

VENTURING MAGAZINE

LeaderThoughts #6 by Michael Brown

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Goal Setting

In our previous LeaderThought, we spoke of the characteristics of servant leaders. We have already touched on the concept of Vision & Mission that tied to the characteristics of Conceptualization and Persuasion. Now we deal with Goal Setting that also ties to those characteristics.

For leaders, there are several 'soft skills' that is valuable for them to be comfortable with, both on a personal level as well as to use within their organizations. I think it's important to touch on one that also ties to servant leadership: Goal Setting. This skill, along with time management and planning are important for all.



Goal Setting is something we all must face. As individuals we should be setting goals for ourselves. The organizations we are part of should be doing the same. Many groups will have an annual planning session in which they review the accomplishments of the group in the past year, including how well they met their goals, set new goals for the coming year, and make plans for the organization. As leaders, we should be comfortable with goal setting ourselves if we expect to lead our groups in setting and keeping their goals.

SMART Goals

S = Specific

M = Measurable

A = Achievable

R = Relevant

T = Time-Bound

When speaking of goals, most use the concept of SMART goals (the one organization I am part of extends this to SMARTER). If you've taken any training on goals, you have probably been introduced to the concept.

Each letter represents an aspect that the goal should meet. Be advised that some sources give different words for some of the letter.

Specific means the goal must be specific, not vague. Basically meeting the "who, what, where, when, why" kind of questions. Usually "what do you want to accomplish", "why" are you working on the goal, "who is involved", "when" is a possible location, and "which"- basically any constraints. Having a goal like "I want to do better" or the like is just too vague.

Measurable means the goal must have some way to measure if it's been achieved, by qualitative or quantitative means (ie amounts or percentages). We want to recruit 10 new members is a good measurable goal. We want more members is not.

Attainable looks at if the goal is attainable: do we have the means (resources) to attain the goal. It's ok for goals to push or stretch an individual or a team (they can grow from that), but the goal should not be something difficult to achieve.

Relevant is about the goal being a meaningful goal vs one that is silly or unnecessary. Are you willing to achieve that goal?

And finally, you need to set a time for when the goal should be achieved. This could be next week, next month, or next year. But you need to know when it will be accomplished.

Now, I mentioned that some groups extend SMART to SMARTER. What do the extra letters mean? E is Evaluate. This means that you are evaluating the progress of the goals as you go along. This is important to know that if you are halfway on your timeline that you have achieved what you expected at that point, else you need to put more effort OR take another action. R is for Revisit. This means revisiting the goal and changing it if there is a problem.

Another thing to keep in mind is that you can have different kinds of goals. Some goals may be long term (several months to a year or more). Some may be short term (weeks or months). Some may be in between. Sometimes short term goals lead into long term goals. A long term goal may be to graduate from college. Medium term goals would be the successful completion of coursework to graduate. Short term goals would be the assignments and work that goes into completing those individual courses.

As noted, as individuals we need to set goals for ourselves and work to accomplish them. These goals can be of various kinds. Some may be personal. Some may be tied to work, school, or the organizations we are involved in. The GOLD Award is built upon setting goals and achieving them, so this is a good way to apply what you've learned here.

Also, groups should have goals. Goals for groups may deal with growth of the group, meeting the purpose of the group and the like. Many organizations, to help their constituent groups meet goals, will have programs that push their groups to do better. These may be called quality or distinguished programs that are based on recognizing the groups for meeting defined goals. While many people put down these programs, they fail to understand the underlying purpose of such programs. They are all built around the basic goals that those particular groups should be achieving, such as membership group, meeting the purposes of the group for the membership and the like. If only groups would take these programs more seriously, the groups could be more successful. At present, for BSA units we have our "Journey to Excellence" program. All crews & ships should take this program seriously and work to achieve the goals, as this would help our units be more successful. This should be done as part of their annual planning session.

As with all of the LeaderThoughts, I have tried to find works that tie in to the topic, to give people further materials to learn from. But I wasn't that successful with this. Ken Blanchard in his works touches on goal setting in his original "One Minute Manager", but doesn't get into SMART. He does cover the concept in his later "Leading at a Higher Level" (2006, 2009). Goal setting is also part of Covey's 7 Habits, but he also doesn't make use of SMART. I tried looking for resources that would appeal more to Venturers and wasn't that successful. If others have some good resources, let me know.

I did find a couple of videos that illustrate this concept that I think may be of use for Venturers.

- Venture Guide: S.M.A.R.T. Goals
http://www.youtube.com/v/md-yXkcUXkc?version=3&hl=en_US&rel=0
- SMART Goals
http://www.youtube.com/v/md-yXkcUXkc?version=3&hl=en_US&rel=0