

Motivation Through Goal Setting: The Road to Success

In sports, as well as in life, it is important to set goals for yourself and also for your team. They will provide direction and identify areas which can be improved upon therefore giving more focus. Goal setting is your road map to success on what could be a long journey and the easiest way to plan for a journey is with a map. When using a road map you are in essence setting goals for the trip. The road map can:

- Locate specifically where it is you are going (long term goal)
- Determine how many stops to take along the way (short term goals)
- Tell you how many mile to the next destination (daily goal)
- Tell you the alternate routes along the way, and
- Help locate tourist stops en route (you should always enjoy the journey!)

If an individual's expectations are too high chances are they will drop out of the sport quickly and easily so it is important that goals are challenging but achievable. Setting these goals will in turn motivate your players to stay involved and want to improve both personally and as a team. Motivation is all about having needs and striving to have those needs met. How can you enhance your players' motivation?

How far ahead should a team or player look ahead?

Effective goal setting entails setting long term and short term goals; these goals will identify where your team is going and how they are going to get there. When planning a vacation, you often think about dream destinations. Where would you do if you had unlimited funds and abilities... the Caribbean, Australia? As with travelling and many other aspects of life it is fun to dream. In sport, it is also fun and important to dream. **Dream goals** allow you to project years into the future without any limits. For example, for many players to get selected on the All Star Team and go on an All Star Trip is a dream goal.

Players need to progress from a dream goal to a **long term goal** and this is where you the coach/manager will kick in. First you need a long term goal, what does your team ultimately want to accomplish or achieve at the end of the season? An example of this would be "to reach the semi-final of the championship" or "to finish in the top 3 in the league". When coaches and players understand what the long term goal is they can then set about trying to achieve this one session, one match or one short term goal at a time but it will always be in their mind. You, as the coach, should help your players set team goals as well as encourage them to set personal goals to coincide with the team goals. After selecting a desired outcome as a goal, players can then ask themselves some follow up questions. Such

as: "What obstacles are standing in the way of accomplishing that goal?", and "What steps can I/we take to overcome these obstacles?" Once arriving at the answers to these questions, you can focus on the task at hand.

One problem that teams tend to have is that they set long term goals at the beginning of the season, then never go back to see how they are doing and they do not really talk about their goals or strategies to get there. There must be agreement on the goals from all team members and they must then be reviewed throughout the season and adjusted where necessary to keep them challenging as well as realistic.

In order to achieve your long term goal it is essential that your team sets **short term goals** to get there. These are the stepping stones along the way. As you achieve each short term goal your players will gain self-confidence so it is important that you take time to set these goals. Teams come together as an effective unit much more quickly when they have challenging and meaningful goals they are committed to achieving.

The advice that emerges from the research of Edwin Locke and others on goal setting theory is a helpful way to clarify how you might set goals.

Two of Locke's observations are particularly interesting:

Firstly goals should be demanding. We are far more motivated by challenging goals than by moderate or mediocre goals. That is of course provided they are not set too high and seen as unachievable.

Secondly, goals should be specific. General unclear goals are not motivational: clear specific goals are. It is also worth considering that goals perhaps shouldn't be so specific that they don't allow flexibility to achieve things differently as the context and situation may change over time.

Finally short term goals can also feel far off therefore something more within reach is needed to maintain focus and motivation. For these reasons some teams will set **daily goals** and these are set before training sessions or matches to help motivate players and coaches alike and bring a higher intensity to the session.

How do you conduct goal setting with your team?

1. Bring your team together in meeting room arrangement
2. Explain what goals are and the importance of having long and short term goals. Stress the importance of SMART goals

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Realistic

Time-bound

3. In groups get your players to decide on their long term goal. Then discuss feedback and decide as a team which long term goal they want to set.
4. In groups identify three short term goals. Then discuss feedback and decide as a team on a number of short term goals. These should be approximately for the next four weeks.
5. It is important that you then give the player's time to firstly decide on their personal long term goal and then progress to give time to decide on personal short term goals. If they want to discuss this with management you should provide an outlet for this.
6. It is important to discuss what the players need mentally and physically to achieve these goals and also the skills and tools they feel they need to develop.
7. Make sure to write up all goals and give a copy to every player.
8. It is essential that you revisit the short term goals at the agreed time period, evaluate and establish updated and new goals for the next time period.
9. It is also important to review your long term goal at the end of the year with your team and the steps (short term goals) you decided on to get there as this will assist when repeating format the following year.

How do you evaluate your goals?

Effective goal setting requires players and management to regularly evaluate progress towards their goals, note successes along the way, and modify goals if necessary. Let's go back to the road map analogy, where the goal is to drive from Derry City to Cork City and you set off bright and early at 7am with your trusty roadmap in hand and the aim to get there at 3pm but unfortunately there is an accident and you end up sitting on the road for three hours. At what point, if ever, will you stop to assess your progress and re-evaluate your goals?

Back to the pitch, and your team wanted to increase their accuracy rate to 85% of shots taken to be scored by the end of July but it is the last week in July and they are currently at 75%. At what point should they reassess? They will only be disappointed and frustrated. Goals are meant to provide direction, give feedback on progress and motivate. To ensure they serve this purpose, goals must also be flexible. It is essential to evaluate goals on occasion throughout the season and you should set specific dates for your players to monitor their success and to make changes if needed. Individual goals can then be altered to reflect the updated team goals.

So, what are Five Golden Rules of Goal Setting?

1. Set goals that motivate the team and the players individually.

It is essential that your players feel there is value in achieving the goals you have set out. If they have little interest in the outcome, or they are irrelevant given the larger picture, then the chances of the players putting in the work to make them happen are minimal. Motivation is key to setting goals.

2. Set SMART goals.

It is important that you use the SMART principle so that all your players are clear about the goals and can measure if they achieve them or need to re-evaluate.

3. Set goals in writing.

The physical act of writing down a goal makes it real and tangible and there is no excuse for forgetting it. Every player should be given copies of your goals. When writing goals it is important to use words like “will” instead of “would like” or “might”. It puts power in your goals and they are positive. Ask your team to post their goals in visible places to remind themselves of what they intend to do. If you have team website, facebook, twitter or any other social media it could be posted there also for team to have record off.

4. Make an action plan.

This step is often missed in the process of goal setting yet it is the most important as it provides your team with the steps needed to achieve their goal. Your team can then cross off each step (short term goal) as they achieve them to show the progress they are making and maintain motivation.

5. Stick with it.

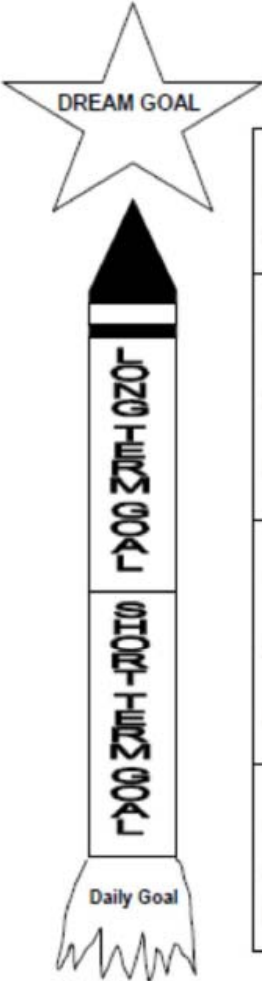
Remember, goal setting is an on-going activity not just a means to an end. Build in dates to have short meetings with your team to review progress and re-assess goals where necessary. These can just take place before or after training. Your long term goal may remain quite similar over the long term, but the action plan (short term goals) your team sets will change to ensure you are making progress to your overall target. So what happens if your long term goal was to win

the championship and you get knocked out in the first round? Do you forget about goal setting as you see the season as over? No, this is when your goal setting is extremely important to maintain the motivation of your team. Re-evaluate and establish a new long term goal (e.g.) To finish in the top two of the league and then discuss your short term goals to get there. Keep your team focused. Make sure the relevance, value and necessity remain high.

Goal setting is much more than simply saying you want something to happen. Unless your players clearly define what they want and understand why they want it in the first place, their odds of success will be considerably reduced. By following the Five Golden Rules of Goal Setting you can help your players set goals with confidence and enjoy the satisfaction that comes along with knowing they have achieved what they set out to do.

So what will you and your team decide to accomplish today?

Shoot for the Stars!
Use the goal setting rocket to help define your dream goal(s), long term, short term and daily goals.



1.	Dream Goals
2.	
Long Term Goals	
1.	
2.	
3.	
Short Term Goals	
1.	
2.	
3.	
Daily Goals	
1.	
2.	
3.	