

# Starting with goals and objectives

## Introduction

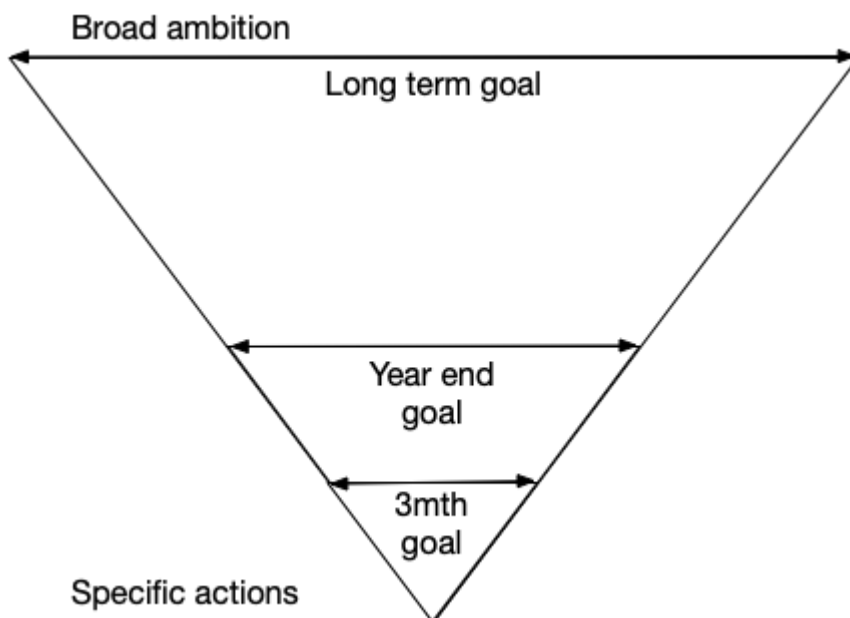
Keeping busy makes everyone feel good but to be meaningful and valuable busy'ness needs to be directed towards some bigger goals - that is the nature of business. Making money is necessary but it is not enough.

Making money - whether revenue or profit - creates a feedback loop that tells us the work has value and helps decide and direct work but making money is a hygiene factor.

Necessary but not sufficient. And when we don't make enough money to cover our needs - that too is information: that is the bad news that the market, society, customers, don't value what we do enough to make it worthwhile.

Meaningful goals are big: they have big impact and are usually broad. Such goals can be very motivating. But working across a big front is inefficient. The broader the front the higher the costs and the slower the progress. It is normally better to decompose work into smaller pieces. This allows more rapid progress on a narrow front.

One might characterise this as "Think globally, act locally", or perhaps "Think long term, act now."



Broad ambitions to specific actions

## Check lists

1. Do you have an objective for the next 3 months?
2. Do you have an goal for the next year?
3. Do you have a goal for the longer term? e.g. next 5 years
4. Which of these goals would you describe as your product goal? Which, if any, would you describe as your mission, north star or true north?

5. Are your goals stand-alone or do they contribute to other, even broader, goals? e.g. company strategy, bigger mission
6. What is your timeline for reviewing and resetting goals?
7. Are your goals central are your goals to work planning? e.g. sprint planning

## Actions

### Goals and objectives

#### Questions 1, 2 and 3

If you answered "No" to any of **questions 1, 2 and 3** then work to create the missing goal. For question #1 "Do backlog items" is not sufficient - there should be some overall objective for the coming quarter.

For questions #2 and #3 having work complete and the initiative closed is an acceptable goal, e.g "Finish work within 3 quarters of today with all closure and handover tasks. "

If the short, medium and long term time periods of quarter (3 months), year and 5-years are not suitable for your case these can be changed to 3 periods (immediate, medium and long) which are more suitable for you.

#### Questions 4 and 5

For **Q4** it is not expected that you have any of these goals. But if the terminology is used it should align with the quarter, year and 5 year goals. Most likely the long term, 5 year, goal will double as a product goal, mission or north star.

**Q5** aims to understand what other goals might have a bearing on work. If your organisation defines and uses any other goals, e.g. corporate mission, then it should be recognised and situated with reference to the now, medium and long term goals here. For example, if the company aims to be cash positive in 3 years time then this would represent an additional goal between the medium (year) and long term (5 years).

It is important to understand what other, potentially competing goals, might be in play at the same time. Once you have identified the different goals in play list them on a single sheet of paper.

For example, a virtual reality start-up might have use the following

**5 year product goal:** Deliver a VR toolkit allowing immersive environments to be created within weeks

**1 year goal:** deliver VR situation room system to Unified First Responders London

**3 month objective:** Demonstrate situation room model without data feeds to client

- Demonstration system contains mock data feeds for at least 5 elements
- At least 6 client end users can simultaneously enter the situation room, see data feeds and interact with controls and each other

- Initial training simulation (to be developed later) has been agreed with client and lead stakeholders identified

## Questions 6 and 7

Goals and objectives are deliberately kept free of actions so that outcomes are not confused with means. As well as being clear on goals it is important to know the dates associated with goals, not just deadline but other important dates, e.g. review dates and reset dates.

**Q6** aims to identify these dates. If you do not have a timeline for the coming year then create one. For each of the goals and objectives you have identified identify the target date for completion. Identify too whether the date is flexible or not. Also identify any other important dates. Particular attention should be paid to the next year, dates for goal completion, review and new goal setting should be listed. Beyond the next year such detail is not necessary.

As you reach each of these dates update the timeline to reflect the new time horizon, e.g. at the end of this quarter fill in the date for the future fourth quarter that now falls within the next year.

(Timelines and examples will be covered in another sheet.)

If your answer to **Q7** is "no" then attention needs to be given to how goals will be delivered. The simplest way to do this is to revise the agenda for planning meetings to put goals at the centre of planning.

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