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## Achieve Success with Careful Planning

Long-range objectives require time as well as action. Others can be reached easily and quickly. A few may even appear to be mutually exclusive. How do you choose between goals that conflict? How do you know which goal to tackle first? The answer is found in priorities. To sum it up, you must decide which goals are most important for the success of your organization. Such decisions depend upon clearly stated priorities based on organizational values. Then, making workable plans is the key to making things happen.

### Plan to Achieve

Once a goal is identified as a high priority, you are ready to develop a workable plan for achieving it. Here are several suggestions:

- State your goal as clearly and concretely as possible. Ask, "How will we know when we have achieved this goal?" Unless you can answer this question specifically, go back and restate the goal. To make a goal specific, isolate one particular type of situation for improvement. You might state a goal in this way: "Leaders will give instructions so that when an assignment is made, team members will follow instructions correctly without coming back repeatedly for additional explanations." This, then, is a goal for which you can identify specific actions that will bring appropriate results. To be as specific as possible when you state a goal, ask exactly what will you and your team do to accomplish this goal? When will you do it? Who else in the organization will be involved? How will this action change your overall effectiveness? How much effect will this action have on your productivity? What conditions will exist when this goal is achieved? Answering these questions makes it possible to state your goal more specifically.
- Identify the benefits of achievement. List every possible reward or benefit that will accrue to your organization when you and your team members achieve the goal. Include tangible rewards like increased profit and intangible rewards like satisfaction in a job well done. Anticipating the rewards of success keeps enthusiasm and motivation at a high level.
- Once you have stated the goal and identified the benefits of achieving it, list specific action steps for accomplishing it. These are the concrete activities you and your team members can follow on a day-to-day basis for completing all the work needed to bring the goal into reality. Perhaps the goal is to advance your organization in the marketplace, and your staff lacks knowledge or training in a specific area. Action steps might include identifying books and materials to study, acquiring them from the library or by purchase, allocating time for team member study and interaction, and setting up a method to apply and test new knowledge.
- Set target dates for reaching your goals. When you have identified simple actions that are progressive steps to achievement of the total goal, estimate how long it will take to accomplish each step. You know how fast you and your team members work, how urgent the need is to complete the job, and what else those involved will be doing at the same time. Set a target date for each step, and you can determine when the work will be completed and the goal finally reached.
- Identify obstacles and roadblocks. If you encounter difficulty listing needed action steps, you probably need to identify likely obstacles and to plan solutions for overcoming them. Ask, "What could keep us from achieving this goal?" You may list obstacles such as lack of information or skills training, shortage of resources or money, or the opposition of others. One obstacle might be doubt that you can reach the goal! Whatever they are, recognize the existence of obstacles and realistically anticipate the problems they could cause.
- Develop solutions for overcoming obstacles. Many solutions are obvious. If you lack information, choose a method of gaining the required knowledge. If time is a problem, consider eliminating some present time-consuming tasks by delegating appropriately, eliminating tasks that do not help meet organizational goals,

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or rearranging team member schedules. Use creativity to find solutions. Discover innovative ways to go over, around, or through any roadblocks to goals achievement. There is always a way to overcome any obstacle if you believe it exists and look for it!

Although the process of achieving success through goal setting is easy to understand, a written plan of action is not a substitute for organizational effort. The journey toward success becomes a process of accomplishing each of the steps in the process.

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