

Goal Setting

Why is goal setting important? Goals help to describe success. Without taking the time to think about success, one may or may not achieve it. Goals provide challenges. A person's (or organization's) reach should exceed one's grasp. People tend to maintain expectations, not surpass them. Thus, expectations or goals should be challenging. Goals create common tasks and processes. By having goals, a group knows what it has to do. Then members can work together on them. Tasks and relationships become further defined goals.

Goals provide direction to student organizations. They enhance their operation, contribute to group maintenance and development, and give group members a sense of cohesion. The process of setting goals should be tailored to each organization's needs. Some benefit by using a highly structured goal-setting process, while others prefer a more informal process.

Is your organization spinning its wheels wondering in which direction to go? Are your members also confused regarding the organization's mission or reason for being? On the other hand, is your organization clear about its goals, but does not seem to get anywhere anyway? Do your members never seem to know who is supposed to be doing what in order to achieve those goals? There is one way to avoid these pitfalls - use a goal setting and action planning process. Organizations cannot survive and flourish for a very long time without some basic goals. Goals give an organization a purpose and direction to move towards the entire year. In order to establish a successful organization, it's important to create a clear purpose, goals, and an action plan to provide direction and to meet the needs of your members.

Definitions

- **Mission:** A statement defining the function and purpose of an organization.
- **Goal:** Broad, abstract statement describing an ideal intent, state, or condition.
- **Objectives:** Specific statements that describe desired behavior in measurable terms and acceptable criteria of performance.

Three levels of defining an organization's priorities:

1. **Purpose** - a broad, general statement that tells why your organization exists. The purpose usually doesn't change from year to year, and is often the first statement in your constitution.
2. **Goals** - statements describing what your organization wishes to accomplish, stemming from your purpose. Goals are the ends toward which your efforts will be directed, and often change from term to term or year to year, depending on the nature of the group.
3. **Objectives** - descriptions of exactly what should be accomplished derived from the goals. Objectives are clear, specific statements of measurable tasks that need to be accomplished to reach your goals. They are usually short term with deadlines or specific timelines.

Why Set Goals?

- To Channel your Time, Effort, and Ideas
- To Build Confidence and Self-Esteem

- To Gain the Backbone for a Positive Attitude
- Goals help define your organization's mission.
- Goals give direction and help avoid chaos.
- Goals can help motivate members by clarifying and communicating what the organization is striving to achieve.
- Goals help members and leaders become aware of problems in a timely fashion, which in turn leads to healthy solutions.
- Goals help the organization plan ahead and be prepared.
- Goals are a basis of recognizing and measuring your accomplishments and successes.

Goal setting can allow:

- Clear and specific delegation of responsibilities
- Greater freedom to operate. Better communication: two-way and interpersonal
- Greater job satisfaction
- More diversity of services/programs, by updating and improving old programs and developing new programs
- Identification of individual and organizational strengths and weaknesses
- Fair and easy appraisal and evaluation of the organization
- Clarification and/or development of an organizational mission or philosophy
- Better morale

Assumptions

- People work better if they know what the goals of the organization are.
- If people have clear ideas about what they hope to accomplish, their chances of accomplishment are enhanced.
- Intrinsic goals produce more energy than extrinsic goals; therefore, people will work better if they set the goals for their own jobs.
- Progress is measured in terms of what one is trying to make progress toward.
- People are more comfortable in their job situation when they know how they will be evaluated.

Advantages

- Enhances the accomplishment of a desired end and enables one to know where he is going.
- Reinforces the principles of participative management, establishes the proper environment for constructive feedback, and enhances communication between the individual and the officers.
- Facilitates a fair and clear evaluation of performance of the organization.

Although goal setting is rewarding, some difficulties do exist:

- It is sometimes difficult to quantify and qualify what our goals/actions should be
- Goal setting takes time - initially the members must be introduced to the process, develop necessary skills, implement procedures and record evaluations

- Goal setting can be a giant verbal game of paper shuffling exercises - the process can be easily distorted

How are Goals Set?

Set your goals as a group. Group members will support and be held accountable for what they help create. If you set your goals as a group you can expect the following results:

- Greater commitment and motivation among officers and members.
- Clearer understanding of the goals and the rationale for selecting them.
- Better collaborative goals that represent a group consensus rather than one person's opinion.
- Prioritize: Put First things First! Make a list of the things you personally find most worth doing. This will get you moving in the right direction and help keep you on track later.
- Think about & write your statements: goal statements are broad & encompassing while action statements are more specific & measurable
- Map out an action plan: under each goal, write out ten actions you can do to achieve that goal
- Write a time line: set specific dates for each goal & action to ensure they are completed
- Evaluation: look at your progress:
 - Are you where you want to be?
 - Have you met your time line?
 - What needs to be changed?

Types of Goals

Long-Range Goals

- Keep you focused
- When outlook is not good, look another way
- Change direction, but not the ultimate goal

Personal Goals

- Be tough on yourself
- You will endure short-term failures
- Remember that you can accomplish anything

Group Goals

- Goals must be communicated to others if they are going to be part of the decision-making process.
- People help support what they helped to create: if many are involved and included, many will support the decision.

What are Goals?

- Written
- Clear
- Logical
- Consistent
- Challenging
- Achievable

- Evaluating Tool
- Planning Tool
- Statement of Purpose
- Provide a Systematic Way to Achieve Results

Components

A goal is a precise statement of a desired state of affairs that includes the following:

- It is realistic, attainable, feasible, yet provides challenge and growth.
- It has a target date for completion.
- It has measurable results.
- It is clear, specific, and understandable.
- It is meaningful and relevant.
- It is beneficial.
- It is flexible and has more than one method of attainment.

An organizational goal is identical to an individual goal except that it has these additional components:

- It should be created by all members.
- It should be understandable and acceptable to all members.
- It should be beneficial to all members.

Developing goals:

Describe what you want the future to be like. If developing organizational goals, try to think of at least two ways to describe the future:

- Through organizational tasks or purposes
- What happens to the members

Use your organization's purpose. An organization's purpose can define what the goals need to be and then these goals can be adjusted each year. Use what members, constituents, and other interested parties suggest. By being open to feedback, one can get new ideas for improving or building goals.

Process for brainstorming goals:

The process of setting goals is similar to a problem-solving process. To simplify matters, yet ensure a goal that includes all necessary components, you can set a goal by answering the 5 W's and an H.

- Who? Delegate responsibilities equally to all members.
- What? Generate the possibilities and narrow down the alternatives to the ones you intend to pursue.
- Why? Clarify the needs and purposes that are the basis of your goals.
- When? Identify when planning work sessions and the actual event will take place.
- Where? Determine locations of events.
- How? Decide how you will implement the selected alternatives.
- Allow ideas to start goals
- Members should begin to talk about what they would like the group to accomplish
- Let every member take part in the brainstorming. This is important for morale and cohesion. Also, members are more likely to support what they help to create

- Unrealistic goals should not be weeded out until later
- When finalizing goals, make sure they are measurable
- Brainstorm potential goals as a group. (People support what they create, and will accept responsibility more easily.)
- Choose the goals from the brainstormed list that you want to work on.
- Prioritize those goals as a group.
- Determine objectives for each goal and plans of action for each objective. Be specific and include deadlines. (Remember, there may be several objectives for each goal).
- Move into action, follow through. Implement your goals by following through with your action plan. (Many groups fail to do this step and their goals are never achieved).
- Evaluate your progress on a regular basis.
- Circumstances will continually change so be flexible and allow your objectives to change with them.

After brainstorming, prioritize the goals:

- Place goals in order of importance. This can be difficult to do because each member has one's own idea of what is important for the group
- All members need to take part in this to feel ownership in final goals
- Set a few important goals to which the group can commit rather than a laundry list of tasks or goals, which may or may not be achieved.

Some different methods for prioritizing:

- Have a discussion in which each member voices an opinion
- Have members rank the goals on their own and then share their ideas with the group to reach consensus
- Break into small groups to prioritize goals concerning different segments of the organization

After goal setting, develop plans to achieve the goals so they are more than nice words.

Planning

Planning is the process of laying out a course of action to achieve a goal. Planning is commonly thought of as little more than tasks, responsibilities, and costs set out on a time schedule, as a list of who is going to do what, when and at what cost. This is a very important step in goal setting.

Thorough planning takes several steps:

1. Goal - What is the overall end result you wish to achieve by executing this plan? Your goal should include target dates for beginning and completion.
2. Objectives within plan - Each objective should state a result desired. Distinguish between long-range and short-range objectives.
3. Assumptions - What are the factors that may affect your plan as it unfolds? What is the degree of probability that they will?
4. Resources - What do you need to carry out your plan? Resources include money, people, machines, materials, time, capabilities, experience, energy, etc. Include anyone or anything that is available to you and usable. Make an inventory of all resources.
5. Constraints - What are the limitations within which you have to achieve your goal? Constraints may be limitations on your resources or outside considerations.

6. Action steps/tasks - What activities need to be undertaken to achieve the goal of your plan? How long will they take? Who will do them? What resources do you need for each task?
7. Schedule - Which tasks need to be done in sequence? Which can be done parallel? Have you allowed enough time? Are your deadlines realistic?
8. Implementation - Do it!
9. Evaluations - What are your milestones? What cross checks do you need to ensure that tasks will be done properly?
10. Recycling the planning process - Is there further planning needed to reach your next goal? Is there more planning needed for a particular difficult or complicated step of your plan?

Develop Action Plans:

If you have more than one objective, start with the one that the group considers the most important and/or complex. Develop a detailed plan for fulfilling the objective by the target date.

- Identify what information, not already available, is needed to meet that objective
- What is your objective, or more specifically, what tasks needs to be done to reach your goal?
- Identify the steps needed to accomplish the goal in the order that they need to be done
- How will your objective(s) be accomplished?
- Determine what individuals or groups in the organization will be involved in the implementation of the plan, then decide who will be responsible for what phases of the action plan
- What are your resources in terms of people, money, materials?
- Set a deadline for each step
- When will each task be accomplished and what is the ultimate deadline?
- Who is responsible for completing each task?
- Evaluate the goals or the people doing them periodically to check their progress and make sure members are working to achieve them
- What results do you expect and how will you measure the effectiveness of those results?
- Conduct an evaluation of the goals by the end of the year; from that evaluation make recommendations for next year's group

By setting goals, developing action plans, working to fulfill them, and evaluating the process, you and your organization will be more likely to succeed in your tasks.

Example of an Action Plan

1. Goal: To improve membership recruitment, retention and involvement.
2. Objective: To develop a committee whose purpose is to increase member involvement to at least 40% by next term.
3. How: Brainstorm ideas to increase member involvement. Go over this list and weed out all those ideas that are impractical or impossible to do. Discuss this edited list with the executive board. Determine which will be done and delegate the final process of setting up this system to one or two executive officers.
4. Resources: Members, executive officers, professional staff members, and advisors.
5. Deadlines: Who: Executive board

- When: By next term (try to set a specific date if possible).
- 6. Results:
 - Acceptable - membership involvement increases by 40-70 %.
 - Unacceptable - membership involvement increases by less than 40%.
 - Better than expected - membership involvement increases by more than 70%.

Goal-Setting Tips

Here's a tip that might help: Make your goals VISIBLE!!

- Post them
- Give a copy to every member
- Discuss them at meetings -- put them on the agenda
- Put them in newsletters and materials you send out
- Goals and objectives are a roadmap to your future.
- You need a map to know where you're going and whether you have arrived at your destination.
- Make a list of activities to accomplish your goals and then schedule your time! ("To Do" list.)
- Planning is essential and must be done every day.
- "To Do" lists helps you reach your goals.
- Goals change with time and age.
- Follow your "To Do" list and don't procrastinate!

Find These Helpful Resources in the Leadership Library

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen R. Covey