

Week 6

From Mission to Action

When asked how he managed to raise his children from a Los Angeles Ghetto to be two of the biggest stars in women's tennis, Richard Williams, the father of the phenomenal tennis sisters Venus and Serena, said that the key to their success was by setting big, big goals. Despite their humble beginnings, by expecting, both of himself and his daughters, that they be far more than most people would ever dream of being, the whole family were driven forward. He knew what he wanted for them and he did all he could to make this dream a reality. Even before either of these youngest two of his five daughters were born he was convinced they were destined to succeed and consulted psychologists and tennis trainers to ensure he knew how to best guide them to success. He made a plan based on this and they worked and worked and worked to make the dream a reality.

Whatever your views on the rights and wrongs of parents pushing their children hard in a particular field, the Williams' story certainly shows the extraordinary power that setting goals can have in our lives. If we **set goals** that we really want, **commit** to achieving them, **plan** what we are going to do so we follow the best course of action, and then **take consistent action** towards their fulfilment, we will achieve far more than if we sit back and let the flow of life dictate our destiny.

Goals are a statement of how you wish your life to be, what you wish to have and what you want to achieve. They are a target for you to work towards. Whether your desire in life is to be rich, be a sports champion, a great mother or father, or to contribute to others, get a promotion at work, or simply have a relaxed, easy life, if you set yourself goals, and do so in the right way, you will set off a force in your life which will drive you forward to enable you to live the life you truly want.

From Life Direction to Goals

In week 3 we defined our life direction, our long term vision of the way we want our life to be and what we want to achieve. The problem with such a long term view for our lives is that it can seem so big, so far away and so hard to achieve, that we can get overwhelmed and we never get started. Perhaps you envisage running your own multi-million pound business, but currently have no business

skills, no finance and no idea of what to do or how to do it. The vision seems so far from your current position in life that you just don't know where to start and never do. Richard Williams didn't let his background and lack of knowledge of tennis hold him back and neither should you. What you must do is break down your long term vision into smaller parts, each of which you know you can work towards and achieve. Since you know you can achieve these short term goals you will work towards them and each one you achieve will move you towards making your long term vision a part of your life.

The benefits of having goals

1) To focus our daily actions on making a difference to our lives in the long term

Setting goals creates a direction which focuses the way we spend our time today. Many people's daily actions have no long term purpose. They simply let the flow of life dictate what they do. They go to work, watch a bit of television, go out for a drink, watch a film, do the ironing, go for a workout, and so on. None of these actions is designed to make their life any more or better in the future. Their life has no long term direction. Where will they be five years down the road? Most probably in the same job, earning the same income, living in the same place, in the same way, with the same quality of relationships. If the life they have means that they're happy and contented then great, there's no need to set goals. I have two questions for **you** though:

- 1) Are you currently living the life you really want?
- 2) Will you be happy if your life is that same in 10 years time?
- 3) Are you taking actions today, tomorrow, or later this week which will make your future more or better?

If you want more for your life than you have at present, make sure you spend your time directed towards a meaningful and purposeful end rather than getting lost in the fog of a life where your actions have little or no long term direction - set yourself goals and work towards them.

2) Motivation

By setting goals which link in to the heart of who we are, and that we truly want, we spark the fire within us which gives us the energy to go that extra mile to make what we desire a reality.

Take a moment to think of something you would really love to have or do, and which if you really worked hard towards it is achievable within the next 3 years. Imagine what it would be like to have this. How would you feel? What would you see? What would you hear? Stay with this thought and really experience what this is like. Coming back to the present, how do you feel now? Feeling positive? Is this something worth working towards? If you imagined clearly what you want, and you really believe you can get there you will feel really motivated now to get on and work hard to get what you want. You've connected with what is important to you and this connection brings desire which will keep you moving forward.

3) **Improved performance**

Considerable research has been undertaken in business about setting goals to improve performance. When researching the performance people achieve without goals people tended to achieve to a lower level of performance than when tough targets were set. The researchers found that setting a tough goal tended to make people try to achieve more than when there was no goal, and because they expected more of themselves they achieved more.

It was important that this target level was set at a level which was *tough but achievable*. Where targets set were too easy, employees under-performed as they tended to take life easy, knowing they would achieve their target. If targets were set which were too tough, the employees reacted by giving up and not even trying - again performance was poor. When tough but achievable targets were set, performance improved. People believed they could achieve the target and they stretched themselves to hit it. The results also showed that even if the actual goal itself was not achieved, the performance was better than if no target had been set.

By setting ourselves goals which we believe we can achieve yet which are beyond our normal aspiration levels we will improve our performance. This is true in any field in which we wish to excel.

The 8 keys to setting effective goals

A goal should inspire you, motivate you and focus how you spend your time. To make sure that the goals you set do this it is important that you set them in the right way. The following are a set of 8 characteristics which are present in effective goals. Use the model whenever you set goals to ensure you are setting them in the right way.

1) **Specific**

We often have a vague idea of what we want for our life - more money, more happiness, more leisure time, more time with the family, a nicer car and so on. Vague generalisations of what we want are simply NOT going to focus and motivate us. They are like having broken umbrella on a rainy day.

Lets say someone plays golf and decides that they want to ‘improve their game’. It’s very hard to know what ‘improve’ means. Does it mean: to develop a better swing, to putt with a more consistent stroke, to chip the ball better, beat their personal best score or reduce their handicap? Very general goals do not focus the mind. It is hard to know exactly what our golfer’s focus of attention should be on. Unclear goals are very hard to make a clear plan of action towards.

Secondly, we don’t know by how much she wants to improve. Does she want to reduce her best score by 5 shots or 20 shots? The amount of work she’ll have to put into her game will be very different depending on the specific goal she’s aiming for.

2) Measurable

The next problem with this goal is that it is not measurable. How will she know if she’s improved; will someone say “you’re swing is looking good”, will she hit the ball further on the driving range or will her average score have come down? With the goal as it stands she’ll never know whether she’s achieved it, or indeed what progress she is making towards achieving it. She is also not getting clear *feedback* about what is helping her improve and what is not. If she’s has some lessons with a pro, is that improving her game? You’d hope so, but how effective is it really being. Without a clear way of measuring it’s effectiveness this there is no way of knowing.

Now golf is quite easy to quantify and therefore measure. Most people would hope their average score would come down as they improved. Some goals are not naturally measurable in terms of a quantitative measure though - ‘To be relaxed’ for example. You’ll sometimes need to really think about what will happen when you achieve your goal and how you can measure that. You might for example be able to say “To go one whole month without losing my temper” or set a target for a “20 point drop in my blood pressure”. One way of making goals measurable is to state what you will **see, feel, hear or do** when you have achieved it. So for example “I see myself walking calmly to work, regularly taking breaks during the day, and chatting to people in an easy manner. When I sense my muscles throughout my body they will feel easy and relaxed. My internal dialogue will be

calm and easy. I will feel my heart beating normally when I have to do a presentation. I will react calmly to unexpected events.”

3) **Time bound**

Returning to our golfer wanting to improve her game, the final problem with the goal she has set was that we don't know by when she wants to improve, the goal is not **time bound**. Improving her game by the end of the week is a much tougher proposition than improving by the end of the year. Making a goal time bound makes a goal much more specific. It also lets us know when to take our measurement.

Pulling together each of these first three keys of effective goal setting, a better goal could therefore be to “improve my average score from 96 last year to 90 this year”. She knows exactly what she's aiming for - she will be able to make a clear action plan which will be focused on improving her scoring. At the end of the year she'll be able to measure her performance, and based on whether she achieved it or not she'll be able to use this as feedback about the effectiveness of the things she's done to improve her game - vital information for her to use to improve in the future.

4) **Positive**

State your goals positively - “I want to be really happy” rather than in the negative “I don't want to be depressed”. Take a moment now to avoid thinking about the colour of your front door. Did you manage to do this without first thinking of the colour of your front door? It is very hard not to pay the colour of your front door some attention even though I asked you to avoid doing this. In the same way goals stated in the negative tend to focus our attention on the negative. In the statement “I don't want to be depressed” our attention is focused, if just for a moment, on being depressed which can start cause us to start feeling depressed. By setting our goals as positive statements, our attention is focused on what we want and our thoughts and therefore actions guided in the right direction.

5) **Attractive**

Goals should be stated towards something you want with passion. It is the passion you have to achieve a goal, which creates the motivation to do what it takes to succeed. If you set goals which you wouldn't mind, or would be ‘nice’ then you're unlikely to get them. In times of difficulty or when you are busy these are the goals which fall by the wayside.

6) Congruent and committed

Does the goal feel right? Is it right for *who you are and the values you have*? Is it right for the *people around you*? How will achieving this effect them, and is that what you want? Any lack of congruence will show up in a lack of effort when the going gets tough. That nagging feeling that something isn't right will take over and you won't follow through on your actions. You must be wholeheartedly committed to a goal for it to be right. Are you wholeheartedly committed to your goals?

7) Believe you can achieve

If you set yourself a target which is harder than you really **believe you can achieve** it is unlikely you will get very far in working towards it. Our reaction is usually to dismiss the goal “that’s just not possible” and our performance suffers. When setting goals ask yourself, “Do I really believe I can do this?” If not, lower your expectations, or change your beliefs! If you’re lacking self-belief in some areas of your life at present then you will find Chapter 10 of vital importance to you. In it I will review the *10-step self-belief process* which will help you to generate the self-belief you need when working towards your goals.

Remember too, that research shows that to get the most from yourself you should set goals which are *tough but achievable*. Use that as a guide to whether you’ve set your goals at the right level.

8) YOU are in control

I was once facilitating some goal setting with someone who was really attracted to a gorgeous girl he worked with. His goal was to go out with her (well it wasn't quite that, but I'm not going to tell you here exactly what it was!). The problem with his goal was that he could have all the money in the world, a great personality, work on his body to make it lean and attractive, and yet she still might not go out with him. Achieving his goal depended on her views, opinions, values and position. Instead he changed it to ‘I will do all I can over the next three months to get to go out with this girl’. Suddenly the emphasis was on him, not her. He had a goal which he was in total control of, that would keep him focused, motivated and working harder to achieve than one where he was giving control to someone else. He also set a time frame of three months, so that he didn't go on pursuing her even after he'd made his best efforts. He could now plan all the things he could do to attract her, and feel positive in that he was doing all he possibly could.

Do YOU want a change in someone else's behaviour? Remember that this is out of your direct control. You can just control yourself. Set your goals so that they are achievable by you and you will take control of your life. You give yourself the power that comes from taking responsibility for what you do and the results you get.

Goal setting as part of the Management of Life

So how do we capture the power of effective goal setting to make our lives better and enable us to achieve more? To manage your life so you get the most from it you must set goals, you must work towards them, and then you must review your performance against these so that you can learn from your experiences for the future.

I've seen so many people set themselves goals, feel enthusiastic about them but then never look at them again. They have an incredibly powerful tool which they are not using as a positive force in their lives. It's like buying a Ferrari, taking it out for a quick spin and then locking it up in the garage never to be used again. The aim of the Management of Life program is enable you to use the powerful tools available from the personal development field in your life in an ongoing way. To do this we need to be organised in how we set and use the goals we set. In the Management of Life goals are used in two ways:

1) Personal project planning

For a small number of key activities in which you wish to excel, be it your career, business, relationships, sport, hobby, or whatever, you will set goals to act as a clear focus for what you want to achieve and towards which you can make a clear plan of action. We will look at how to do this effectively in chapter 12, personal project planning.

2) Annual goal setting

We also need to bring the power of goal setting into the other aspects of our lives, across all of our roles, so that we create a balanced life. As such I recommend that we take time just once each year to review where we are on the road of life, what we want to achieve for the future, and set or revise our goals. We ensure that the goals we set are stepping-stones on the road to living our mission, by setting long-term five-year goals, and shorter term one year goals.

We will then go on to make clear plans each month of how we will move towards these goals and will regularly monitor our progress towards their achievement. We

will be clearly linking in our goals to our daily actions, so that the actions we take today will be creating a better life for us in the future. We will be making goal setting work for us by building it into our lives in an ongoing way.

Okay, it's now time to start this process, and set your own personal goals and use them in your life.

Exercise 4.1 - Annual goal setting



Review your mission

1. It is important that you reconnect to your mission. Get a sense of what it means to you, and how important it is to you. See what you will be doing and hear what you will hear when you are living your mission.

Remember that goals are simply stepping stones on our path towards living our Life Direction and Key Values. They are the guiding point for the goals you are about to set.

Where do you want to be in 5 years time?

2. Now is your time to dream. What would you like your life to be like in 5 years time? What would you like to achieve? Where would you like to be? What would you like to be doing?

Using the table on page 11, write down 5 year goals in each of your goals. Remember to use the 8 Keys to Effective Goal Setting to ensure you set your goals in the best way. These are:

- 1) Specific
 - 2) Measurable
 - 3) Time bound
 - 4) Positive
 - 5) Attractive
 - 6) Congruent and committed
 - 7) Believe you can achieve
 - 8) YOU are in control
3. Review your 5 year goals as a whole:

Imagine it is now 5 years into the future and you have achieved all the goals you have set for yourself? How does this feel? What have the last 5 years been like? Is there anything missing which if included would make your life now or the last 5 years more whole, and right for you?

Add to your list any additional goals you feel are appropriate.

1 year goals

4. In each of your roles ask yourself: If I am going to achieve my 5 year goals where will I have to be and what will I have to have done after 1 year?

Set yourself goals for the next year. Again, use the 8 Keys to Effective Goal setting to guide the way you set these.

5. Review your 1 year goals as a whole:

Imagine it is the end of the year and you have achieved all the goals you have set for yourself? How does this feel? What has the last year been like? Is there anything missing which if included would make your life now or the last year more whole, and right for you?

Add to your list any additional goals you feel are appropriate.

5. One of the problems with setting goals across different roles is that by the end we have so much to do that it is impossible to do everything. It is

important that as well as each individual goal being achievable, that the whole is achievable as well.

Review your 1 year goals as a whole, and judge whether it is possible to achieve them all. If not, amend your goals accordingly keeping those which you feel are most important to you, and removing or setting an easier target in the others.

Remember that you should set your goals at a level which is tough but achievable.

Annual goal setting		
For the Year beginning:		
Date of next annual review:		
Role	Long term goals (5 years)	1 year goals

From mission to action

Our mission gives us a view of what our life is all about, the direction in which we wish our life to progress, and the way we are going to live. Long term goals take this and break it down into specific targets in all the areas of importance to us, which we wish to work towards. By setting ourselves goals we create a focus for our day to day actions, making them purposeful and meaningful, we create enthusiasm and motivation, and improve our performance in all areas of our lives. They are essential to living a successful life which is in accordance with our deepest values. If you've yet to set your long term goals, do so now, you'll unleash a power in your life which will make it better, happier and more fulfilled.