

# Goals: The Route to Success

## It really does work....

Researchers have shown that people in work like to know where they fit in and like others to know what they contribute to<sup>1</sup>. Not only do they like this feeling, it's been proven to increase productivity as well.

Experts in human motivation sometimes call this process 'management by objectives' but it's not a new concept. First introduced by Peter Drucker in 1954<sup>2</sup>, it has been seen as one way in which people can gain clarity about their job purpose, whilst also improving their performance and that of the organisation. Further research by Robert Rodgers and John Hunter<sup>3</sup> backed this up concluding that companies who worked this way showed an average 50% gain in productivity as opposed to those that did not.

It's not just in the workplace that this seems to have a significant impact. Team GB Cycling team leader Dave Brailsford<sup>4</sup> is famous for his use of management by objectives to get the best possible performances from his team. Under his leadership Team GB has become the most successful track cycling team in modern history. When a cyclist starts he agrees with them the performance standard they are aiming for. This is then broken down into a timed, step-by-step training plan with specific performance objectives to be achieved along the way. The agreement is clear, these objectives have to be achieved or the cyclist will not achieve the ultimate goal and will be off the team.

It might sound a bit tough to those of us who aren't focused on being world class but look at the results:

| Event                     | Gold | Silver | Bronze | Total |
|---------------------------|------|--------|--------|-------|
| Cycling Road              | 1    | 1      | 1      | 3     |
| Cycling Track             | 7    | 1      | 1      | 9     |
| Paralympics Cycling Road  | 3    | 2      | 2      | 7     |
| Paralympics Cycling Track | 5    | 7      | 3      | 15    |

## How to do it...?

The first step is to show people clearly how they fit in with a series of goals. Sometimes the process of setting them is as enlightening as actually doing them.

## Anchor them

The key to creating goals that actually mean something to individuals is in ensuring that they are anchored in the organisational strategic plan in a way that is easily understood.

<sup>1</sup> Maslow, Esteem, Herzberg - "motivational factors, sense of achievement, responsibility, recognition, meaningful work"

<sup>2</sup> Peter Drucker 1954 - "The Practice of Management"

<sup>3</sup> Robert Rodgers and John E. Hunter, 1990 "Impact of Management by Objectives on Organizational Productivity"

<sup>4</sup> [www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dave\\_Brailsford](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dave_Brailsford)

### Link them

Human motivation theory tells us that goals need to have transparency to have impact so that people can see how their actions will lead to a sense of achievement for themselves, as well as organisational success.

### Make them clear

They need to be specific so that there is no confusion about what is expected. In the same way that athletes use goal setting effectively to improve their performance through attention to specific changes in how they play their sport, we can use objectives in the workplace to focus attention and channel energy to make tangible improvements. From a motivational perspective, this leads to increased job satisfaction; people respond positively to having clear responsibilities and regular feedback on how they are doing. Goals fit into the sort of regular conversations that managers might have with team members (one to ones) and so once the objectives have been agreed, they can be kept alive and relevant.

### Have a plan

A starting point in getting goal setting right is having a clear organisational plan from which department and team objectives and ultimately individual objectives can be agreed. The familiar acronym of SMART<sup>5</sup> is still helpful in providing a useful framework to keep conversations about objectives on track.

### Time to talk

Giving time to have meaningful conversations with team members about goals is crucial. Staff must be bought into the process if their goals are to result in improved performance. It is more likely that people will respond to objectives if they do not feel overwhelmed and so agreeing to three or four is a good place to start.

### Quick wins

Make the process feel achievable with some quick wins, perhaps by completing some short term tasks or meeting key milestones on other longer term goals.

### Review them

Agree how you are going to review them. Having an end time agreed will enable team members to plan their work but if this is a long term objective, it is useful to set some milestones so that they are kept on track.

To find out more go to [performanceforall.org](http://performanceforall.org)  
Follow us on Twitter [@performance4all](https://twitter.com/performance4all)

---

<sup>5</sup> Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time bound