

## **Leadership Barometer 156 Dumb Goals** **Robert T. Whipple, MBA CPTD**



You have heard of SMART Goals, but have you ever considered DUMB Goals? SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Realistic, and Time-bound. The term was invented by G.T. Doran in 1981.

Forty one years later, I thought it was time to add some DUMB Goals. DUMB stands for Doable, Uncompromising, Manageable, and Beneficial. Here are my thoughts on why DUMB Goals are important in our society today:

### **Doable Goals**

In our global economy, we have stretched resources in nearly every organization beyond the elastic limit. Leaders pull on resources in an ever-intensifying quest for more productivity. More and more people reach a burnout stage or just quit trying to stretch.

What is needed is to go for quantum leaps in productivity. The incremental approach or Kaizen has served us well for 40 years. Now we need to find new afterburners to take us to a higher orbit.

Achieve this additional thrust by having a more robust culture based on higher trust. Trust within an organization improves productivity by 2-3 times. Leaders need to seek higher levels of trust as a means to achieve seemingly impossible productivity goals.

### **Uncompromising Goals**

As everything has become ultra-critical, the tendency is to slack off on some of the basics. We have seen several organizations slip backward on the quality principles that provided improvements over several decades. A classic example of this is Toyota. When they got so wrapped up in being the biggest, they ended up with several

recalls for quality problems. They paid a dear price for that mistake. Some organizations are so focused on productivity and profits that they forget to invest in quality and culture. They are sowing the seeds of their own demise.

## **Manageable Goals**

In most organizations today, the goals set out for people are too many and far too complex to manage. What you get is a watered-down approach to performance. It is not the laser-focused and potent enthusiasm of the entire team.

The answer here is better focus. I cringe when I see a strategic plan with 18 critical thrusts. It ain't going to happen folks! For a manageable array of critical result areas, keep the number of thrusts down to three, or four.

Also, for proper engagement, it is important to have the workers themselves be part of the goal-setting process. The doers need to own the goals in cooperation with management.

## **Beneficial Goals**

It is time for a broader view of organizational output. We have become more environmentally conscious over the past decade. We are still far off the mark if we are going to save our spaceship.

We need to dig a lot deeper into our environmental conscience. We must double our efforts to preserve the environment. Social awareness is lagging environmental activities, although some organizations are starting to gain in this area. We need to encourage more socially-conscious corporate decisions.

This means taking a hard look at where we produce products. Do not support socially irresponsible sourcing.

That equilibrium may come at the expense of some short-term profitability. It is less popular with the insatiable companies who are intent on squeezing out every last penny. I believe the organizations that are moving in the right direction will ultimately prevail. We need

a balance of organizations doing the right things for the right long-term reasons.

It is a totally different world in 2022 than it was in 1981. There is nothing wrong with pursuing SMART Goals. I think organizations would be well-served by also considering the DUMB Goals as well.

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