

Great Goal Setting

Motivation

It helps to understand a little about how we are all motivated. Basically we are all motivated in one of two ways, either away from something, usually pain, or towards something which we can, for the purposes of this exercise, call pleasure.

These are really the only two directions of motivation. Now we will all be naturally motivated in both directions, but to varying degrees and in different contexts our motivation might be different too.

Some of us might most naturally be away from motivated, and the primary source and energy for our motivation comes from the desire to move away from something we do not like or we aren't happy with.

While for others our primary source of motivation will be in a toward direction, what drives us is the need or desire to move toward something, which we perceive as in some way being better or more pleasurable than the status quo.

The word motivation has its roots in the notion of movement and there can be no movement without also a conception of direction. It would help to understand our own motivation at any particular instant and determine is it primarily a desire to move away from or towards? Understanding this motivational direction can be a huge help in turbocharging our desire to overcome resistance and move at all.

If we look at the "away" from motivation we can clearly see that there is a natural and inevitable limit to the strength of that motivation, because the further we do actually move away from the thing we want to move away from, necessarily the strength of that motivation must diminish.

So if we know someone who wants to move away from "being poor" for example, let's imagine how that might work. Having identified the pain of "being poor" our client can easily be motivated with all of the techniques and skills that we have developed to do what is necessary to move away from that state. They might take on a coach, apply themselves to the goal, work hard and smart and with the right level of application and commitment they will soon find themselves moving away from that state of "being poor". However as soon as the first steps have been put in place and progress is being seen and felt to be made, the level of income will pick up and before long savings start to accumulate where there were none before. This is great. We have the right result. But look what is happening to the motivation levels. The driving force was the desire to move away from that state of "being poor". As the state ceases

to be that of “being poor” so does the motivation diminish in direct proportion. Therefore the level of activity, which is proportional to the motivation, will probably diminish and the results will also correspondingly diminish. Very often the individual will end up more or less back where they started.

The example above is based on the state of “being poor”, but what if it was “Being overweight”? this explains why so many of us are yoyo dieters, as we lose weight so the motivation diminishes and we cease to apply the things that we have done to get us there and find the pounds gradually piling back on.

Before we look at towards motivation it would be an idea to consider where our thoughts lie if “away from” motivation is our primary channel of motivation. If we are motivated in an away from direction the roots of our motivation will lie in the thing we want to move away from “being poor”, “being overweight”, “being lazy” for example.

Now we know that we become what we think about so if we are constantly drawing our motivation from moving away from something we will constantly be thinking about what we want to move away from. So if we are always thinking about not “being poor” what is going to manifest? That’s right. Exactly what we are spending all our time thinking about “poor”. And that is precisely what we are going to get.

Now I don’t want to decry the moving away from motivation. It is hugely powerful and can enable us all to achieve great results. It is better that there is a moving away from motivation than no motivation at all. But it is important to realise these two facts

1. That away from motivation has a limited shelf life and
2. It is ultimately self defeating.

However we can all use that motivation to begin to drive some movement. Once there is some forward momentum and impetus we can then use that momentum to catapult us into massive action based on *toward* motivation.

You see when we are motivated toward something the motivation remains strong until we have achieved our goals. That’s why we need massive goals and to constantly reset and enlarge those goals. So having, in the example above, used the away from motivation, to begin to move away from the state of “being poor”, and we have begun to get traction. We can see the progress we are making and feel the effect in our hip pocket and our bank accounts, it would be

really smart to switch the point of focus from not “being poor” to being “financially free”.

The moment we do that our focus moves from a negative “poor” to a positive “financially free”.

If we become what we think about and we are always thinking about, and drawing our motivation, from wanting to be financially free then that is what we shall become. How cool is that?

So *towards* motivation in the long term will be more effective and get you what you want. But the problem is so many of us don't know what we want. Lots of us know what we don't want but we often don't know what we do want.

It is quite easy to know, to feel what we don't want. We recognise those feelings of displeasure and discomfort. We recognise that we would rather not have those feelings and so it is not too difficult to motivate ourselves to move away from that state. But what do we want? Now that, I believe, is an altogether different and often more difficult question. What is it that we want? What makes us really really happy?

What makes us content, joyous, ecstatic? All of these are much more difficult states to define, but not impossible.

Start with what you don't want and ask yourself “OK so if I don't want that, what do I want” start brainstorming and slowly, gradually, over time you will become more and more clear about what it is that you do want.

You see goals should always be positive in nature. Stated with certainty and in the present tense

Setting your RAS.

What is your RAS?

Well let me give you an example of your RAS or Reticular Activating System. Have you ever bought something new like a car, an outfit or piece of equipment that you thought was either unique or at least highly unusual? What was the first thing that happened next? I bet you saw loads of others. Do you recognise that feeling? Why does that happen? Is it simply just that you are a trendsetter and once you bought something the whole world went out and bought the self same thing? Well it could be but more likely it is just your RAS at work.

The fact is that the human brain is faced with billions of bits of information every minute. It simply has to find a way to handle all of that information. It does this by filtering the information it is receiving. It will also delete and distort (generalise) information too. As you read this just take a moment to pay attention to the noises

around you. As I write I can hear the heating boiler cutting in and out. The rustle of paper from Jayne's office down stairs and the passing of an airliner miles overhead. What can you hear? The chances are you could hear nothing much until I asked you to take notice of what was around you, and now I have you are probably noticing noises and sounds that were always there but weren't able to get through the filters that your unconscious brain had in place. Now I have asked you to notice them you are noticing them.

There goes the boiler again!

And that is how your RAS works. You are suddenly letting your unconscious brain notice stuff that was always there but may not have been consciously noticed before.

So when you ordered that new car you were unknowingly allowing your unconscious brain to become more aware of similar examples and so of course it does.

How many times have you noticed something that you were only recently thinking about?

Well now you know a little about how your RAS works you can have it working for you and, as your unconscious brain never stops working so your RAS can be working for you 24/7.

It is up to you what it notices. If you are smart you will have your RAS notice things that are beneficial for you, Perhaps ways to achieve your goals.

Most of us are not that smart however and we get preoccupied with negative stuff, gossip, bad news, disasters. So that's what our RAS is on the lookout for. So guess what we notice more and more?

That locks us into a spiral of doom and gloom. No wonder so many of us are so depressed and negative. You might realise by now why reading the daily papers is not always recommended.

What if we could use that immensely powerful side of ourselves, our unconscious brain 24 hours a day, seven days a week? And what if we could use that part of our brain that never tires and never quits for something good, something important, something beneficial?

Wouldn't that be fantastic?

Well we can. All we need to do is to get our RAS focussed on the right thing. On our goals, on where we want to go.

The quickest and most effective way to do this is to actually write our goals down. Do we have to write them down? I don't believe you have to but it is way more powerful that way and much more likely to yield the results we want.

Remember the weakest ink is always more powerful than the strongest words. It is more permanent and more memorable too. So just write your goals down and let your RAS help you to do the rest.

We are now going to look at setting those goals.

There are lots of books that tell you to just write down your goals; to dream of all the things you want and write them down. It sounds plausible. It sounds easy, and for some it is but for others it is far from easy.

I never found it easy. Then I heard about the following which worked for me so I am going to suggest you give this a try too.

You understand a little about motivation and what is important to you. These will be useful skills for the next steps.

Setting your goals

Let's start at the beginning. Jim Rohn said "work harder on yourself than you do on your job". It is a fact that the limiting factor in all of our lives is us. You and me. We are the thing that limits our success. That is you in your life, and me in mine. So if we are going to have more, do more, and be more we need to start with ourselves.

We need to be more. We need to learn more, to think better, to ask better questions so we can make better decisions and take better actions.

In other words we need to grow ourselves.

That is where it starts, or perhaps it doesn't start; until now that is. So the first goals we are going to set are the goals for ourselves and our growth.

Growth Goals

To do this just take a blank sheet of paper and start to jot down all of the things that you want to see in terms of your personal growth. Let your imagination soar. Remember all of those things that you have always wanted to do, to learn, to become.

To get you thinking here are some that might be on your list.

Learn to play the piano

Learn to dance

Learn to fish

Read something that will improve me for 20 minutes everyday

Invest 15 minutes in thinking time every day

Exercise for 20 minutes every day

Write a book

Write something every day

Learn a new language

Learn psychology

Lose 20 pounds in weight

Join a debating society

Join MENSA

Mix with high calibre people

Be kind

Be responsible
Set an example of excellence
Become a role model for my daughter

And so the list goes on.

Again I don't believe this is a one off exercise. This is work in progress, and always will be.

But start at the beginning. Don't worry, don't even think about the how. Think only of the what.

So many of us stop ourselves before we even start because we can't work out how we are going to do something. Well that's absolutely right. If we knew how we would already be doing it! Just get writing. Jot it down in any order as the thoughts come to you. Go on, do it now!

Then once you have your list and you are relatively happy that you have most things on there go to the next stage.

Decide when you are going to be able to have achieved those things.

There will be things that may have to wait, but some you can start straight away.

I can start reading a book a day right now. Today. So I might choose to put the word "now" alongside that goal.

Losing weight might well start now too but having a commitment to a start date is only one factor. If I am serious about it when will I have achieved that specific goal? By June 1st? September 16th?

Now depending on your list some of them may be a lifetime's work.

Some may have to wait but at least you have written them down.

Your RAS can be starting to work.

So step 2 after writing your goals down is to prioritise them into when you will start them and when you will have them finished. Just write the date next to them. It is that easy.

Try to make them S.M.A.R.T. goals, if you can but first of all make them written.

Now you have a start.

You have started to work on yourself.

Well done.

Every journey starts with the first step. Congratulations if you have just taken it, and if you are still dithering, ask yourself why and get started now!

Career, business, and economic goals

Now that you have started to grow yourself you can start to set yourself some goals about your career and your business or your job. Remember that the limiting factor in your success is you and you have now set yourself some goals to grow and develop yourself.

That is a great foundation for setting yourself some stretching goals around the economic and career aspect of your life.

You now know the format. Don't worry about the how just think about the what it is that you want to achieve.

Think about the income level you want, how much of that is to be earned income, how much passive?

You may find this more difficult or easier than the previous exercise whichever it is for you is fine. Just start writing, jot those thoughts, ideas and goals down.

Then go back through your list and start assigning start and completion dates. Try to be as specific as you can.

Try to make the goals as stretching as you can. Be bold. Go for it. Get it done.

Toys and adventure goals

By now you have some specific and challenging goals to develop your self and to grow your business and economic life. You can now start to focus on the toys and adventures that you want to be part of your life.

For me this order of doing it makes a lot of sense. Very often people approach goal setting simply by talking about the possessions and the "stuff" that you might want. I never found that approach worked for me but there is a logical progression to this way of setting goals which appeals to me in my world and I hope it will to you also.

You know the drill. Get writing. Don't think about the how just concentrate on the what.

All goals are better when they are bigger so be bold.

Now you have set yourself goals for your own growth, your career and finances and the toys and adventures that will come as a reward for the others, it is time to move on to contribution.

Set yourself some contribution goals.

Contribution Goals

What are you going to contribute to the family, the society, and the community that you are part of?

The secret of living is giving, and one of man's highest needs is a feeling of worth and contribution so it makes sense to set yourself some stretching goals in this facet of your life. Remember that it need not be simply money that you may choose to contribute, what about time, energy, organisation, management skills, enthusiasm.

By now you really will know the score.

Just write down all of the things and all of the areas that you want to make a contribution in, and then start to set timelines and deadlines against them all.

Congratulations you now have a pretty comprehensive set of goals for the next phase of your life. All you need to do now is to hold yourself accountable for achieving them.

So how are you going to do that?

Well one way would be to have them permanently on view so that you see them every day. What about having them on your desktop, or on a flipchart by your desk, in your diary? I have heard a great thing is to stick them on your bathroom mirror so you look at them each and every morning. Whatever way works best for you make sure they are visible and regularly reviewed.

Another great thing to do is to share them with someone who is going to hold you accountable for completing them. Perhaps a loved one, a colleague, or a coach. This may be something you chose to do for each other.

I knew some colleagues once who joined a gym together. They agreed on the frequency of their visits and they had to pay a £5 fine to the other one each time they missed a session. It certainly worked for them. Might it work for you?

I know you have set yourself some goals but goals without consequences for not meeting them are fairly weak don't you think? So what consequences are you going to agree to?

It would also be a great idea to set aside a regular time to revisit and review your progress to your goals; to not only review the progress but to set further and more stretching goals. You can do this with the person holding you accountable too.

So well done by now you have set some goals in the four areas of personal growth, your economic life toys and adventure and contribution. You may find that you need to look at some other areas if you feel they don't already fit with the above, your romantic life, and your spiritual life for example.

Let your RAS do some work and start achieving your goals.

Some notes on goal setting.

I mentioned S.M.A.R.T. goals earlier.

That is goals which are

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Realistic and

Time constrained.

In reviewing some goals recently I have noticed some common errors.

I was speaking to someone this week who has a goal of joining a gym. That sounds entirely praiseworthy but I can see that she might achieve her goal but not actually achieve what she wants to achieve.

Think about it. Would the goal not be better expressed as "I will use the gym 3 times a week for the next 52 weeks"?

You see, she could join the gym and never go. She will have met the letter of her goal but not achieved what she wants.

Being precise is important. I know it sounds pedantic but it is important. A friend set a goal of losing 7 pounds in weight. She said she achieved it but put all the weight back on again. The danger is that she will set the same goal this next year and have exactly the same result.

Would it not be a better idea to set the goal of "being 9 stones or less throughout each of the next 52 weeks"?

What if she were to agree a consequence of giving her partner £10 every week if her weight was more than her target? Might that not bring about a quicker and more permanent result?

Losing 7 pounds in weight in the next year seems to fulfil the S.M.A.R.T. criteria; just upon reflection it is not very smart.

Last year I set a goal of reading a book a week. It seemed like a pretty good goal and it seemed to work. This year though I am going to alter it to read, "to spend at least 30 minutes reading each and every day" why? Well because I think it will give me more flexibility, allow me to read bigger books without jeopardising the goal, and help me lead a more balanced life. It has to be worth a try in the quest for constant improvement.

I am also going to set daily goals around how I invest my time, in thinking, exercising, and writing.

I trust this will help you to set great goals in your journey to be the best you you can be.