

Goal Clarity – The Basics

Single goal linking up to two departmental (parent) goals....

In current review and goal setting processes, individuals are often encouraged to link a single individual goal to multiple parent, or departmental, goals.

It is possible to do this because the goal setting process is not rigorous enough to highlight this as a problem. However, it is very unlikely that the same specific, measurable outcome from the goal will achieve what is required to meet the needs of more than one parent goal. Usually, what is required is that the individual goal should be rewritten as multiple, more specific goals, each separately aligned with single departmental goals.

For example:

A Faculty Manager has a goal to 'Deliver the 2013 Research Conference on X drug treatment'. They initially say that this fits into two departmental goals:

1. Maximise indirect income to the department over the period 2013/14
2. Share research knowledge amongst our partner institutions

In the end the conference was a great academic success – it was fully subscribed, with knowledge shared, contacts made and academic staff very happy with the level of academic engagement and debate. However the costs of the venue and catering were miscalculated and the conference did not make a profit, in fact when accounted for it lost £2000.

Was the goal successful? The answer is *in part*. For the first parent goal, regarding income, the answer is 'no' – however, for the second, sharing research knowledge, it was a great success. The problem is that, because the goals were not specific enough, it became impossible to judge against success criteria.

In order to properly define success and to allow the outcome to meaningfully inform the departmental goals, the goal for the Faculty Manager should have been written as two separate goals, each linking to a different parent goal:

- Maximise departmental income, by at least £2000 profit, via the funding stream of the 2013 Research Conference on X drug treatment
- Utilise the 2013 Research Conference on X drug treatment conference to attract at least 30 academic staff delegates, with papers presented by 3 speakers, and a networking dinner to share ideas and contacts

Conclusion

Being more rigorous about the line of sight between individual and parent goals makes it easier to judge and reward success. Goals may need to be broken down and split so that this clarity can be introduced.