

“Inspiring Progress: Motivating Goals”

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Increase your ability to achieve your goals by starting out with well-formed outcomes

By ensuring that the goals you set yourself have seven simple qualities you can radically increase your achievement of the outcomes you really want. Now isn't that something that would be valuable to you in all areas of your life?

“I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth.”

Pres. Kennedy, May 25, 1961

This was one of the most motivating goals in history – one that was so powerful it drove a nation to achieve it well ahead of time.

What would it be like if your personal goals were this motivating? What would it be like if you achieved all the goals you set? Wouldn't that be a valuable thing to be able to do?

People dream all the time of what they would like to achieve in life and work. Unfortunately most of the time that's what they stay – just pipe dreams and wishes, with little hope of achieving them fully. Stephen Covey¹ has termed them “first creations” – the purely mental creation of what we want. They're certainly not “goals” as often they lack precision or clarity – just nebulous ill formed longings – with a clear risk attached to them.

Do you remember the proverb – “Be careful what you wish for, you may get it in full”? Well there's actually some truth in this. Psychologists now believe that many of our instinctive reactions, gut decisions and hunches come from unconscious drivers.

These are strongly influenced by the images we create and hold in our conscious minds as we dream or wish for the things we want. The unconscious mind often takes these images as literal instructions whether we like it or not!

The lack of precision and clarity in dreams/goals is a therefore a serious problem. When your unconscious mind gets to work on realising your wishes and dreams (as it always does given half a chance), it invariably takes

the easiest route and you may end up with a very different result from what you intended.

Suppose your goal is “I want more money” – a goal that most people could identify with. What could be clearer?

If you're half serious, this dream will activate your unconscious mind – programming it to look for opportunities to get more money, sensitising it to be thinking of money all the time.

So picture this. There you are on a beautiful day, walking in the park and your keen eye picks out a £1 coin in the grass ahead. Delighted with your powers of observation, you pick it up and since it doesn't appear that anyone around might claim legitimate ownership, you put it in your pocket.

Well you now have more money and your unconscious mind can be rightly pleased for delivering on what you wished for. But have you achieved your real goal? Probably not!

Frustrating, isn't it? Never quite reaching the goal we thought was clear and achievable. Actually a goal like “I want more money” will never be achieved – do you know why?

So, what qualities should a goal have to make it work for you? How can you ensure that every fibre of your being takes it on board – striving to get exactly the result you want?

1: The goal is positive, tangible and specific

Firstly, be sure to write your goal down. This is easy to do and makes your “first creation” immediately much more tangible, something you can look at every day and can show to other people. This is a simple, first step towards achieving your goal.

Then the goal **must** be expressed in wholly “positive” terms. For example write: “I want to be really fit and healthy”. This is the opposite of “I don't want to be unfit and ill”, a subtle difference but critical to achieving your goal.

¹ “The 7 habits of highly effective people”; Stephen R. Covey; Simon & Schuster; 1989.

Remember the proverb and the way the unconscious mind works? Stop and think about it now – if I say to you “don’t think of a blue tree”, what’s the first thing you think about? That’s right, a blue tree. Saying “I don’t want ...” means that we have to build a picture of whatever we don’t want first. And, unfortunately, that’s what sticks as an instruction for the unconscious mind and how motivating or inspiring is that?

In addition, when we said “I want more money” (a positive statement) how specific was I being? Not very was I? Be specific - how much money – a lump sum or ongoing increases? Give the unconscious mind some definite instructions.

2: The goal should be initiated and maintained by you

If the goal, as you’ve expressed it, requires someone else to do something, then you’ve effectively abdicated responsibility for achieving your goal to someone else.

Will that person be as driven by your goal as you are? Do they know what you really want, specifically? How are they likely to respond to any obstacles that might come up?

If it’s important to you (and if not, why are you doing it?) then the goal should be yours to initiate and drive.

3: The goal’s outcome richly describes what you’ll see, hear, feel etc. when you have it

A key quality of great goals is a very rich accompanying description of the outcome you want and the steps you’ll follow to get there.

So, what will you see around you when you’ve realised your goal? What will you hear, what will people be saying around you? How will you feel? What will you be able to hold or touch? Be sure to describe the outcome in the present tense – as if you have it now (“I have...”, “I am...”, etc.), this all helps to make it real.

There are more sophisticated things you can do that will make the goal completely compelling to you, like a magnet drawing you towards it. You’ll have to work with us in person to do that!

4: The goal must be ecological

Your goal should be wholly ecological and responsible. Always consider the effect of achieving it upon the wider world around you.

You could always get “more money” by robbing someone or stealing it from a bank. For most people, those are not ecological methods!

Think about your answers to these questions and consider how you might change your goal so that you can achieve your outcome with the most beneficial impact upon **everyone** and **everything** around you.

- ★ For whom do really want this?
- ★ What will I gain or lose if I have it?
- ★ What will others gain or lose if I have it?

5: There should be more than one way to achieve the outcome

It is good is to give yourself options – to allow yourself more than one way to achieve your outcome. Then if something crops up, an obstacle that has the effect of closing off your current approach to achieving your outcome, another route will be open to you. This kind of flexibility is vital to getting what you want.

6: The next step towards achieving your outcome should be specified and achievable

For any new goal you need to know, practically, what to do next. Otherwise, it remains a dream and how will you even start? It might actually be a very simple first step, anything to get you moving. Once you have forward momentum it is then much easier to maintain progress.

When formulating goals you don’t need to know every detailed step up front, just the first. Then as you move towards your outcome each “next step” becomes your new focus and should in turn be specified and achievable.

7: The goal increases your choices

A great goal always expands your options in life, creating more opportunities. The excitement of unknown opportunities is irresistible for the curious unconscious mind. As the possibilities unfold, it drives you faster and faster towards a compelling future.

So there we have it seven clear steps to well-formed outcomes – achievable compelling goals. How does Kennedy’s goal stack up? I’ll leave it for you to practice your new ability...

Now you’re ready to begin working on your own goals to make sure they have the right qualities to take you where you want to go.

Having well-formed goals is such a powerful thing that we spend a significant amount of time with our clients helping them to realise what areas of life are important to them now and what they want their goals to be so that they can have the life they really want and deserve.

If you’re interested in reclaiming control of your life and creating a truly positive future then please feel free to contact us.