

The Leader Next Door Needs Written Goals

You're the leader next door and have heard over and over that you need to set goals and write them down. Let's say you are the manager of a sales team in your office. You sit down in front of the computer to make a list of the development you want to take place in your followers. It includes all the things you want them to be aware of as well as all the things you want them to know and appreciate.

One goal may look something like this: "The members of my team shall learn appreciate the value of my organization's training system". There is nothing wrong with this type of goal, but there's nothing really right about it. What do you need to do?

Fuzzy Goals

The above example is something that is referred to as a fuzzy goal. It is abstract and refers to an internal condition in the mind and emotions of the team member. How can the leader next door know when it has been accomplished? How do you measure how aware they are?

Goals like these are called "fuzzy goals". They are not measurable. Neither you nor your follower will be able to say when or if they were successful. If your goals are fuzzy, you should do more analysis to determine what it is you really want from your followers.

Write down your fuzzy goal as a start of the analysis process and only look at one at a time. Don't waste time criticizing what you've already written. Instead, make sure your statements are clear. (A goal may consist of two or three sentences.) Ask yourself, "What do I want them to do?"

Make the statements very specific. Avoid forms of "to be" as they weaken the goal statement. For example instead of saying, "I want them to be courteous when they greet people." Try sentences like, "I want them to smile, shake, hands, and give a positive affirmation when they greet people." Do you see the difference? You can measure the latter.

When you get done rewriting, ask yourself, will I be satisfied that they are successful if they do this. The purpose behind developmental goals should always be the success of the person being developed. Do this and you will have goals that are concrete and measurable.

Four components of a well-written goal

As the leader next door, you will want to write goals that are complete and well written. Four things need to take place: The goal should describe the follower; it should describe the tools that the follower will have to learn and perform the activity; it should describe the context in which the follower will use it; and it should describe clearly what the follower will do.

An example of a goal that meets these four criteria:

“The sales staff will study and utilize the protocols established in the Customer Relations Training Program to provide a cordial greeting to all customers who enter the office. They will respond to walk-ins by smiling, shaking hands, and asking them, ‘How can I help you?’”

Who are the followers? They are sales staff. What is the tool? It is the Customer Relations Training Program. What is the context? It is when customers enter the office. By now you know what the activity is...it is smiling, shaking hands, and asking how they can help.

Try this with a goal or two that you already have in the back of your mind. You'll be amazed at the clarity it brings.

Rick Hubbard - B.A. in Communication and Organizational Leadership and an M.A. in Instructional Systems/e-Learning He is a instructional technologist at a Florida university and does consulting in communication and instructional design.

<http://www.ALeadershipRevolution.com>

Copyright © 2007. Permission is granted to reprint this as long as the author information is included and the article is reprinted in its entirety without editing.

