

Goals? We Don't Need No Stinking Goals! (With apologies to " The Treasure Of Sierra Madre")

When you started your practice, you had dreams and desires regarding the mountain tops you were going to reach with your practice. Did you just have dreams and desires or did you proceed to set goals to focus you toward accomplishing those dreams and desires?

Is your practice soaring to ever- greater heights? Or is it mired in the swamp of sameness? To win the success game, you must reach your goals. What is a goal? One definition is, "A known objective toward which an action is directed with the purpose of achieving that end". A less complex definition might be, "That toward which effort is directed". My definition is, "Gots to have it!"

The grammar is lousy but the message should be clear. If you set your sights on an objective, go for it with all the power you possess until it is achieved. Don't deviate from your course! It surprised me to find out that of the Chiropractic practices we have consulted, how many admitted they operated without goals. Some docs felt goals were not necessary for the effective performance of their practices. I disagree. Their viewpoint reminds me of the ostrich who, to get away from the hot sun, bends over covering his head in the sand. You know what happens? Their butt gets sunburned!

By properly setting goals, your practice then turns into a Spock practice. It will live well and prosper! Those offices that excluded goals from their planning, continued to plod along the same dusty, statistical plateau. Goals give you a known objective which you must keep firmly in focus. If you can't actually see or touch your goal then it must have a clear, detailed picture, of that goal, in your mind. Otherwise, how and when do you know it has been achieved? During 40 years of racing cars, I learned principles, including setting goals, that were applicable to my daily life especially business. For example, during a race, my short term goal would be to pass any car in front of me. My medium-term goal would be to conserve my tires and not blow up my engine. My long-term goal would be to stay focused, pass every car I could and win the race. Those were some of my race goals.

All competitive events have goals. Whether you like it or not, when you opened your practice, you entered into a competition. Not with fellow Chiropractors or other health professionals. But with yourself. After all, you opened your practice to survive and succeed. Because in order to serve, we must survive and succeed.

Plan is not a four-letter word neither is goal! - Ivan

You must plan now in order to guide your practice into the next millennium. What plans have you made? What goals have you formulated that will help guide you and your practice so that you maybe able to properly serve your community?

The other day, I had lunch with a Chiropractor who is considered to be a success by his community. He explained that his method for goal visualization was to write them all down on small pieces of paper. He would then post his written goals on mirrors in his house, in his car and around his office. He told me all of his goals have been accomplished or exceeded. He continues to stretch himself by re-formulating his goals.

He and many other have verified that this concept works.

Remember, a goal is not a wish or a desire. It is an object that you want to possess so strongly that your strength of purpose will motivate you to continue in that direction both in good and bad times. Goals will help you achieve your wishes and desires. Just remember that "taking action" is an essential ingredient to your success formula.

Mark Twain said, "Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over unless you keep moving". Goals will get you on the right track, but remember, you have to keep moving toward your goals, otherwise, you're going to get run over by the next train. How many of your colleagues have told you that they desired their practices to, "Do this and accomplish that". When you ask them what their plans are for achieving those desires, you get "The check's in the mail" look. Unless you go after it, those "someday goals" are really just dreams and wishes.

Goals with a time line are the tools that prevent your dreams and desires from decaying into nightmares and yearnings. Otherwise, you'll be too busy keeping up with yesterday to plan for tomorrow.

My greatest enemy is reality. I have fought it successfully for thirty years.
--Margaret Anderson

If you want to achieve anything, you must believe it to be a reality. In your mind, your goal must be attainable. Otherwise, somewhere down the line, those well-meaning, usually mis-informed people who think they know what's best for you, will weaken your resolve. You must believe in what you seek. A football team will not try a goal play unless they believe it can be accomplished. Once they believe it, they will power to that goal. So can you!

Easy is a four-letter word!--Ivan

You don't want to make your goals too easy. To advance yourself, you must push your personal limits. I sometimes relate the concept of limits to seeing how fast I could take a car through a turn. I was always looking for the "edge" or limits of adhesion. When testing my car before a race, I would "push the corner" until I felt the car start to slide. I was usually surprised to see how much deeper my car could go into the turn when I stretched my comfort zone.

You have to select a goal that will stretch your perceived limits. The operative word here is perceived. Most of us are able to perform well beyond the edge of our comfort blanket. You must, however, absolutely feel that your goal can be achieved. Those who cannot see themselves being successful have poor self-esteem. They will be losers. If you really believe that you are capable of achieving your goals then you will be a winner. If you have a successful attitude and couple it with realistic goals, your practice will soar!

Alright, Already! So How Do You Set Goals?

Most consultants agree that goals should have time lines. These time lines should be divided into long-term, medium-range and short-term goals. We also agree that goals be set in as specific manner as possible.

Let's examine specificity as it applies to travel instructions. Have you ever been lost on a country road, stopped to ask a local for directions and were given the following directions: "Well ol' buddy, you go down a-ways to the first, uh, maybe second barn then turn kinda left toward a field that was just plowed"...and so on. You've been there, right? Your mind, including your subconscious, works best with detailed information. Your mind works a lot like a computer..Garbage In-Garbage Out! Therefore, write up your goals with enough details so that the direction you take is clear and specific.

As an example, instead of a goal that states, " I want my practice to be successful in the future". It would be better to state, "By the year_____, I want to be seeing_____patients per month, in a clinic of_____square feet with a staff of_____an overhead of_____dollars and a net of_____per cent." You'll notice that I left out gross income figures. For some reason, income doesn't seem to work well as part of a goal. I'm reminded of what my father once told me, "Be the best you can be in what you do and the money will naturally follow" I think that the US Army stole my dad's advice and used it for their logo. In any case, that declaration has held true for me and of many doctors we have consulted. Accomplish your goals and the rewards will be a natural result.

When you consider long-range goals, they should project out into the future only as far as you believe is realistic and attainable. For example, at my age, a 40 year long-range goal might be a stretch. If you're under 50 years old, however, a 20-25 year long-range goal might be reasonable. Mid-range goals would range the period of time between long and short-range goals. (Gee, how clever, but I had to put that in!)

Some management experts have recommended that short-range goals to be no longer than 90 days. I found that 30-45 days worked better for my practice set-up and for others that we have consulted. Here's the easiest way I found to set up a goal system: Go out as far in time as is reasonable plus believable for you then work inward toward the shortest set of goals with which you feel comfortable. The very fact that you are setting goals starts the magic!

Remember, your goals should be used to guide your personal as well as your business life otherwise, your life becomes unbalanced. As you know, an unstable personal life will seriously affect your business operations. Your goals will help guide you toward attainment of your wishes and desires. I firmly believe that if those wishes and desires are cast within a framework of morality, ethics and compassion, the result will a noble winner. That's you!

Try not to become a person of success but rather try to become a person of value.
--Albert Einstein

About The Author

Dr Delman is a magna cum laude graduate of Cleveland Chiropractic College-Los Angeles. Prior to his 18+years as a solo and multiple clinic owner/ practitioner, he also worked 20 years in two other fields, manufacturing management and insurance claims adjusting.

His degrees include a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, an Associate in Arts and "more partial degrees than a thermometer".

Dr Delman's 40 year hobby of racing cars channeled his interests toward the chiropractic care of race car drivers. In between his own races, he would take care of his fellow competitors whose care were then followed up in his office. He has been able to successfully apply racing philosophy to his business practices.

Since his retirement in 1995, Dr Delman traveled for several years consulting solo practitioners. His low-cost service, called First Aid Practice Management, was developed to repay the chiropractic profession for "A wonderful 18 years".

He and his wife now live in the Smoky Mountains of Eastern Tennessee. In between community activities and traveling, he is completing a book, "A Primary Guide To Chiropractic Business Survival", due out Summer 1998. The book will be an easy-to-follow, low-cost guide outlining the elements necessary for the successful management of a small chiropractic office.

You can contact Dr Delman on his Internet address: uncleive@bellsouth.net.
Ivan Delman, BSc Bus Adm, DC