



# Setting the Right Goals

If the idea of coming up with a set of goals for yourself seems intimidating and overwhelming, first try creating one or two smaller goals that seem achievable, and then branch out.

With the beginning of a new year, I've been thinking a lot about the subject of goal setting. January and February are behind us now, and perhaps some of the resolutions we made to start the year are behind us as well. Yet I believe that it's never too late to set goals and that you needn't wait until the beginning of the year to do so. Goal setting is very important to individuals and to organizations because, without it, neither individuals nor organizations can chart a course from where they are to where they need to be.

Geoffrey Albert once said that, "the most important thing about goals is having one." The very action of setting a goal puts you on the course to meeting it. Setting a goal becomes the "ready" in "ready, aim, fire."

One goal I set for myself every January is to read 12,000 book pages during the coming year. When I tell people that goal, I usually get a response of "How in the world is that possible?" But although reading 12,000 pages

might seem daunting, the plan of reading just 30 pages a day (45 pages on the weekends) every day for a year isn't. Furthermore, I make that goal even more manageable by reading 10 pages per day from three different books (15 pages per day on the weekend). In my own case, I'm partial to biographies, history, and business books. If a book isn't readable or enjoyable, I cut my losses and start another. Most years I succeed, but there have been years when I've read only 9,000 or 10,000 pages. Believe me, I'd never even get that

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far without setting a goal and attempting to achieve it.

Beyond that, however, we must set the *right* goals. In our personal or business lives, setting poor goals is of little value to ourselves or our employers. Earlier in my career I decided I needed to become certified. I had a master's degree, but I knew that, as an accountant, I also wanted to obtain my Certified Management Accountant (CMA®) designation. Becoming a CMA seemed like an

impossible task when I began the journey, but I knew that I would learn much, that it would help my career, and that it was valuable to my employer. So I set a course that would enable me to successfully reach my goal. Becoming certified is just one example of a good goal for any accountant—so is learning a new skill that will sharpen your on-the-job performance.

Setting the right goals and then charting a course for meeting them are among the most beneficial tasks that we can do for ourselves and our career. But that's just the beginning. It's also worthwhile to measure progress against your goals at regular intervals so you can make mid-course corrections, pat yourself on the back if you're doing well, or spur yourself harder if you aren't. Good, steady measurement of your progress will also prevent you from being overcome by short-term setbacks and help you focus on the long-term attainment of the goal.

I challenge all of us to identify a handful of stretch goals for ourselves. They can be intellectual, emotional, physical, or spiritual. No matter. Set some goals, and go after them.

As always, I welcome your comments at [jbrausch@imanet.org](mailto:jbrausch@imanet.org). **SF**