

How to achieve your goals

Russell Veitch of KWS, a company that helps people to create wealth from their businesses, offers advice for business owners on how to set goals and work towards achieving them.

Where do you want to go? What do you want to get out of your business venture? What does success mean to you? These are all hard questions but ones that owners should be asking themselves on a regular basis. Business owners work extremely hard and often spend a considerable amount of their time keeping their staff, customers and suppliers happy. But along the way they overlook someone who is very important to their success and that is themselves.

After the countless hours and effort that they have ploughed into their venture, business owners can lose touch with the very reason they started the company in the first place. It is important that business owners successfully identify what it is they want out of their business and how to move towards achieving these goals.

It's all too easy for business owners to focus too much effort on the day-to-day operations of their business venture and not on the wider picture of where that business is actually going. It is important, as a business owner that you take a step back from your business and evaluate your current position within the company to make sure you are getting where you want to go.

Think S.M.A.R.T

S.M.A.R.T principles work as an effective business tool that can offer direction in setting personal and professional goals. It is useful to break them down into the following stages:

Specific- often when people set goals, they are too general which makes it very difficult to identify exactly what needs to be done to achieve them. This is also a way some people use to get around setting a goal, as it is harder to make yourself accountable for not achieving it. Focus your goals by specifying what they are, why you need to set them, when they will be executed and what is the best way to go about achieving them.

Measurable- a goal needs to be measurable so that it is possible to identify whether or not it has been achieved. Charting your progress will also help to spur you on as you move forwards.

Achievable- for a goal to be motivational, it needs to be taxing but at the same time it has to be achievable. If the chances of achieving a goal or even getting close to it are too slim, it could have a negative effect, denting your confidence and slowing your progress.

Realistic- goals should be challenging and based on what you really want to achieve. However, setting yourself too many goals, especially those that are unachievable can have a negative impact on your business and morale if they are not accomplished.

Time bound- finally, it is important that you put a time frame to each goal, as this way it becomes a deadline that needs to be met. Establishing a timeframe will also help you to focus your activity on achieving your goals.

Looking backwards, not forwards

When business owners set goals, they often look forward to what they want to achieve. Whilst this is a reasonable approach, it is then harder to actually work out what needs to be done to actually achieve the goal. Sometimes reversing the process and thinking backwards rather than forwards can help. Imagine yourself at the point of achievement first and then visualise the process that would have taken you to that point from there. This will enable you to realise the individual steps that you will need to have taken to reach your goal.

Write something down

It is essential that when you spend time thinking about your goals for the future that you write them down. Do this whilst you are still sitting down, before you even get up and start thinking about something else. This simple act will help you to clarify your goals and will allow you to visualise them more effectively. It can also act as a motivational tool each time you are able to cross a goal off of the list.

Take the first step

All the planning in the world will not help you to achieve your goals. You must take action. Once you have set yourself a goal, take action within 24 hours, this will set the wheels in motion and create the momentum you need to accomplish your task. Sometimes goals can be daunting if considered in their entirety. Breaking them down into smaller, more manageable steps can combat this, making your goals seem much more attainable.

A goal is never static

Business is always changing and so any action plan or goal setting needs to be flexible enough to evolve as you evolve. As the goal posts move you need to constantly re-evaluate your progress and be flexible enough to adapt if necessary. However, avoid moving back the time frames you have set out to achieve your goals, as this can become an excuse to simply avoid moving forwards.

Anticipate the challenges you will encounter as you work towards your goals and plan how you will overcome them. This will prepare you in advance for any challenges you are likely to face and help you overcome the obstacles much more easily. In fact, the simple act of planning for obstacles will often prevent many of them from occurring.

Get help from those around you

It is important that you share your goals with the people around you, especially those who could help you along the way. We all need a little help from time to time and the support of your friends, family and colleagues can have a huge impact on your success. You can also use them to make you accountable for your progress, reporting to them on a regular basis or asking them to remind you of impending deadlines that you have set.

No right or wrong answers

There are no right or wrong goals to have. They should not be based on what you should do or on what others tell you, but what you really want. Envisage that there are no limits to your dream goal in your business and then refine this to an achievable objective. Remember a goal without a deadline is simply a dream. Attach a realistic yet challenging deadline for accomplishment and post this where you can review it regularly.

Celebrate your goals

Working to achieve your goals is never going to be plain sailing. There will be bad days. But there will also be good ones. Success, no matter how small, needs to be celebrated. Make sure milestones are noted and appreciated; your success can spur you on to achieving the next step in reaching your goal.

Many people start out on their own with a plan in mind, full of aspirations that they are looking to achieve. However, inevitably as their business progresses and they get busier these original goals and intentions become lost as they get bogged down in the day-to-day running of a company. Operational activities take on more importance than the original vision, leaving business owners without the time to really consider where they are going.

It is sometimes hard for people to identify for themselves what their true goals are. Often to find the right answers, you need to be asked the right questions. KWS offer "Discovery & Focus Workshops" and through a process of questioning and coaching, help business owners to discover, or rediscover, what their true business and personal goals are and then focus on what needs to happen to achieve them.