

SIGMA

Leadership Series



**Great Leaders
are Goal-Oriented**



GREAT LEADERS ARE GOAL-ORIENTED

“ **By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.**

– Benjamin Franklin

When it comes to leadership, many people think of the inspirational individual who plans for the big-picture, long-term direction of their company. A clear vision and corresponding strategy are certainly important aspects to leadership, but successful leaders also understand that long-term goals are achieved by execution in the here and now. Short-term planning is critical to high performance in individuals and teams because it focuses effort and resources in the most effective direction. Leaders who excel at short-term planning prioritize effectively and set clear time-bound goals. These leaders also devise steps to achieve these goals that leverage all resources available.

Short-term planning is the ability to establish short-term goals and objectives for subordinates and for the work unit, and develop action steps to achieve them. In the workplace, short-term planning allows leaders to maximize their team’s efficiency by honing focus on measurable objectives to be achieved within a specified timeframe. Furthermore, good short-term goals are the lifeblood of successful strategy because they turn long-term visions into specific goals. These goals help leaders and their teams see the value of their work and how it contributes to the organization.

In assessing your ability to develop short-term plans, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I clearly link short-term plans with our overall strategy and vision?
- Do I prioritize effectively when selecting which objectives require an action plan?
- Do my short-term plans have measurable objectives with specific timelines?
- Am I able to communicate how the action steps achieve the objective?
- How do I make use of all resources in my short-term plans?

Developing Better Short-Term Goals

Check back with the organizational strategy and vision: When developing short-term plans, take the time to consider how they contribute to your company’s strategy and vision. Stepping back to not lose sight of the bigger picture will help you prioritize the right near-future goals. Remembering this will also help you develop short-term plans that are less rigid and not focused on the immediate goal at the expense of everything else. Keeping the company vision

in mind allows even short-term plans and their objectives to be more flexible and to change as needed to contribute to organizational success.

Set the right kind of goals: Research on goal-setting has repeatedly found that the most motivating objectives are **S.M.A.R.T.** (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound)¹. It is most important to ensure that the objectives of your plans are specific, measurable, and time-bound. You should focus on the steps necessary to achieve a goal and how to execute them. However, you and your team must be on the same page about what the goal is. Clearly defining a goal also provides the information needed to decide how progress will be measured. This will help determine how long completing the plan and attaining the goal will take. Communicating the specifics of the objective is as important as the details of the plan. Your team will value knowing what they're trying to achieve and why.

Tap into all your resources to achieve your short-term plans: Unlike long-term plans that aim to achieve objectives that might be years into the future, short-term plans focus on more immediate objectives and are the result of a leader's ability to direct their team to perform day-to-day. For instance, short-term plans often do not go through multiple iterations, nor do they have the benefit of input from several sources as long-term plans do. Therefore, you should avoid developing short-term plans without using all the resources available to you. Seek feedback on your plan from your leaders, colleagues, and subordinates whenever feasible. Above all, do not allow the immediacy of short-term plans to stop you from seeking the opinions or feedback of others.

Start Doing These 3 Things Now to Improve Your Short-Term Goals

The following steps can help you become better at developing short-term plans:

1. **Evaluate and improve your current short-term plans.** Spend some time evaluating your current short-term plans to determine how they might be improved. For example, you might not be able to change how the objective is measured but you might be able to tweak your timeline. Each improvement you make to a current plan helps you sharpen your ability to create better plans in the future.
2. **Practice S.M.A.R.T. goal-setting.** Goal-setting provides an evidence-based method for creating effective goals and can be applied across work and life domains. Additionally, goals that are S.M.A.R.T. have been found to be more motivating and teams are more likely to accomplish these goals². Work on your goal-setting skills by applying this technique across different parts of your life to develop better objectives for your short-term work plans.
3. **Be clear about your expectations.** Short-term plans provide you with an opportunity to communicate your confidence in your team members. This confidence increases their sense of self-efficacy, which increases job performance³. Do this by identifying highly capable members of your team and delegating parts of your plan to them. Your short-term plans should include a series of actionable steps, which you can use to set clear

expectations around the quality of work you expect, and the timeline on which you expect it. Once you've laid out your expectations, step back and let your employees meet the goal in their own way. A good leader uses short-term planning to develop their team members by providing them with clear direction *and* a sense of ownership over their work.

Resources



[S.M.A.R.T. Goals – A Quick Overview](#)



[How to Boost Your Team's Productivity?](#)



Develop your ability to create effective short-term plans by taking advantage of SIGMA's coaching services.

Contact SIGMA for coaching on developing your skills as a leader.

SIGMA Assessment Systems, Inc.

Email: support@SigmaHR.com

Call: 800-265-1285

References

¹ Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (2002). Building a practically useful theory of goal setting and task motivation. A 35-year odyssey. *American Psychologist*, 57, 705–717.

² Kleingeld, A., van Mierlo, H., & Arends, L. (2011). The effect of goal setting on group performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(6), 1289–1304.

³ Judge, T. A., Jackson, C. L., Shaw, J. C., Scott, B. A., & Rich, B. L. (2007). Self-efficacy and work-related performance: The integral role of individual differences. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(1), 107–127.