

Best Practices for Helping Employees Set Goals



If you're in any kind of management position, you're charged with helping each and every one of your employees do their job and fulfill their potential. Anything short of this can be detrimental for your team, and the entire organization.

Goal setting is widely lauded for its merits of building morale, bringing about continuity and motivating employees. Unfortunately, goal setting in practice often resembles something entirely different. All too often, managers call in employees for their 30-minute quarterly or yearly reviews and go through a prepared list of questions and metrics that fall short of addressing individual needs and performance. To many employees, meetings like these are seen as laughable attempts from higher-ups to check in from 30,000 feet.

If you're serious about getting the most out of your employees and taking your team or organization to new levels, effectively helping employees set goals is an essential part of the process.

1) Know Your Employees

Every employee is different. Each of them listens, learns and produces in their own way. As a manager it is your job to adapt your communication and teaching style to each individual. In order to get to know your employees taking a [personality test](#) can provide tremendous insight to who they are as people. If you don't have access to a personality test, simply spending some time talking to your employee and getting to know what drives them, what interests them, and what they would like to achieve in their business and personal lives can give you great

insight.

Not only will this help you communicate with your employees, but they will be better suited to communicate with co-workers and customers as well. When it comes to goal setting, arming yourself with knowledge of your employees as people only helps you to set goals that are tailored for them.

2) Make Goals the Employee's Idea

No one likes to be barked at and told what they need to do better in their job. This approach to goal setting is often viewed by employees as meaningless and scathing. Instead, invite your employees to take part in a two-sided conversation about their performance and objectives. Asking probing questions is a great way to steer the conversation in a certain direction while also allowing employees to think for themselves. Give them an idea of what needs to be accomplished and ask them what they can do to help achieve it. This helps them participate in the process and take early ownership of their role.

If your employees feel that they have been heard and that goal setting was a collaborative experience, the results will surely show in the workplace.

3) Set Goals that can be Measured

We set goals for ourselves all the time. They usually are something like, 'I'm going to lose weight' or 'I'm going to make more time for my family.' These goals usually aren't attained for a simple reason. They lack measurability and accountability.

When you're working with employees to set goals, make sure they are attainable, measurable and have accountability and incentives tied to them as well. When employees are readily able to track their progress and feel a goal is within reach, they are increasingly motivated to hit the target. Once a goal is attained, employees will be all the more excited to reach the next one. This spells good news for the entire organization.

4) Align Goals with Company Objectives

It's human nature that we are more inclined to put forth our best effort if we feel like we are part of something great. The [best companies to work for](#) know this and make it a cornerstone of how they do business. They take every step necessary to get each employee on board with the company's mission. Setting individual goals that are in line with company objectives and culture goes a long way in motivating employees to reach their full potential. Don't expect your employees to be excited about working with blinders on, allow them to see their part in the bigger picture.

5) Be Consistent and Transparent

While it's vitally important to curtail goals to each individual, they should be similar for all employees with a certain level of responsibility. People talk and if one employee's goals are vastly different from another's of the same stature, you are sure to incite jealousy and angst which are toxic in the workplace. It could also lead to accusations of favoritism, which could undermine the management of your team.

6) Take a Step Back and Look at the Entire Picture

All too often managers are quick to bring down the hammer on employees that aren't meeting expectations. The truth is however, yelling and punishing rarely solve anything and more often than not make employees more disengaged and unmotivated. When setting goals for employees that fall short, it's important to take a step back and look at the entire situation. Did this employee receive proper training? Were expectations clearly spelled out? Do they feel they are part of the team striving for a greater good? Did they have the resources or equipment they needed to succeed?

Looking at the bigger picture to identify shortcomings often reveals easy fixes that can be communicated constructively in a nurturing manner. Make these employees a priority and help them create an action plan to achieve desired results. Ask them what they feel they might need from you to be able to reach their goals. It lets them know you are supporting them and also puts the

responsibility on them to succeed. If the proper steps are taken, these employees often become top performers.

As a manager, you're only as good as your team. Checking in regularly and collaboratively setting clear and measurable goals for each individual under you is paramount to achieving desired results. Setting aside appropriate time to meet with employees on a human level lets them know you care. It doesn't take much, but simply knowing you want what's best for each individual goes a long way in increasing productivity, efficiency and morale in any organization.