

You'll Fail if You Have No Goals

By John Madden

“It must be borne in mind that the tragedy of life does not lie in not reaching your goals; the tragedy lies in not having a goal to reach for.”

Dr. Benjamin Mays

You fail by not having goals because there is no incentive to move forward; there's nothing to be drawn to; no raison d'être, as the French say. One dictionary defines a goal as “A point toward which effort or movement is directed.”

Ask any failure what their goals are and the answer will probably be “What goals?” Statistics tell us that 95% of people have no written goals. Few people know how to set goals. We weren't taught that skill at school. In the workplace the closest we've come to understanding goals is following a schedule of tasks determined by someone else, or working toward a budget. But, while many people follow that routine, they rarely achieve great things unless they have their own goals also.

Start by using S.M.A.R.T. goals. S.M.A.R.T. means Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timed.

Specific: Don't be vague. What exactly do you want? In your company or business, you may want to reduce employee turnover. The expression “To reduce employee turnover” is not a specific goal. It's vague and won't stimulate the right action. “To reduce turnover by 20%” or to “To reduce turnover from 50% to 25%” are more specific goals.

Measurable: Quantify your goal. How will you know if you've achieved it or not? You must know when you are advancing and by how much. If your

turnover has gone down to 42%, you're making progress – and you are able to measure it.

Attainable and Realistic: It's dangerous and futile to set “lofty” goals that are so high they are unattainable. Attainable doesn't mean “easy.” Your goals should be set so that they are just out of your reach; so that they challenge you to grow as you reach forward to achieve them. If you're unsure about what is attainable and realistic, ask a colleague or friend – one who is optimistic! If you're earning \$50,000 a year, it might be unrealistic to have a goal of making \$200,000 the next year. Most likely it will take a few more years and a real breakthrough in entrepreneurial performance.

Timed: Every goal should have a timeframe attached to it. If there's no set time when the goal should be accomplished, there will be little motivation to proceed. You will procrastinate, lose focus, and get buried in wishful thinking; in short, nothing will happen - it will be a goal that has no meaning and no incentive for you to move forward.

I used to say, “One day I'll finish writing my book.” After Nine Eleven, when much of my business was cancelled for the period following the tragedy, I knew this was the time to get back to my book – no more excuses. Over a period of three years previously, I had written no more than 5,000 words, less than a fifth of what I needed to complete the book – and of course I had all the usual excuses.

When I resumed work on the book, I set my goal as nine months to have the finished book in my hands, by July 1st of 2002. The books were printed and delivered just before Independence Day in 2,002. There were many events during that period that provided good excuses for me not to press on with my writing; in particular the challenges involved in doing all the things you have to do to self-publish: finding good editors, a good and

reliable book printer (ADR BookPrint in Wichita – 316-522-5599), working on book design, and applying for ISBN and Library of Congress numbers and copyright. The time deadline and the vision of a completed book - was the catalyst.

Avoid failure by using S.M.A.R.T. goals!

John Madden is an international speaker, trainer, and author of “Leap, Don’t Sleep” (How to get different results by doing something different). He helps businesses and individuals become more profitable through customer service training, changing present results, networking for profit, coaching skills for managers, stress management through humor, time management, and interpersonal skills. You can reach him at 316-689-6932; email at john@LeapDontSleep.com; web site: www.LeapDontSleep.com