

Goals – Bridging Mission and Vision through Practical Achievements

By Daniel Leidl, PhD

We speak an awful lot about goals. We make them, we meet them, we miss them, and ignore them. We push toward attaining them and invite them to guide us, but what are they really? What's their purpose? Why all the attention and focus on establishing a set point to strive for?

Fundamentally goals are intended to serve as beacons, guiding us on to greener pastures of prosperity and accomplishment. But is that all goals are? Do we really need a Northern Star to keep us moving on our journey? Do we need defined goals to inspire us to show up at work, hit the practice fields, strive forward? I have more faith in our willingness to endeavor toward success, as I know good teams that do not define each step forward with a goal, and I know unsuccessful teams that do. With that said, it's not merely the goal that keeps us advancing, and the sole function of goals is not to chart out a defined direction.

While we clearly rely on goals to assist us in progressing forward, good goals serve a much higher order. Well-defined goals serve an organization and its leaders by unifying institutional objectives with the vision of the leadership. In this sense, goals are defining elements of much larger organizational objectives: vision and mission.

Although all associated, it would seem to be a mistake to speak of goals, vision, and mission as interchangeable terms. They are not synonyms, and seem to better serve an organization as distinct concepts. Vision represents the foresight and inspired direction of the leadership. Vision is fluid, representing a leader's interests and efforts to guide and inspire an organization to advance. On the other hand, mission is unique to the organization, represented by a steadfast decree that serves to support the continual operations of the business over time. The mission is an unwavering guidepost for an organization to continually strive for, while a vision serves to articulate the manner in which an individual leader guides his/her organization en route to achieving the mission. For example, a hospital may have the mission to be a self-sustaining organization that serves the health needs of the larger community. The CEO of the hospital may have a vision to improve sustainability by becoming a national leader in preventive medicine so as to proactively reduce health issues amongst its constituents. The mission serves as a general guide for the organization while the vision represents the leader's individual spirit, know-how, and expertise. Both are interrelated, yet very much exclusive.

Goals are also intimately associated with mission and vision, yet they too are wholly independent. However, in best using goals, vision and mission must be thoroughly considered. Effective goals work to marry mission with vision, unifying the leaders direction with the larger objectives of the organization. Goals can be used to bridge the

gap between a longstanding organizational mission and the exuberant new perspectives of a leader. In continuing with the hospital example, one goal may be to offer six preventative out-reach programs to the community within the calendar year (e.g., a Fitness and Nutrition Symposium). By devising goals that are considerate of the organization's mission, a leader may effectively assert his/her vision through tangible and realistic action items. In this sense goals serve a higher order than simply guiding us toward sustained success.

Great effort often goes into developing keen goals that will keep us motivated and continuing forward. However, goals are most impactful when they bridge the vision of the leadership with the larger mission of the organization. In this way, goals serve as unifying and cohesive instruments that not only guide future advancements, but do so in a manner that reflects the interests and expectations of the larger institution. Goals not only serve to guide, but also inspire stakeholders who are committed to the mission and values of the organization they represent and work for. When employed thoughtfully, goals are an effective means for a leader to express his/her voice while inspiring an organization toward continued success.

Dan Leidl, PhD is a Managing Partner of Meno Consulting, a consulting firm specializing in leadership development, motivation, organizational culture, and team building. Dan can be reached through <http://www.menoconsulting.com/>, or contact him directly at dleidl@MenoConsulting.com.