who set goals actually achieve them.

The definition of goal-setting is "the process of identifying something that

you want to accomplish and establishing measurables with time frames."

There are different goal levels within a company to consider:

- **Companywide goals.** These are goals that focus on growing the business as a whole. The goals are communicated to all staff. All decisions made by staff must have the goals in mind. This also ensures the entire staff is running the same race.
- **Department goals.** These are goals that are set with a focus on a specific department. They must directly connect back to the companywide goals.
- **Individual goals.** These are goals that are specific to individuals. The individuals are held accountable, and are assessed on their ability to meet their goals. Managers have

their own set of team goals that differ from their individual goals.

Goals should use the five SMART elements:

S — Specific. Clearly describes what the target is and what needs to be accomplished.

M — Measurable. Tools must be available to make sure progress is tracked and on target.

A — Achievable. Goals should be aggressive, yet attainable. Setting a goal that will inevitably fail defeats the purpose and breeds discouragement.

R — Relevant. Goal has a clear impact on the company, department, or individual.

T — Time-Bound. Specific time frame and deadlines it will take to reach the goal.

Now that you have the foundation for creating goals, how do you set them and keep staff motivated to reach them?

- 1. Get input.** It's extremely difficult to set a department goal, for example, without having input from everyone in that department. At Royal Containers Ltd., we meet as a management team annually to set corporate goals. In management meetings each month, we monitor, communicate, and report which goals are on track and which ones are not.
- 2. Define the goals with specificity so there is no room for misinterpretation.** This helps everyone focus on the target and the successful behaviors needed to obtain it. Communicating the goals is key. You must use visuals that include electronic platforms. We use things like communication monitors, posters, pictures, and other visual aids throughout all venues within the company. Use prompts and reminders. We start every—and I mean every—meeting by reviewing our mission statement, core values, and company goals. We report whether we are on track to promote transparency within the company. This reinforces an “eyes on the prize” mentality and aids in accountability.
- 3. Measure.** Create reports to measure progress. We use a tool called a “scorecard.” It lists each goal, who is responsible to meet each goal, deadlines, and any risks or challenges we may face. Create a weekly or monthly checklist of items to be completed, and create calendar reminders to keep you on track.
- 4. Train your employees.** AICC is always a great resource. The Packaging School, for example, is a tool that can help with training new and established employees—courses such as

Communication for Coaches, Go Team Go: How to Make Your Team More Productive, Project Planning for Success, Achieving Higher Levels of Productivity in Corrugated, and the many Packaging 101 courses. All AICC courses are free and included in your annual dues. At Royal Containers Ltd., we are partnered with Holly G. Green of The Human Factor, in conjunction with AICC, in the *Ready, Aim, Win* program.

- 5. Celebrate and reflect.** Once you reach your goals, celebrate your success. You did it! How has it improved your business and contributed to your bottom line? If you failed, reflect on reasons why you didn't achieve your goals, and highlight challenges that you can change for the future.

Reaching goals takes work. I love watching TED Talks videos on *ted.com* or YouTube for motivation. They highlight creativity and innovation in just about any area you can imagine.

How can you personally become better at reaching your own goals? Every night, look at your calendar and prepare your checklist of tasks to be completed for the next day.

Every Sunday, write out a checklist of three things you want to accomplish in the week ahead.

Use apps such as “Be Focused.” Let's face it: These days, we use our phones to organize all aspects of our lives. We all have those moments of panic when our phones shut down due to low battery. These tools help you focus and track your goals.

As a final tip, something I learned at the 2016 AICC Emerging Leaders meeting in Fort Worth, Texas, was to “build a focus vault.” Think of your attention like a currency. Your attention (currency)

resets every day, and you have only so much to use each day. Like money, you should spend it wisely, on the things that will help you reach your goals in two to 10 years. Go into your focus vault to do better and become excellent.

The combination to the vault is:

1 — Pick one place to enter the vault. Your brain picks one environment to form a habit.

00 — This one you have full control of. Zero digital activity. Fight back against the digital distractions with good technology, such as the “Freedom” app. This effectively puts your computer in “freedom mode” and will allow only one program to run, with no email notices or notifications. Turn off your phone during the vault time. Just like Girl Scout cookies, when we have the temptation within arm's reach, we are more inclined to be tempted to eat one (pick up our phone). Put the Girl Scout cookies back in the pantry during vault time.

45 — Don't be in the vault longer than 45 minutes. Start at 20 minutes and work up to 45.

In the words of Wayne Gretzky, the greatest hockey player who ever existed: “You will always miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take.”

Don't be afraid of goals or failure. Goals push us beyond our comfort zone, help show our level of commitment, and test our determination. ■



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