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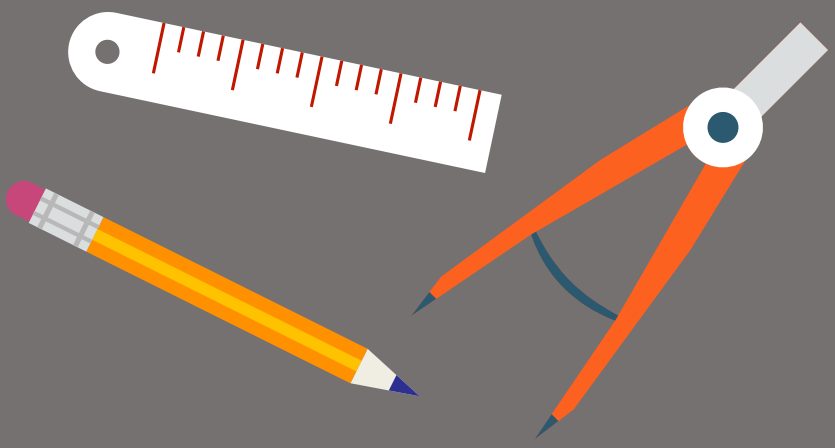
# 6 Ways to Get Your Team **to Achieve Its Goals**



PRACTICAL TOOLS

# 6 Ways to Get Your Team **to Achieve Its Goals**

Setting team goals is very different from setting personal goals. If you set a personal goal for yourself, most of what you have to do to reach the goal should depend on what you can and should do yourself – since you can't control what other people will do. Reaching the goal – and what you have to do to get there – should be under your control. Getting it done is really up to you.

Setting goals for your team is different because success in reaching the goal does depend on others – probably on every member of the team. Some would even say that it depends on the team's weakest link coming through since the shortcomings of one weak link can doom the entire team to failure.

There are six essential steps to get a team of people to achieve a common goal. This ResourcefulManager Goal-Setting process will work for any team charged with any responsibility, whether it is to increase sales by 15%, devise a marketing strategy to penetrate a new market, successfully introduce an IT or systems upgrade, or launch a new product. Goal-setting for teams will be essential when projects are too big for one person to tackle or when the expertise of several different people will be needed to complete the task.

Here are the six ways to set and reach goals for teams:



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## 1. Identify the Limitations of Teams

Setting the goal remains much the same for teams. As in all other cases, the goals must be SMART. That means Specific (i.e., increase sales by 15%), Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound. You cannot afford to have a problem with Relevant – if you get a whole team of people involved, the project had better be relevant to the well-being of the whole organization. You may have to modify what's Attainable a bit (remember you depend in large measure on the weakest link) and you need to be conscious of team dynamics when it comes to the Time-bound element. The advantage of
teams is that you can tap the talents of many different people, but working with teams means a lot of information sharing, and things may go a little slower when different pieces of a project have to be pulled together.

## 2. Getting Buy-in from All Members

Do not proceed until you know you have assured the full support and cooperation of all people on the team. Do they see the big picture and have they been able to, with your help as team leader, visualize what success will look like? Is there a doubting Thomas whose help you need, but who needs a little more convincing? You can't have people on the team pulling in different directions. You're better off getting someone off the team and making do with a little less talent or experience if the person you really need isn't a believer in the goal or in the strategies to be followed to get there.



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## 3. Assign Personal Responsibilities for Parts of the Project

The greatest danger in teams is that when it's everyone's responsibility, it turns out to be no one's responsibility. Finger-pointing for failure to reach interim objectives is all too common in teams ("I thought she was doing that!"). To guard against such occurrences, break the tasks down into smaller pieces and assign individual responsibilities for specific parts of the project. Of course, you want to play to people's strengths. Don't ask the guy weak in math to do all the calculations. Let your better writer pull together the report. Put the assigned responsibilities in a flow chart, display them up on a whiteboard and/or distribute them electronically in a spreadsheet as well as in paper form so everyone can see -- and no one can say they didn't know what they were supposed to do.

## 4. Shore Up Weak Links

Going into the project, you will probably have identified the potential weak links on the team. Ask yourself: If this were to fail, why would it be and where will it probably go wrong? Shore up those points in advance and have additional resources standing by and ready to help if any part of the team should falter along the way. Just a little help, perhaps from you as the team leader, or from another veteran team member, can get some people over the hump, so the whole team doesn't fall behind.

## 5. Monitor Frequently Along the Way

Don't send your team away to work on a goal and tell them to report their final results back to you by the deadline in six months' time. That's a recipe for guaranteed failure. You need frequent check-ins with your team along the way, so you know how they're doing and so they can inspire each other to push forward.



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## 6. Use Peer Pressure

Peer pressure can work positively in team projects and especially in team meetings. You don't have to do all the spurring on yourself as the team leader. It's probably more effective if the team members do it to each other. Different parts of the team won't want to fall behind others. No one will want to be seen as a laggard. A little competition isn't bad among team members.

## And Then Celebrate Success

Especially for reaching team goals, celebrating success becomes extraordinarily important. You may not want to wait until the final work product is delivered and the end goal has been achieved. Reaching interim milestones and objectives that keep the team moving in the right direction are also worth celebrating.
A pizza party, maybe even an afternoon off to go to the movies or bowl a few games can create lasting positive memories, re-invigorate a hard-working team and increase motivation and team spirit.

And don't forget: There'll always be a next goal for which to strive and for which you will need their wholehearted cooperation.



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