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Choosing **Your Goals**

Part 5 of The **Learning Effectiveness** Series

Performing the goals—the tasks— may not be fun, but successfully completing a project usually has benefits. Because goals are often not fun, learn to frame goals in a positive tone and write them out.

The September 2006 issue of *The Viridiant Business Newsletter* discussed how to choose your roles. Once completed, the task of choosing your goals is much simpler. Begin by creating a list of possible goals, thirty minutes a day for one week. Use a pen and paper, a spreadsheet or a PDA. Divide the list into upper and lower sections. Review the list daily. Add goals you wish to consider and cross off those you believe will not make it to the final group. If you use a spreadsheet, you can cut and paste to the lower section goals you believe you will discard, but if you decide to revive one, simply move it back to the top. Create a list of no more than 20 possible goals. You will need to understand roles and projects in order to create your final list and select your final goals.

Goals are not as important as roles. Goals are merely things you do. You may want or need to complete a “project” (a noun), but goals are verbs, they are the things you need to do, or delegate to someone else to do, to complete the project. Goals are the moving signposts that guide you to complete your projects. Hey, wait a second. What’s a project? Projects are those things you do in order to perform your roles. In fact, you

really choose your projects first. Projects are the true key to being successful in your roles. Once you have a project in mind, then you choose your goals!

So why are we discussing goals before we discuss projects? Because you can’t speak of one without the other and there is a skill to creating goals that will make it easier to organize projects. In a sense they are two sides of the same coin. As an example, many people wake up Sunday morning and think, “I need to mow the lawn and do the laundry.” These are “goals” and thinking about goals rarely motivates us. To be effective, you need to first think about projects that create nouns, for example a nice lawn for the barbeque Sunday night or clean clothes for the week. Goals often have a negative connotation. The last thing you probably want to think about Sunday morning is, “Oh boy, now I can mow the lawn.” Rather, first think about the project: “the family barbeque” that evening. Then create goals in a positive manner. “I will mow the lawn so it looks good for the barbeque.” These days, with an mp3 player, it’s easier than ever to perform monotonous work. Goals are the actions you perform to complete projects.

Projects tend to require multiple steps, while goals usually entail a single step. Looking fit in a bathing suit this summer is a project: goals to get you there may be written as

- a) take a one hour spin class 3 days a week
- b) lift weights 4 times a week and
- c) diet to lose 10 pounds in 4 months.

Performing the goals—the tasks— may not be fun, but successfully completing a project

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“...complete projects by performing goals that support those projects.”

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usually has benefits. If not, you chose the wrong project. Because goals are often not fun, learn to frame goals in a positive tone and write them out. Don't write, "go to gym 4 times a week." Write, "lift weights 4 times a week to build muscle mass." Don't write "Oh no, another hour on the exercise bike." Write, "During a one hour spin class, I will listen to music while improving my health"

The Top Five Requirements for Effective Goals are:

- 1) Goals must be written
- 2) Goals must be specific
- 3) Goals must include a metric
- 4) Goals must include a deadline
- 5) Goals must support a project that supports a role

1) Goals must be written down. You need to record them in one place so you can easily find and review them. Even better, they should be with you at all times, in a daily planner or PDA. Why? Because they are the small things we do every day, our daily tasks. Going to the bakery to buy bread is a goal. You may be challenging me here thinking, "Wait a minute. A goal is way more than that". Not really. What you may be thinking of are projects or roles. But goals are the simple tasks we do.

2) Goals must be specific. If your wife asks you to buy eggs and you buy white bread... well you know where that's going. Goals must be specific because otherwise they do not support the overlying project. Your wife's request was based on her project "a home-made cake after dinner." That cannot be baked without eggs—and certainly cannot be done with white bread as a substitute.

3) Goals need a metric, a measurement to guide you in their performance, so you will know when the goal is completed. If your wife tells you to buy 6 eggs, 6 is the

metric. If you buy 4 eggs the goal is not met (surpassing a metric may be fine, but in the business world it may not be worth the time and cost). The metric guides you in performing the goal, while also verifying you successfully completed it.

4) Goals require a deadline. I didn't write must, because not all goals do. But you will serve yourself well to impose deadlines, even if you do not believe the goal requires one. For two reasons. First, on some level, we all need a little pressure to encourage us to complete tasks. Second, goals and projects clutter our minds. Setting a deadline and completing this goal makes room for undertaking another more important goal and/or project.

5) Goals must support a project that supports a role. Goals must be chosen that help you complete a project. Projects must be chosen because they support one of your chosen roles. First define your roles. Then choose projects that support your roles. Then complete projects by performing goals that support those projects.

Many books advise people to review their goals on a regular basis. Understand that goals are simply defined as tasks. They are the "To Do's" on your "To Do" list, but they are not important in and of themselves. What is important? The *projects* they support, which in turn *support your roles*. Using this system, you will not need to constantly re-evaluate your goals because "**The Learning Effectiveness System**," only permits goals (tasks or "To Do's") that support your roles to make it to your "To Do" list in the first place! Spending focused time choosing the correct roles (*The Viridiant Business Newsletter*, November 2006) and projects (*The Viridiant Business Newsletter*, January 2007) is what is required, and The Learning Effectiveness Series simplifies these processes because it will teach you to do just that.