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Casey Accounting & Finance Resources Inc.

Specialists in the Placement of Accounting & Finance Professionals
Direct Hire, Temporary and Temp to Hire Placement
"Our People are our Greatest Asset!"

Employment Laws You Should Know

There are many complex laws that govern the employer-employee relationships as well as the provisions requiring reporting or record-keeping. The more employees you have, the more such laws apply, and the more likely the employer is to inadvertently violate a law due to not knowing the requirements.

Here are two of the laws of interest:

At-will employment defines the employment relationship in many states. Under this approach, the employer and employee both may terminate the employment relationship for any reason or no reason at all, just so long as the reason is not illegal or otherwise prohibited by law, such as discrimination. Without an express or implied agreement of employment, employees are usually considered "at-will."

Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) is a federal law that requires employers to allow employees to continue their health insurance coverage after termination, in the same insurance group, at the group rate and providing the same benefits.

Inside This Issue

1. *Employment Laws You Should Know*
1. *Leadership: Have Your Goals and Achieve Them Too!*
3. *Daylight Savings Time Changes*
4. *More Future Insights*

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Are You Achieving Your Goals?

Leadership – Have Your Goals and Achieve Them Too!

By Howard Shore

You see it every day in your daily lives and particularly at year-end with all of the New Year resolutions and business plans. Next year you are going to do all of those things you have never done and more. Or maybe you just want to get back to where you used to be.

You set goals for some really important reasons:

- **Keep you on target**
- **Make better decisions**
- **Keep you focused**
- **Increase self-motivation**
- **Develop self-confidence**

How many goals do you have going right now?

How have the anticipated rewards influenced your progress (or lack of)?

Are all of your goals planned out fully? What difference might it make?

How do you know if you really are going to achieve those goals?

Here is a quick quiz to see if you are on track:

1. Do I state my goals in a way that tells exactly what will be achieved and by when?
2. Are my goals measurable in a way so that I know whether they are achieved or not?
3. Do I set goals that are attainable and are not designed to stretch to some level below that goal?

Continued on page two – Goals

Continued from page one – Goals

4. Are my goals set realistically high so that they require some sort of behavior change?
5. Do all my goals have a definite target date for completion?
6. Do I evaluate my goals to make sure that I do not have too many goals?
7. Have I taken the time to prioritize my goals?
8. Have I written down all of my goals?
9. Do all the people who contribute to my goals know exactly what the goals are and how they contribute to them?
10. Have I thought through in advance and considered all the detailed steps that it will take to complete my goal?



The answer to every question above should always be yes whether it is a personal or professional goal. For every question you answered “no” you can probably drop your goal success rate down by at least 20%. Do not try to put more importance on any one of these items as that would be like building the engine of your car or baking a cake and saying one part or ingredient is more important than the other. The reality is if one part or ingredient is missing, your car will probably not start or your cake will not bake.

The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of some of the critical factors that can help you increase your goal success rate to over 90%. There are too many factors to cover in this article so my aim is to clarify some of the top (key) points.

There are a lot of things you do (consciously or subconsciously) to achieve or not to achieve your goals. While I would agree that outside circumstances can play a role in goal achievement, you must be honest with yourself. When you fail to achieve a goal, whether it's more sales, customer retention, employee retention or something personal like weight loss, success or failure is more dependent on those responsible for the goal than outside influences.

COMMITMENT

I always get a funny look when I discuss this issue with clients and friends. Many people think that because they made a decision, they made a commitment.

Continued on next column –

This could be the farthest from the truth. Actually the hardest decisions oftentimes have the weakest commitments particularly the larger the group size.

Does this scenario sound familiar to you? More than a year is spent thinking about something, maybe even a committee is created to evaluate it, consultants are hired, friends and colleagues conferred with, money is spent for market research, and finally an affirmative decision is made. The project, system, process, or other decision is placed into action and all of a sudden the inevitable happens -- problems arise, big problems, little problems, and problems disguised as attitudes.

What happens to most people's level of commitment when faced with these problems? Rather than solving the problem, ignoring all of the thought that went into decision, they allow emotion to take over and rethink the decision. Commitment crumbles and with it the chance of following through on the decision.

IF YOU MAKE A DECISION...MAKE A COMMITMENT!

SMART GOALS

The first step in setting goals is to establish a SMART goal that is stated positively. As alluded to in the Quiz, SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistically-high, and Time-based. However, one often overlooked item is the goal must be Yours. While this criterion seems simple it is actually not easy in execution. If it were, everyone would be achieving a lot more goals. Very briefly let us discuss what each of these criteria really mean:

- **Specific** – You say exactly what it is you are going to do. Hazy goals are doomed to failure. For example, we are going to establish a new training program for our supervisors by a certain date. You are not defining what you want to train them to do.
- **Measurable** – The goal must be stated in a way so that you can definitely know whether it has been achieved. In addition, you should be able to see when the trend is negative so that you can modify your detailed action steps accordingly. For example, we are going to increase the frequency of meetings with our hourly staff. How often would you consider acceptable?



Continued on page three – Goals

Continued from page two – Goals

- **Attainable and Realistically-High** – Goals should have sufficient rewards and/or consequences to be motivated and they must be attainable. If it appears that your goal will not require any kind of behavior change, challenge yourself to make sure that it does. Either the goal is too low or you are not being realistic on what it will take to get there. The reality is you have set it as a goal because you are not already doing it and the definition of insanity is “*doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different outcome.*”
- **Time Based** – When do you want this goal completed by? Be honest, are there goals you have talked about for years that are still on your goal list? It is probably because you have not committed to a deadline.

The following is an example of a SMART goal:

Get 10 appointments with decision makers in the manufacturing sector within 50 miles of Toledo that employ more than 250 people by the end of the quarter.

WRITE YOUR GOALS DOWN AND BROADCAST THEM

It is not unusual to meet people that have goals and nobody knows about them. Even worse, they may not be written down anywhere. In personal or organizational circumstances it is always best to write your goals down for the following reasons:

- ◆ It strengthens commitment
- ◆ Unwritten goals change unconsciously
- ◆ Rounds out your thought process and gives you an opportunity to think things through
- ◆ Provides a means to communicate to everyone who is responsible for execution

If you have goals and they are not communicated succinctly to everyone who is responsible for doing what it takes to get to where you want to go, what is the likelihood they are going to do it? People like to have purpose and know where they are going. We use goals to focus individuals and organizations in the same direction.

When we achieve goals it increases energy and that has a positive impact on results, increasing focus on goals, increasing results, increasing energy, and so on. It is that simple!

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Daylight Saving Time (DST) Changes

Starting spring, 2007, the start and end dates for daylight-saving time will change in the United States. This change is part of the United States Energy Policy Act of 2005.

Daylight Saving Time is extended one month and begins for most of the United States at: 2 a.m. on the **Second Sunday in March** (Mar 11th) to 2 a.m. on the **First Sunday of November** (Nov 4th).



Note: DST is **NOT** observed in Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Arizona.



ONE MINUTE IDEAS

**Business Travelers:
Passport needed to fly to
Canada, Mexico**

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has begun tightening the rules for entering neighboring countries. Until now, Americans could come and go from Canada, Mexico or the Caribbean with just a picture ID, such as a state driver's license.

Effective Jan. 23, 2007 Americans entering or leaving those countries will need a valid passport if they travel by air. A driver's license will still be accepted if crossing the Canadian or Mexican border by auto.

Homeland Security is planning to expand the passport requirement to all entries and exits beginning June 1, 2009.

For more information go to:
<http://travel.state.gov/passport>

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More Future Insights

Bring every employee up to – or above – standards. This task may not be as easy to achieve as you might wish. You will be tempted to waive some requirements or let some people "get by." Every time you do this, you risk dropping your standards for everyone. If people are not working up to your standards, you'd be wise to give them a creative career redirection opportunity.

Tighten your hiring practices. No more warm bodies. No more hiring the best available. Every person hired must meet your standards. No exceptions. This practice sends a very clear message that you won't allow anyone who may drag you down to become a part of your organization. By adhering to this rule, you reinforce the high performance of your current employees.

Recruit aggressively. Don't wait until you have an opening to recruit qualified applicants. Always have a list of screened potential employees, ready to call when you have the right opportunity for them. Use internships, co-op programs, assessments and other similar tools to subtly recruit and evaluate future employees. Develop your succession planning for all positions to assure full utilization of your recruits.

Critically examine your organizational structure. Is your company structured in a way that is optimal for your smooth operation? Does it support productivity, accountability, and profitability? If not, make the changes that will concentrate your energies on results. Consider engaging an outside professional to give you an objective perspective. Use of Certified Management Consultants can be a valuable investment in your future.

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