

Goal Setting with Direction and Commitment

After your company has set specific, realistic, and challenging goals that will be measured, what's the next step? Now, how can you make certain your employees are committed to these goals? Without commitment, these goals obviously will not affect their performances. Remember, as goals become more difficult, people tend to make less commitment to them because there is greater risk of failing.

You can do a number of things to increase team member's commitments to their goals. Most importantly make sure that they are their goals, not yours. Team members should participate actively in setting their own goals. This increases their feeling of responsibility for their own actions, which helps to develop perceptions of internal control.

Team members not only commit greater effort to goals they set, they work harder to find methods to achieve these goals. If one strategy blocks their progress, they will look for another strategy. Manager/coach imposed goals simply are not owned by employees, and if they do not own their goals, goal setting backfires.

This is not to say as team leader that you should not be involved in the goal-setting process. You should provide guidance, the degree depending a great deal on each person. When new to the job and learning skills, employees often prefer, and benefit from, greater guidance because they do not know how to set goals and what your expectations are. *The more experienced an employee, the less you should direct their goal setting.*

Imagining goals permits team members to try out goals in their minds, and possibly even adjust them to a realistic level. Imagining goals will help them focus on the strategy or method for achieving a goal. Imagining the goal regularly, and visualizing its attainment, keeps the goal prominent in the person's mind and develops anticipatory motivation for its eventual attainment.

Recommendation: Explain to your team the benefits of setting goals and pursuing them systematically. 1) Help them understand the nature of the goals you jointly set with them (if they are not obvious) and the reasons a certain standard should be selected.

2) Do not use threats or intimidation in urging team members to set goals at a certain level.

3) Be highly supportive of your team members. The process of identifying specific goals and selecting a standard to be achieved should be done in such a way that it communicates you care about the athletes and respect his

or her self-worth. Research shows that when managers are supportive it gives employees the confidence to set higher goals because they have less fear of failure or fear of punitive actions on the part of their superior.

4) Give rewards for progress and attainment of goals. The use of praise, recognition, and tangible rewards can all increase commitment when they are correctly administered.

5) Provide regular feedback about progress. This is essential to commitment and goal attainment.

When employees see that you will help them with a plan of action that will develop the skills and knowledge they need to achieve their goals, they will have much greater commitment.

Alan Goldberg, Ed.D.
Competitive Advantage
226 Strong St.
Amherst, MA 01002 www.competitivedge.com