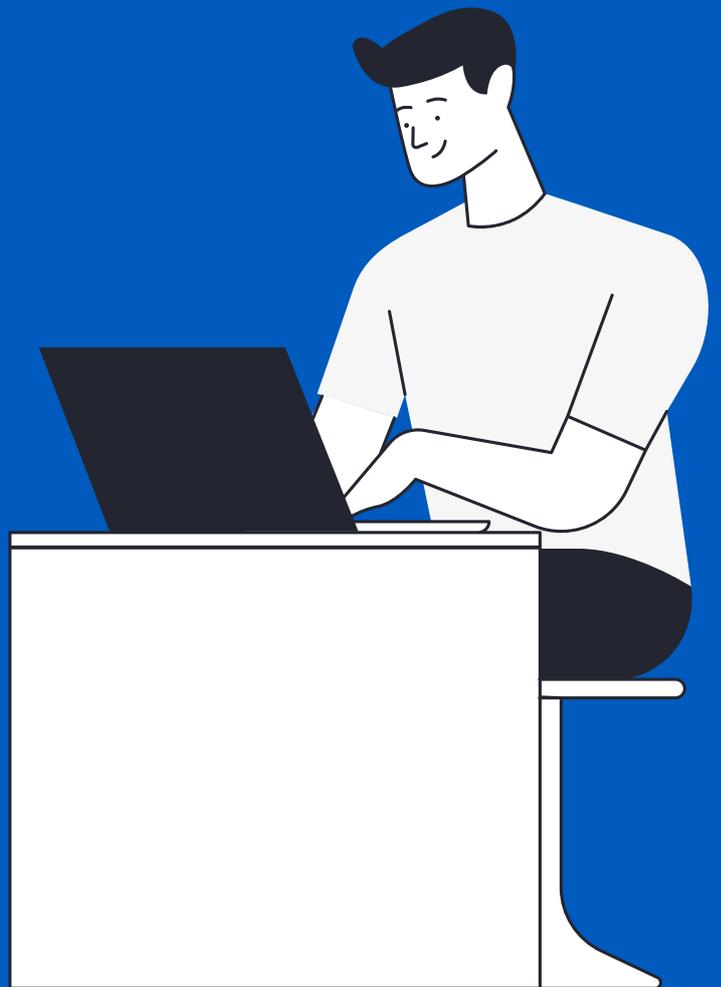


The Ultimate Goal Setting Checklist

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— ...



Do you set the same New Year's resolutions every year? Do you recommit to the same goal, promising yourself that you'll finally finish it?

If you answered yes, know that you're not alone. Many people are stuck in the same cycle of setting goals, forgetting about them or failing to complete them, and then setting the same goals again with a renewed (but temporary) resolve to meet those goals.

But you can break the cycle. Here's a checklist to learn about the goal-setting process and get the most out of your business, your team, and yourself.

What is goal setting?

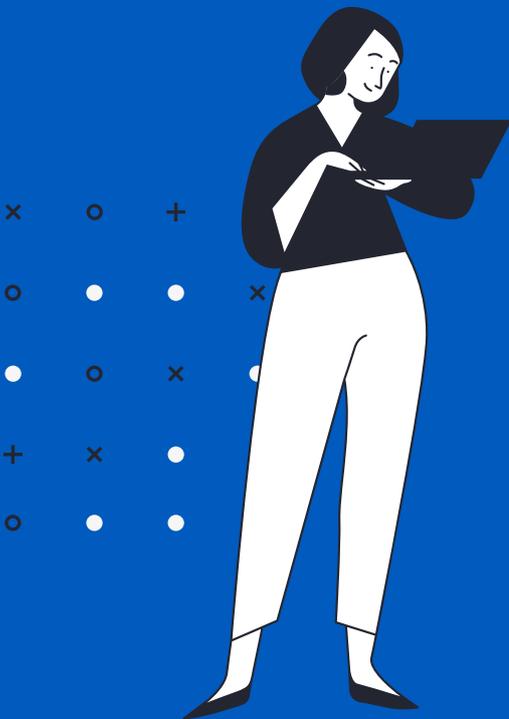
Some people may have trouble sticking to goals because they don't distinguish their goals from more casual, everyday self-improvement efforts.

Just because you decide to start running every day doesn't necessarily make that a conscious goal. So let's revisit what goal setting means.

Goal setting is a purposeful and explicit process that starts with identifying a new objective, skill, or project you want to achieve.

Then, you make a plan for achieving it, and you work to complete it.

Instead of just running with no particular purpose, a true goal would be more along the lines of starting a training program to complete a specific race, say a Thanksgiving Day half marathon, which requires much more careful planning, motivation, and discipline.



Why is goal setting important?

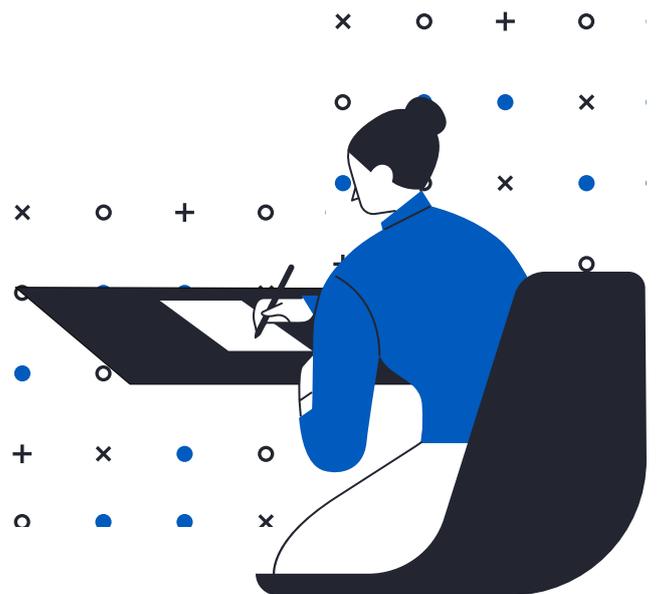
When you set goals, you take control of your life's— or your work's—direction.

Goals provide you with focus. The decisions you make and the actions you take should bring you closer to achieving those goals.

Setting goals keeps you moving, increases your happiness, and significantly benefits your organization.

When you set goals, you create a vision of what your life or your business could look like.

Then you start pushing yourself and your team to get the best results possible.



What is goal-setting theory?

Proposed by industrial-organizational psychologist Edwin Locke, goal-setting theory recommends how to set the most effective kinds of goals.

Locke found that employees perform better and are more motivated to complete goals if those goals are difficult.

In other words, you can't cheat. The easier the goal, the less you'll work to achieve it.

If you set hard (but not impossible) goals, you'll actually put in the highest level of effort.

This article goes into detail on the other important aspects of Locke's theory, like setting realistic goals and being self-motivated.

Keep reading to get the most out of your personal goals or have your employees be effective when setting their own.



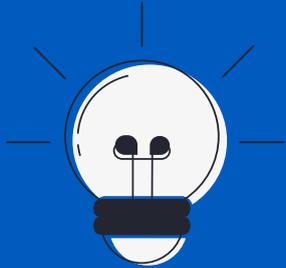
How to set goals in 7 Steps

If goals are so important, why do we fail to achieve them? Because we don't plan the steps to get there.

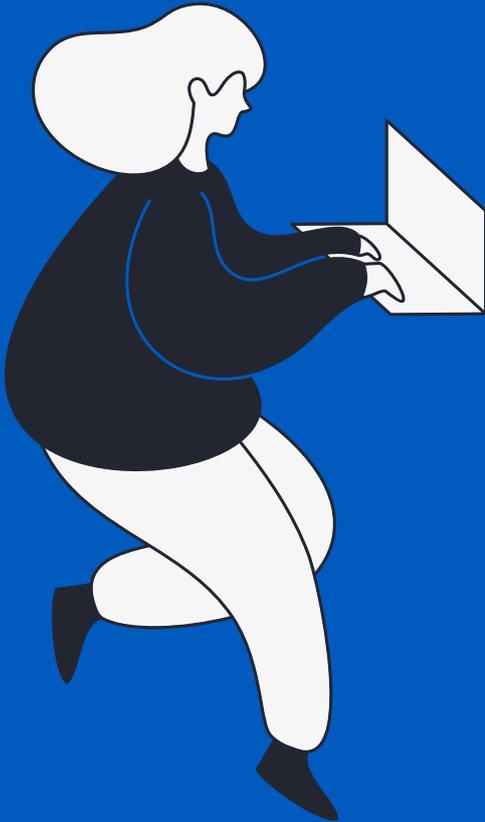
A goal-setting process forces you to think about the journey (in other words, how you're going to complete your tasks) instead of just the end destination.

Take a look at the steps below to get started.





1. Think about the results you want to see

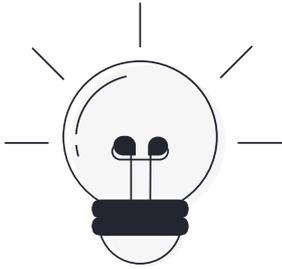


Before you set a goal, take a closer look at what you're trying to achieve and ask yourself the following questions:

- Is this goal something you truly want?
- Is it important enough to pour hours of time and effort into it?
- If you're not willing to put in the time, it may not be worth pursuing.

If you create a long list of goals to pursue all at the same time, you may have a difficult time achieving any of them.

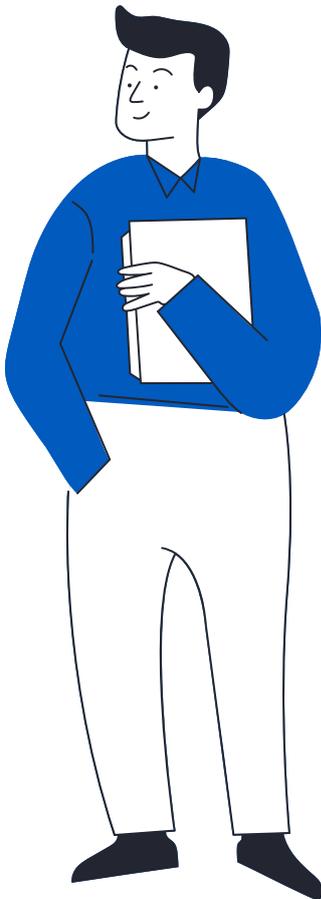
Instead, use the questions above to determine which goals matter the most to you right now, and then focus on those few.



2. Create SMART goals

Once you've zeroed in on what you actually want, ensure your goal meets the SMART criteria:

- **Specific**
- **Measurable**
- **Attainable**
- **Realistic**
- **Time-bound**

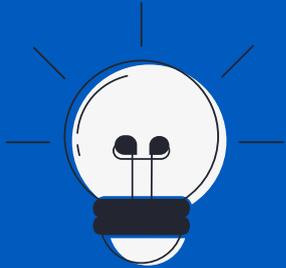


The most important part of SMART goal setting is to make your goal specific so you can clearly track your progress and know whether you met the goal.

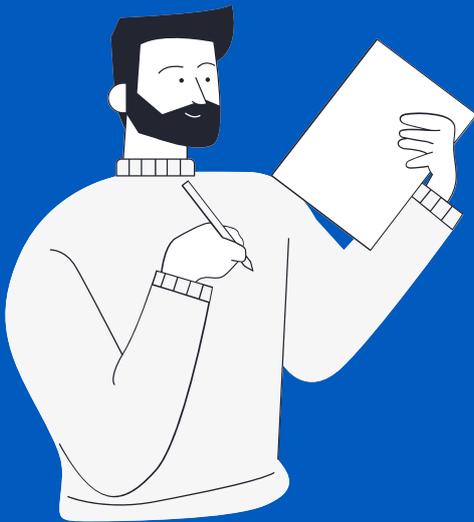
The more specific you can be with your goal, the higher the chance you'll complete it.

For example, many people set goals to lose weight, but they don't always decide how much weight they want to lose and when they want to accomplish this goal.

A specific goal would be "I want to lose 25 pounds by the Fourth of July." This goal provides an exact amount of weight to lose and an end date to do it by.



3. Write your goals down

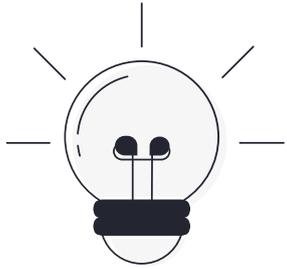


When you write your goals down, they become real and tangible instead of a vague idea that resides only in your mind.

Once you've written your goals down, keep them somewhere visible—put personal goals up on your mirror or near your computer screen, put team goals up on the walls next to everyone's desks, and include company goals in internal presentations.

This tactic reminds you to keep working on your goals daily.

As you're writing down your goals, use a positive tone so you stay excited about completing them.



4. Create an action plan

Many people decide on a goal but never create an action plan to determine how exactly they will meet that goal.

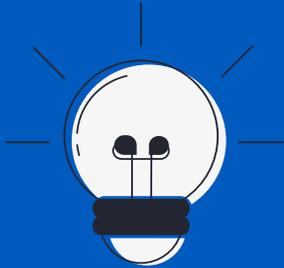
Your action plan should include the overall goal you're trying to meet and all the steps you need to take to get there.

Don't be afraid to get creative with your action plan. Go back to your elementary school days, and get creative.

Write out your goal using crayons, markers, or colored pencils, for example.

According to Forbes, creating an action plan this way activates a different part of your brain and cements the goals in your mind.





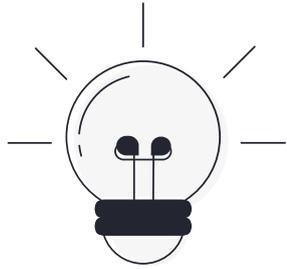
5. Create a timeline

As part of your action plan, use a timeline maker to help visualize roles, tasks, milestones, and deadlines to achieve your goal.

Once you've set those dates, try to stick to them as closely as possible.

A timeline creates a sense of urgency, which in turn motivates you to stay on schedule and finish your goal.



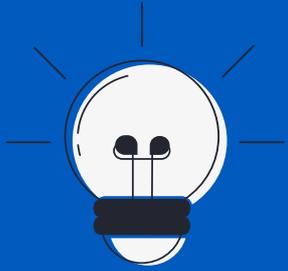


6. Take action

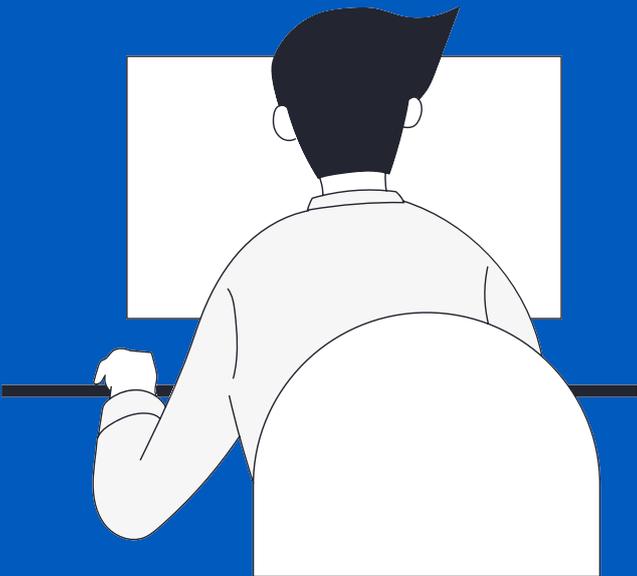
Now that you've planned everything out, it's time to take action. You didn't go through all that work just to forget about your goal.

Every step that you take should lead to another until you finish your goal.





7. Re-evaluate and assess your progress



You need to keep your motivation strong to complete your goal.

Consider scheduling a weekly evaluation, which could include measuring your progress and checking your schedule.

Once you see how close the finish line is, you'll feel more motivated to push through to the end.

If you're a little behind schedule, make necessary adjustments and keep going.

Start Setting Goals!

The process of setting goals makes you succeed faster and more efficiently. It can fuel your ambition and help you achieve tangible results. A goal-setting process will help you determine how to set goals that are specific, timely, and realistic.



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