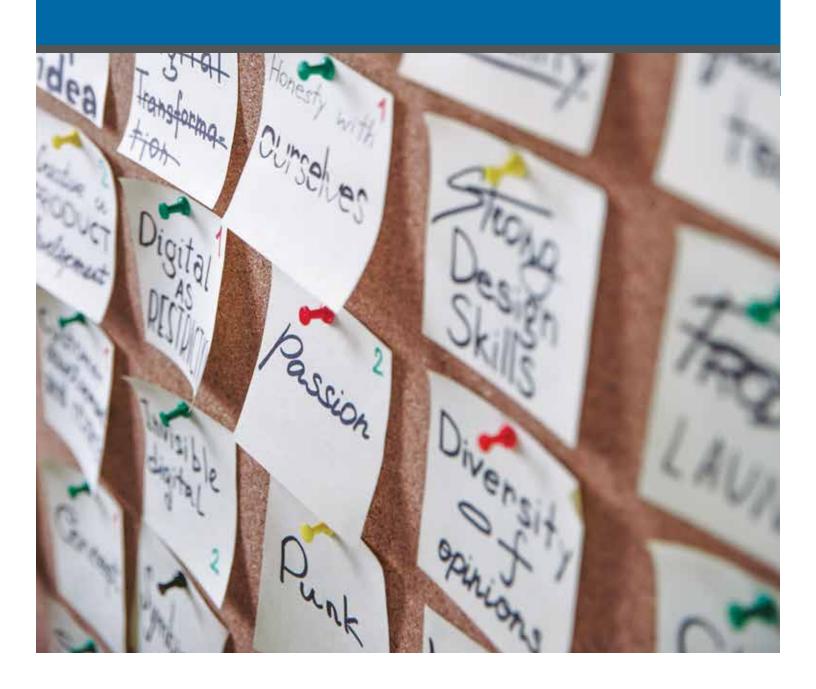# PROFESSIONAL GOAL SETTING
Guidelines & Examples

Professional Goal Setting — Guidelines & Examples

If you want to develop your career faster, learn new skills, and earn more money — you need professional goals. While this is pretty standard advice, not many professionals act on it — even when there is hard evidence to back it up. Those who write down and create a plan for achieving goals, achieve them at double the rate of those who do not. But how and where do you get started?

In this special report, we've collected the best of Business Management Daily's advice on setting personal professional goals no matter what position or field you are in. Whether you're a small business, Fortune 500 company, in-person, remote, or hybrid — we've got the insight you need.

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A guide to setting professional goals that will drive success

If you want to develop your career faster, learn new skills, and earn more money — you need professional goals. While this is pretty standard advice, not many professionals act on it — even when there is hard evidence to back it up.

Dr. Gail Matthews of the Dominican University of California [conducted a study](#) looking at how committing to written career goals affects goal achievement and overall success in one's professional life. The study featured over 267 professionals from various networks, businesses, and organizations throughout the US and overseas.

The participants who **wrote down achievable goals and followed up on their action plans had a more than 70% success rate.** For the participants that **didn't write down any goals**, the success rate **fell to 35%.** The study also found that you're 76% more likely to achieve your personal goals if you include an action plan and some form of accountability (such as regularly reporting to a friend or coworker on the status of your goals).

Most employees already have to set quarterly or annual goals, not to mention sit through regular goal-setting sessions — so why not strive to make the most out of them?

It's clear that setting smart goals can help you streamline your progress down your chosen career path, so learning how to set attainable goals is an extremely valuable skill. That's why I put together this guide that will teach you how to set professional goals that will help you take your career to the next level.

Why are professional goals important?

There are many reasons why you should set professional development goals, including some that may not be directly apparent. For instance, forming professional goals is a lifesaver whenever you're **prepping for a job interview.**

Why is that?

It's because setting professional goals will help you place all your work experience into perspective. Establishing a long-term career goal will help you build a narrative that all your past accomplishments were building toward your future goal. If that's a tad unclear, here's an example to consider.

Let's say you look at all your past experiences at your organization, including your time running social media campaigns, working with various team members, and handling project management. You then decide your long-term goal is to transition into a leadership role at your company. To back that up, you cite your experience with all the above as stepping stones toward landing a leadership position.

That's a great way to enhance your value proposition, as well as present a confident vision for your career development — both of which are fantastic for answering interview questions without an ounce of hesitation. That will reflect far better on your professional skills than framing random accomplishments and not having a direction for the interview.

Achieving career milestones with short-term goals and long-term goals

Professional goals can be both short-term and long-term, and you should use a combination of both if you want to achieve key milestones in your career. Otherwise, you could get stuck in your current role for too long, which can cause burnout.

Without writing out specific goals, it can make career advancement seem too daunting or unattainable. Procrastination also has a habit of setting in whenever actionable career goals are absent.

Maybe your next career step involves learning a complex new skill, such as a programming language. In that case, your best option is to combine short-term goals with an ultimate long-term goal.

Your long-term goal is to master a new programming language like C++ or SQL. That will take a while, which is why it's your future goal. Along the way, you knock out various short-term goals that inch you closer toward your ultimate goal.

An example of a short-term goal would be to get the command-line basics down. It's a simple task that you could realistically take on in a few days, and it will kickstart your journey toward mastering the language.

You should also write out a timeframe for each task to hold yourself accountable. Implementing this technique of small goals toward a larger one is a great way to take on challenging goals and remedy procrastination.

Understanding the SMART goals method

By now, you may be wondering how you can come up with your own professional goals. After all, goals don't write themselves, and it can be challenging to come up with some. That's especially true if you aren't sure which direction you want to take with your career.

Bear in mind that there's no right or wrong way to develop goals, but a framework is always useful for sparking ideas — which is where the SMART goals method comes into the picture.

What's that?

SMART is an acronym where each letter represents a step that helps you set career goals. Here's what each letter means:

S for specific

It's crucial to set very specific goals instead of staying vague. That's because the more specific you get with a goal, the more actionable it becomes.

To see why this is, let's consider an example. Here's a vague goal:

- *To grow my personal brand and sell more online courses.*

While it does state a goal, it doesn't provide much information beyond that. How do you plan on selling more online courses and growing your brand? How long are you giving yourself to do it? This goal leaves too much on the table because it isn't specific enough.

Here's an improved version of the same goal:

- *To increase the total number of followers on social media by 10% in six months, as well as launch an SEO/content marketing campaign to see a 5% increase in online course signup during the same timeframe.*

As you can see, this goal is far more actionable **due to how specific it is.** You now have target numbers to hit as well as a timeline to follow, which will make it easier to come up with smaller goals along the way.

M for measurable

Next, your goals need to be measurable in that you have a tangible way to keep track of your progress. That doesn't mean that you need fancy analytics software, either. It can be as simple as keeping a journal to keep track of your goal progress.

Other techniques include:

- Creating a to-do list and checking off items as you go.[Text Wrapping Break]
- Using apps that provide analytics related to your goals.[Text Wrapping Break]
- Holding regular meetings with coworkers to go over your progress.

As long as you have a way to keep track of your hard work, you've taken care of this step.

A for attainable

If your goal is to become fluent in Russian in a single day, you haven't set an attainable goal. While that's an extreme example, people unintentionally set impossible goals all the time. What's worse is that unattainable goals can negatively affect your morale, especially if you aren't aware that the goal is impossible.

To avoid this, make sure that your goal is realistic and attainable. Your goals should always motivate and inspire you, not discourage or question your competency.

R for relevant

If you work in PR but set a goal to become a professional broadcaster, your goal isn't relevant to your current career path. You should always ensure that your goals pertain to your current work environment and will provide value to you.

If the only goals that motivate you are in another field or industry, it might be time for a career change.

T for time-bound

Last but not least, your goals need to have a clear timeframe in mind. If the clock isn't constantly ticking down, you likely won't have the motivation to act on your goals.

After all, why not just do it tomorrow if there's no deadline set? You've got all the time in the world.

Except you don't, or shouldn't if you want to achieve your goal. That's the main reason every goal needs a clear timeframe to keep a fire lit under you to get things

done. Not only that, but setting time-bound goals will help you improve your overall time management skills.

Tips for setting professional goals

Are you still drawing a blank on which professional goals to set for your personal development? If so, these examples of professional goals should help spark your creativity. Feel free to use them as templates to form goals for your own business or professional network.

Understand your team's structure

In order to follow through with a work goal, you need to have a flawless understanding of your team's dynamics. That will help you come up with productive goals that add value to the organization.

Understanding team structure means knowing all your teams' and departments' functions and interrelationships.

Stepping back to take in the big picture can help you identify areas for improvement, such as a lack of communication going on between departments. That's a surefire way to develop actionable goals that will improve communication skills and productivity.

Focus on factors you can control

There's no point in setting goals related to factors that you can't control. As an example, you can't set a goal to have flawless weather on the day of a business event — as that's out of your control.

Instead, set goals around the things that you can control, such as the quality of the business event you put on.

For all the factors that you can't control, **come up with a contingency plan.** Going with the business event example, you could reserve an indoor venue should the weather turn sour.

Know what success looks like

An excellent way to come up with professional goals is to draw inspiration from others that have succeeded. There is no shortage of professional development [success stories](#) online, and they can give you examples of successful goal setting.

Just as a musician cites influences in developing their style, you can too for how you develop professional goals.

Don't be afraid to ask for support

The weight of the entire organization isn't on your shoulders, nor should it be. After all, an organization consists of lots of different people, not just one. As such, it's perfectly acceptable to ask for support when coming up with professional goals.

In fact, it's a much better idea to ask for help instead of coming up with a subpar goal that adds no value.

Think about it as if you're a professional athlete. You're the star performer, but you don't have to do it alone. Just as every athlete has a team and a coach, you have mentors, bosses, and coworkers who can help you develop ideas for goals.

Concluding thoughts: Professional goals

Goal setting is an essential component of a successful professional life and for life in general.

Being able to harness the power of setting goals will help you succeed more in your life.

Professional goals can help you advance your career, succeed in job interviews, and grow your business. Without goals, it's too easy to become complacent with your routine and not push yourself.

Goals serve as a way to motivate yourself to keep moving forward, which is why they're so valuable.

I hope this guide helped you realize the importance of setting professional goals, as well as how to set valuable goals of your own. Did I miss anything? Let me know in the comments below.

9 professional goals examples to spark your creativity

Has development in your professional life become increasingly stagnant? Do you feel as if you're stuck in your current role with no conceivable way out? If so, the best way to remedy that is to set actionable professional development goals that you stick to like glue. As long as your goals are realistic and measurable, they will help you streamline your career development.

How's that?

It's because career goals will act as the catalyst that keeps you motivated to take continued action. A time-bound goal will help you stay consistent so you can achieve key milestones for your professional and personal development.

For instance, say that you want to advance to a leadership position at your company. If you don't set any goals, it will likely remain a pipedream that you seldom work at due to the lack of focus. If you take the time to set and write smart goals, you'll have something tangible to help make your vision a reality. Your goals will act as 'templates for success' in your pursuit of a leadership role.

In fact, people who write down their goals are [20% more likely to succeed](#) than those who do not.

But what types of professional goals should you set?

It will depend on what you want to achieve in your professional career, which will vary heavily from person to person. If you're having difficulty coming up with any goals, you've come to the right place. I've put together nine professional goals examples categorized by the department they relate to the most to help get your creative juices flowing.

Professional goals: What's in it for you?

If you've never set professional goals for work before, you may wonder why you should go to the trouble of setting some. If you're all about WIIFY (what's in it for you), then these clear benefits should change your mind on the importance of setting achievable goals.

You get to assign purpose to your work

Do you feel like you're just going through the motions at work, only showing up to collect your paycheck? If so, your work lacks purpose and meaning, which isn't good for your morale or productivity.

By setting short-term and long-term career goals, your work will suddenly have a purpose - which can supercharge your motivation. Instead of working just to work, you'll be **actively working toward your vision for a better future**. That will enable you to define what work is on your own terms instead of always answering others.

You'll discover areas for improvement

If you never take a look at your career in the mirror, you'll never realize where you can improve. As an example, say that you're not the best public speaker in the world. In fact, you're downright *terrified* of it.

By coming to terms with that, you can set a goal to improve your public speaking skills. If you stick to it and make a serious effort to improve it, you'll face your fear, and it won't be a big deal anymore. You may even take a liking to it and decide to start giving seminars on the side.

The point is that setting goals will help you face your fears and improve on your weaknesses.

Increased career satisfaction

This benefit builds on the other two. Since your work now has a purpose, and you've learned new skills and improved weaknesses, you'll be a more fulfilled professional. Not only will your work have meaning, but you'll also have chosen the career path you wanted instead of letting the company choose one for you.

That leads to increased satisfaction with your career trajectory and professional life as a whole, which is a big plus.

9 professional goals examples categorized by department

Now that you know how essential it is to set career goals, it's time to see some professional goals examples to help you brainstorm some of your own.

For your convenience, I've categorized the goals by department so you can quickly skip to the goals that pertain to you the most.

Examples of professional goals for sales and marketing

Sales and marketing are both fast-paced departments that are constantly evolving and changing. As such, continuing your education is a must.

The last thing you want is to realize that you only know outdated tools and tactics, so you'll need to set short-term goals and long-term goals to continue your development. Here are some specific goals that will help you improve your sales and marketing skills.

#1: Read more sales and marketing books

In today's age, many professionals overlook the power of books in favor of videos, webinars, and social media.

Yet, books are still one of the best ways to:

- Learn new skills
- Discover new insights and sales techniques
- Improve time management skills
- Learn the success secrets of industry gurus

There's no shortage of [sales books online](#), and Amazon is a great place to start.

There are also a few ways that you can set this goal, but it's essential to be as specific as possible.

For example, your goal could be to read 20 sales and marketing books by the end of the year. Or you could focus on only reading one book but strive to get the absolute most out of it. Books that teach new professional skills, such as learning a software tool or selling technique, are the best candidates for this type of goal.

#2: Start a blog to develop your brand

Do you want to know a surefire way to develop your professional network and improve your writing skills?

Start a blog!

It doesn't have to relate to your current position, either. You can start a blog simply to grow your personal brand and expand your network.

It's always best to write about what you know so that you can start a blog covering various sales/marketing techniques.

Or, if your goal is to broaden your horizons, you could start a blog about one of your other interests, such as music or hiking.

There are also plenty of ways you can monetize your blog to earn some income on the side. Examples include affiliate marketing, content marketing, and SEO (search engine optimization). Not only will these help you earn extra money, but they'll improve your understanding of marketing as a whole.

#3: Learn new tools

The sales and marketing world has more software tools and applications than you can imagine.

That includes CRMs, CMSs, APIs, SaaS, ADs, CVSs, and hundreds of other acronyms.

If you're in sales and marketing, it's likely that there are a few tools you could benefit from learning.

In some cases, specific tools even act as stepping stones to new positions. As an example, you won't be able to land certain sales positions if you don't know how to use the CRM software [Salesforce](#).

If you want to be bold, you could even learn a programming language to broaden your skillset and career opportunities.

Professional goals examples for PR and HR employees

If you work in PR or HR, you need razor-sharp communication skills, and you need to know how to work well with team members. As a result, your professional and personal goals need to reflect that.

#4: Work on public speaking

Public speaking skills are invaluable for PR and HR positions, whether you're talking to the press or conducting a job interview.

To improve your public speaking competency, you can:

- Study successful public speakers
- Rehearse in front of friends and family
- Learn to control your breath and voice
- Record your speeches and critique them

To make the goal actionable, you must set a time frame. A good example would be to improve your public speaking skills within six months.

#5: Improve communication skills

This goal refers to both verbal, nonverbal, and written communication - so it encompasses a lot.

PR and HR are all about maintaining quality communication with the press and the internal employees at your company.

Writing-wise, performance reviews, press releases, and company policies are all examples of content you'll need to write at work.

Job interviews also require flawless verbal and nonverbal communication.

Improving these skills will make it easier to advance your career and ensure things run smoothly at your organization.

 #6: Expand your professional network

It's always beneficial to add to your professional network, regardless of which department or industry.

Sales and marketing professionals are always looking for ways to expand their networks, as it's part of their jobs.

PR and HR professionals, on the other hand, don't have as much upfront need to network with others. Yet, expanding your network is still something you should do, even if it takes some additional hard work.

The more professionals you know, the more options and leverage you'll have as an employee. For example, if you've rubbed elbows with executives from another company, you might end up switching jobs and making more money as a result.

Here are some ways you can expand your network without making it your full-time job:

- Attend local conferences/webinars/seminars
- Network with others through LinkedIn
- Schedule a call with an expert in your field

These are all candid ways you can add to your network without completely disrupting your work-life balance.

Professional goals examples for IT employees

IT departments are integral to the function of any organization. Employees in this field need to update their skills frequently in order to stay relevant, so proper goal-setting is a necessity.

#7: Sign up for online courses

There are thousands of IT online courses you can take taught by industry gurus, and they're extremely valuable.

Yet, you can't sign up for a course and then abandon it without completing 100% of the curriculum — so make sure that you only sign up for courses that you know you'll finish.

You should also make sure that the course relates to your position and will teach you something valuable that will help advance your career.

An example would be taking an online course that teaches web development, completing it, and then receiving a professional certificate that you can use on your resume.

Taking and completing online courses will let employers know that you're serious about IT and are constantly furthering your education.

#8: Start your own business

This may seem ambitious, but starting a business in today's age is easier than ever. It will also help you further your IT/development skills by creating a website that offers products and services.

Options for businesses that you can start include:

- Dropshipping (selling a third-party's products through a website)
- IT Consulting (selling your expertise as a mentor to young IT professionals)
- Affiliate marketing (promoting a company's products through a website or blog)

Those are three options that take next to no capital to get started, and they can earn you extra income/further your IT education.

#9: Improve your time management skills

Last but not least, mastering time management is an incredible goal to set for any department, and IT is no exception.

IT projects often have steep deadlines that have to go off without a hitch.

That's why you'll benefit from citing time management as one of your primary professional goals.

There are lots of ways you can improve your time management. Software tools can help, but often the best solution is to start writing detailed work schedules and sticking to them.

Final thoughts: Professional goals examples

Professional goals are necessary to advance your career, learn new skills, and stay relevant within your industry.

I hope that these professional goals examples have sparked some goal ideas of your own.

Career goals don't have to be overly complicated, either. All you need is a target to focus your efforts on during a given timeframe, and you're good to go.

Did I miss any of your favorite professional goals? Let me know in the comments below.