

Take Charge of Your Life

It is important to have goals because they are good for your physical and mental health. You can have goals for all areas of your life. Here are a few ideas:

Career	Learning
Clubs	Money
Community	Politics
Contribution	Professional
Emotional	Reading
Family	Relationships
Health	Service
Home	Spiritual
Interests	Travel

What Makes an Effective Goal?

Not all goals are motivating. If a goal is too vague, hard to measure, or impossible to achieve, it will lack effectiveness and ultimately be a wasted exercise. Goal statements should be:

- Stated with action verbs
- Specific
- Measurable
- Challenging
- Written down, with completion dates

Effective goals have *all five* ingredients.

The 80/20 Rule

The 80/20 Rule (also known as Pareto's Principle) says that 20% of what we do produces 80% of the results. Here are a few examples:

- 20% of the area in your house requires 80% of the cleaning.
- 20% of the stocks in an investor's portfolio produce 80% of the results.
- 20% of the kids in a class cause 80% of the problems.
- 20% of the books in a bookstore account for 80% of the sales.

You can probably think of a few examples of your own. Note them here:

It's important to remind yourself not to get bogged down on low-value activities, but to stay focused on the high-value 20%.

High-Payoff Planning

High-payoff (HIPO) time is the 20% that produces the desired results. Low-payoff (LOPO) time is the 80% that produces only 20% of the results. The challenge is to *find the HIPO tasks and work on those first*.

The HIPO strategies:

- Setting a deadline increases the chances that you will accomplish a task.
- Setting a specific time to do something increases the chances that you will accomplish it.
- Divide and conquer: Break a task into smaller pieces and it becomes easier to complete.
- Motivate yourself by listing the benefits of completing a task.
- Motivate yourself in another way by rewarding yourself for completing a task.

The LOPO strategies:

- Don't do it at all.
- Do it later.
- Do it with minimum time investment or at a lower standard.

Think of your own life. Can you identify five high-payoff and five low-payoff targets and the activities that contribute directly to each?

Identifying and writing down these items increases the chances that they will be accomplished.

Force Field Analysis

For every goal that you set, there are conditions (forces) that *encourage* its completion. There are also conditions that *discourage* its completion.

The Force Field Analysis process helps you identify two kinds of forces: (1) the forces that are pushing *with* you as you work toward your goal (encouraging forces), and (2) the forces that are pushing *against* you (discouraging forces).

The process of force field analysis (developed by scientist Kurt Lewin) is based on a law of physics that says that when two equal but opposite forces push against one another, there is no movement.

Why is this important to a person working toward a goal? Because a similar dynamic can prevent you from achieving your goal.

The idea here is to *avoid paralysis* and encourage momentum by increasing positive (encouraging) forces and decreasing negative (discouraging) forces. For example:

Goal: Run in a marathon this year.

Discouraging forces:

- I haven't exercised regularly for the past five years.
- I tend to start projects and then get bored quickly.
- I live in the Midwest and weather can be a problem.

Encouraging forces:

- I am in good health.
- My neighbor is a runner and has encouraged me to take up the sport.
- My family thinks this is a good idea.

After identifying as many encouraging as discouraging forces, you can map a strategy to build on your strengths—the forces in your favor—and reduce the barriers.

I encourage you to choose a goal of your own and make a list of the encouraging and discouraging forces. This will help you develop an action plan and increase your chances of success.

Your Action Plan

Once you have identified the forces that both favor and discourage the achievement of your goal, it's time to make an action plan. Here is an example:

Force: I haven't exercised regularly for the past five years.

Actions I can take:

1. Start slowly.
2. Map out a plan where I start with a 20-minute walk this Saturday morning.
3. Buy a running magazine.
4. Visit a few running web sites.
5. Straighten up the room where my exercise bike has been serving as a clothes rack. Clear away the junk and move a TV in to encourage me to use the bike every other morning.

Who can help me:

1. My neighbor, the runner.
2. My family members will encourage me. I will tell them that I need this.
3. The woman in the next cubicle started an exercise program last year.

Now it's your turn. Just fill in the blanks.

Force:

Actions I can take:

- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
-

Who can help me:

- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
-