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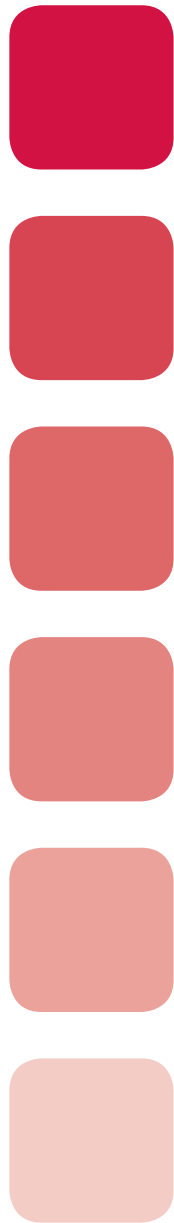
Workforce Development 'TIPS'

Theory **I**nto **P**ractice **S**trategies

A Resource Kit for the
Alcohol and Other Drugs Field

5

GOAL SETTING

Workforce Development 'TIPS'

Theory **I**nto **P**ractice **S**trategies

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GOAL SETTING

ABOUT THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TIPS RESOURCE KIT

This Resource Kit aims to provide straightforward and practical guidance, tools and resources to support workforce development activities and initiatives in the Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) field.

The Resource Kit comprises 14 chapters: an introduction to workforce development and 13 workforce development topics relevant to the AOD field. Each chapter contains evidence-based strategies to address a particular workforce development issue, as well as resources and tools that can be used to implement the strategies. Each chapter can be treated as a stand alone section, however, as workforce development topics are inherently interrelated, links between chapters are identified throughout the Kit.

Goal Setting is the 5th chapter in the Resource Kit.

CHAPTER

Acknowledgements

GOAL SETTING

Natalie Skinner

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Overview

Goal setting is a valuable technique to support the effective performance of individual alcohol and other drug (AOD) workers and teams.

Goals appear in various forms in the workplace, including:

- Project deadlines and outcomes (products, deliverables)
- Best practice or performance standards
- Clinical guidelines for work practice (e.g., treatment guidelines).

Features of effective goal setting

Setting goals and objectives alone is not likely to enhance motivation or improve performance. In order for goal setting to be most effective, six strategies are recommended:

1. Set specific and challenging goals and objectives
2. Build and support workers' commitment to achieving the goal and objectives
3. Provide feedback on achievement of shorter-term objectives, as well as final goal achievement
4. Provide rewards and recognition for achieving shorter-term objectives and final goal achievement
5. Ensure sufficient resources and support are available
6. Ensure workers have the appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities required to achieve the goal and objectives.

The importance of a collaborative approach to goal setting

Approaching goal setting as a collaborative activity between workers and managers / supervisors can strengthen commitment and motivation.

Goals and objectives assigned by others (e.g., a supervisor) can sustain high commitment when:

- The individual assigning the goal is perceived to be trustworthy, knowledgeable and to have legitimate authority
- A rationale or explanation for the goal is provided
- Reward and recognition is provided for achievement of goals and objectives
- Support and encouragement are provided.

Troubleshooting

Setting goals for client outcomes

Improved client outcomes are a central goal for treatment providers in the AOD field. However, the relationship between the work practices of an individual or work team and client outcomes is often complicated, and can be difficult to assess fairly and accurately.

Give careful consideration to goal setting for client outcomes. The key principles of setting specific (measurable) goals that are challenging (but realistic) are particularly important. Where possible, negotiating with individual workers and teams to identify appropriate and realistic goals is also recommended.

The quantity / quality dilemma

A common goal setting dilemma is distinguishing between goals focused on the quantity of work (i.e., frequency of a task / behaviour performed) and goals focused on the quality of work (i.e., standard of work that reflects "best practice").

Effective goals include targets for *both* the quantity and quality of performance. If goal setting is focused only on quantity the quality of a worker's performance may suffer. The reverse is also likely to occur – goals that focus only on quality are likely to result in a decrease in the quantity of a worker's output.

Constructive responses to difficulties

Goal setting doesn't guarantee successful or satisfactory performance. Failure to achieve a goal is likely to result from a combination of factors related to:

- The work environment (e.g., availability of feedback and support)
- The individual worker or team (e.g., sufficient knowledge / skill)
- The goal itself (e.g., unrealistic expectations).

Constructive responses to difficulties with goal achievement include:

- Re-evaluating the goal (are the timeframes, outcomes etc. realistic?)
- Reviewing the supports and resources available (are they sufficient?)
- Assessing the strategies and techniques workers / teams are using to achieve the goal (are they appropriate, efficient, effective?)
- Considering the need for further professional development for workers and / or teams (do workers have sufficient knowledge, skill and confidence?).

Goal setting to address workforce development challenges

Used effectively, goal setting can be used to address a range of workforce development challenges such as organisational change, worker performance, and teamwork. The emphasis for effective goal setting is to:

(1) Set challenging but realistic goals, and

(2) Ensure feedback, support and rewards during the process of striving toward a goal.

Introduction

This chapter examines goal setting as a technique to support the effective performance of individual AOD workers and teams. Goal setting is a technique familiar to many AOD workers as a counselling technique. What is sometimes overlooked, however, is the value of goal setting as a motivational tool for workers themselves. In reality, goals appear in various forms within AOD work, including:

- Project deadlines and outcomes (products, deliverables)
- Targets for client loads
- Best practice or performance standards.

This chapter describes the most effective approach to managing work practice goals to support workers' motivation and capacity to perform effectively.

The language of goal setting: Goals and objectives

Goals are targets. They define the quantity and quality of work to be achieved. They are often placed within a particular timeframe. It is recommended that both longer-term goals and shorter-term objectives are used for goal setting.

The terms used in goal setting can vary considerably. Terms such as aims, goals and objectives are commonly used, however their precise meaning often differs according to the context (i.e., organisation, funding body, educational institution). In this chapter we use two terms:

- **Goals** – the overall desired long-term outcomes; in general, what the individual / team is aiming to achieve or change in their work
- **Objectives** – more specific shorter-term actions, behaviours and work practices that are required in order to reach the goal.

How does goal setting work?

Specific and challenging goals / objectives benefit performance by:[1, 2]

- Directing attention / effort towards task-relevant behaviours and actions
- Focusing effort and energy towards relevant behaviours (i.e., setting scope and boundaries for work)
- Encouraging persistence in the face of difficulties or obstacles.

Goals and objectives also provide a reference point for evaluating progress and achievements.

Features of effective goal setting

Setting goals and objectives alone is not likely to enhance motivation or improve performance. In order for goal setting to be most effective, six strategies are recommended:

1. Set specific and challenging goals and objectives
2. Build and support workers' commitment to achieving the goal and objectives
3. Provide feedback on achievement of shorter-term objectives, as well as final goal achievement
4. Provide rewards and recognition for achieving shorter-term objectives and final goal achievement
5. Ensure sufficient resources and support are available
6. Ensure workers have the appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities required to achieve the goal and objectives.

1. Set specific and challenging goals and objectives

Specific goals and objectives:

- Refer to concrete, observable behaviours or work practices (i.e., measurable)
- Clearly indicate the standard / outcome that defines success.

> Vague "do your best" goals are of little use (e.g., provide high quality service to clients). Setting specific and challenging goals and objectives is the foundation of effective goal setting.[1]

Challenging goals and objectives:

- Are attainable (with effort)
- Are realistic (see Practical Tip "Setting realistic goals and objectives").

LINK

The *Worker Performance* chapter provides a detailed discussion of factors that impact on workers' capacity to perform effectively (i.e., meet work goals).

PRACTICAL TIP

Setting realistic goals and objectives

Realistic goals and objectives are achievable with sufficient effort and resources (material, supervisory, and knowledge / skill).

It is very important to ensure that goals / objectives and the desired outcomes focus on work practices that can be controlled by workers.[3]

Goals / objectives will lose their power to motivate (and hence improve performance) when achievement is heavily reliant on external factors outside workers' control.[3]

Key steps to setting realistic goals and objectives

1. Identify the specific behaviour, action or outcome of interest
2. Engage in discussions with individual workers / teams to:
   - Establish a method to accurately assess current levels of achievement (e.g., organisational records, supervisor and / or workers' estimates)
   - Reach an agreement on the current levels of achievement
   - Discuss factors in the work environment that assist or obstruct workers' capacity to improve on current practices
   - Identify those factors that can be influenced by workers and / or supervisors to help improve work practice
   - In this context, establish a mutually acceptable goal for improving on a particular behaviour, action or outcome
   - Identify shorter-term objectives that indicate the steps required to meet the longer-term goal.

Setting shorter-term objectives can help make a goal seem more manageable and achievable. When goal setting is used for complex or challenging work practices, breaking a goal up into short-term steps or milestones is particularly useful.

To encourage uptake of this approach to goal setting it may be useful for a staff member to model it.

2. Build and support workers' commitment to achieving the goal and objectives

In order for goal setting to be effective, it is essential that workers accept a goal and are committed to its achievement.

Three strategies that can be used to boost commitment are to:

    i.   Identify and set goals and objectives in collaboration with workers

    ii.   Clearly communicate the benefits of goal achievement for the individual worker, team and / or wider organisation

    iii. Build workers' confidence that they can achieve the goal and objectives.

i. Identify and set goals and objectives in collaboration with workers

Approaching goal setting as a collaborative activity between workers and managers / supervisors is likely to strengthen workers' commitment to a goal.[4] Ideally, workers and teams should be provided with opportunities to participate in decisions such as identifying and prioritising goals, negotiating timelines, identifying shorter-term objectives related to a long-term goal, setting up processes for providing feedback, negotiating rewards, and identifying key outcomes.

UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

The benefits of collaborative approaches to goal setting

Collaboration in goal setting can have additional benefits besides increasing commitment. Goal setting discussions can:[1, 5]

- Clarify expectations regarding the goal and desired outcome
- Build people's confidence in their ability to reach a goal
- Provide guidance on where workers should direct most effort
- Facilitate the development of strategies to achieve the goal
- Tap into "expert" knowledge from people who are most familiar with the job regarding likely barriers, problems and difficulties
- Help identify strategies to assist or support effective performance and overcome potential barriers and problems.

In some circumstances collaborative goal setting is not appropriate or feasible. Goals and objectives assigned by others (e.g., a supervisor) can sustain high commitment when:[1, 2]

- The individual assigning the goal is perceived to be trustworthy, knowledgeable and to have legitimate authority
- A rationale or explanation for the goal is provided
- Reward and recognition is provided for achievement of goals and objectives
- Support and encouragement are provided.

Seeking workers' input on strategies to achieve the assigned goal can also provide workers with a feeling of ownership of the goal and commitment to its achievement.

ii. Clearly communicate the benefits of goal achievement for the individual worker, team and / or wider organisation

Setting a goal essentially involves asking workers to change some aspect of their work practice. As discussed in the Organisational Change chapter, workers' motivation (and commitment) to change is strongly influenced by the perceived usefulness and benefit of the change (i.e., the new goal).

> ### If you are setting a goal for other people – sell it don't tell it! [5]

The Organisational Change chapter lists six messages (see below) to motivate workers to accept change. These are also applicable to encouraging workers to commit to achieving a goal.

Commitment to achieving a new goal will be strengthened when workers perceive:[6, 7]

1. **Necessity:** The need to achieve the goal is driven by important factors (e.g., social, economic, political, competition, service quality)
2. **Discrepancy:** There is a gap between current functioning and a desired level of functioning
3. **Appropriateness:** The desired outcomes are valid and legitimate for workers to strive towards
4. **Capacity:** Workers have the resources and capacity to implement the required strategies to achieve the desired outcomes
5. **Support:** Informal and formal leaders in the organisation support the goal and are committed to its application
6. **Personal relevance:** The goal has benefits and advantages for the organisation and workers themselves.

iii. Build workers' confidence that they can achieve the goals and objectives

For workers to be confident that a goal is achievable it is important that the goals and objectives are realistic.

Research on self efficacy (self confidence) has identified a range of strategies that can be used to build confidence.[8] A successful outcome is most likely to occur when a combination of strategies is used. Effective strategies to build confidence include:

- Successful achievement of goals / desired outcomes demonstrated by others (e.g., trainers, coworkers, work colleagues)
- Positive feedback (i.e., support and encouragement from colleagues and supervisors)
- Success experiences with the behaviour or task.

PRACTICAL TIP

Creating success experiences

To ensure workers experience success, start with modest goals and objectives for work practice that can be achieved relatively easily. After modest goals are achieved, then move on to more advanced work practices that may require higher levels of skill and confidence.

Providing positive feedback, support and encouragement is an essential part of creating "success experiences" and building confidence and motivation.[1, 2, 5, 9]

3. Provide feedback on achievement of shorter-term objectives, as well as final goal achievement

Goal setting and feedback go hand in hand. Without feedback, goal setting will not be effective.[1, 2, 9] To sustain motivation and commitment to a goal, it is particularly important to provide feedback on short-term objectives that represent steps towards achieving a longer-term goal.[1, 2, 9]

It is also recommended that feedback be provided on the process of work (i.e., strategies used to achieve goals and objectives), as well as the final outcomes achieved.[1, 2, 9]

PRACTICAL TIP

Providing good feedback

Giving feedback can be difficult. It is a skill that needs to be developed with proper training.[10] The following are some helpful hints for providing good feedback:

1. Create a positive context for feedback
- Develop the feedback system in consultation with workers[3] (i.e., negotiate issues such as frequency of feedback, format (e.g., face-to-face, written) and focus (e.g., process and / or outcomes of performance))
- Feedback needs to be timely – it should be given as close as possible to the occurrence of the behaviour in question to have maximum impact[11]
- Clarify the purpose of the feedback session (i.e., it should be designed to assist the worker to improve their performance, not to punish or belittle).[11]

2. Use constructive and positive language
- Avoid sweeping statements – words such as "always" or "never" can make people angry and defensive (e.g., "You always avoid difficult cases" or "You never deliver on time")[10, 12]
- Avoid destructive criticism – it can breed resentment, intensify conflict, and may have a negative impact on workers' confidence and motivation.[13, 14]

3. Focus on behaviours and strategies
- Be specific. Give feedback that includes specific examples of behaviours or actions[13-15]
- Discuss observed behaviour or results, not personality – feedback that focuses on traits can be seen as a personal attack (e.g., "You are too passive")[12-14]
- Coach rather than judge – suggest strategies for how to do the job better rather than focusing only on what went wrong[10, 12]
- Focus on aspects of work performance and outcomes over which workers have control (i.e., things they can change).[3]

4. Tailor feedback to the needs of the individual worker
- Adjust the frequency and depth of feedback to the individual – some people may need more feedback than others, depending on their experience and self-awareness[12]
- Provide individual feedback privately (i.e., one-to-one), and group or team feedback publicly (i.e., with all team members present).[3]

5. Make feedback a two-way communication process
- Feedback needs to be understood by the receiver – ask the worker to rephrase your feedback to ensure that he / she has understood you clearly[11]
- Feedback should be followed up with an action plan that is formulated together with the worker. Ensure that there is mutual agreement about deadlines and deliverables, and schedule a meeting to review progress.[11]

Providing feedback with complex or difficult tasks

Feedback on strategies used to achieve goals and objectives is particularly important for complex or difficult work.[1] There is a risk that setting specific and challenging goals will encourage a focus on the outcomes to be achieved, rather than developing effective performance strategies. Hence, performance on complex or difficult tasks may be impaired. Providing feedback related to performance strategies, and on achievement of short-term objectives, can help avoid this problem.[1]

> Without feedback, goal setting is not likely to be effective.

4. Provide rewards and recognition for achieving shorter-term objectives and final goal achievement

Similar to providing feedback, recognising and rewarding achievement should focus on both shorter-term objectives as well as achievement of a final desired outcome.

IN PRACTICE

Motivating commitment to a goal by demonstrating treatment benefits

Goals appear in many different forms in the workplace. Changing a particular work practice can be understood as a change of goals (i.e., the target behaviour or outcome is defined as successful performance).

In order to be motivated to achieve a particular work practice goal, workers must perceive the goal to be worthwhile and meaningful (i.e., it has benefits for clients, themselves and / or the organisation). As the following example demonstrates, providing evidence that a new work practice improves treatment outcomes can be a powerful motivator.

In a major Australian teaching hospital nurses were requested to administer the Alcohol Withdrawal Rating Scale (AWRS) and related nursing protocol. It has been clearly established that the implementation of AWRS and a related protocol reduces the incidence of unwanted and dangerous consequences of severe alcohol withdrawal and alcohol withdrawal delirium.

Nurses in this major hospital were well acquainted with the troublesome and disruptive consequences of providing care for the fearful, hallucinating and often combative patient experiencing alcohol withdrawal delirium. This would seem to have been motivation enough to accept an improved sentinel and management system. But required changes in work practice were significant, and involved taking a comprehensive substance use history, and being aware of and assessing all patients on first contact for "an Index of Suspicion for Alcohol Withdrawal." In other words, new goals for effective work practice were being set.

The liaison nurse attached to the hospital-based alcohol and other drug service presented evidence that demonstrated the effectiveness of early interventions for the alcohol withdrawal syndrome. Some nurses were convinced, others were not so sure. Knowledge of this link between a new work practice goal and improved treatment outcomes was more clearly established however by a simple pre:posttest analysis of the number of adverse and critical incidents occurring in two "hotspots" for alcohol withdrawal; the Orthopaedic ward and the Emergency Department. This evidence was further enhanced by comparing the reduced adverse outcomes with a control "hotspot" Gastrointestinal ward. This on-site evidence and the direct involvement of nursing staff was a powerful motivator that enhanced nurses' commitment to, and achievement of, an important work practice goal.

What can supervisors and managers do to reward workers?

Developing a valued and effective reward system can be a challenge. Financial rewards are often not an option in the government and non-government sector. Alternatives to financial rewards include:

- Public recognition of effort and contribution
- Opportunities to work on preferred activities (and / or a break from less desirable work)
- Time off or flexi-time
- Support for professional development activities (e.g., financial contribution, time off).

Don't forget – you can also ask the "experts" – the workers themselves. Developing reward systems that are based on workers' needs and preferences is likely to be most effective. Remember – what one person may find rewarding and satisfying may not appeal to another individual.

Most of the goal setting research has focused on the impact of financial incentives on goal achievement (e.g., providing financial bonuses for goal achievement). Providing financial incentives is not always possible for many AOD organisations. The following are some important issues to consider when providing AOD workers with recognition through the use of reward / incentive schemes:[1, 5]

1. If a goal is too difficult (i.e., most people fail), then missing out on a reward can result in frustration and anger
2. Rewarding progress towards achieving a goal (i.e., achieving short-term objectives) is most effective with difficult or complex work practices
3. Providing rewards and incentives for progress towards a goal can help to sustain workers' effort, and avoid feelings of anger and disappointment from high effort-low reward situations.

Building up goal setting for advanced work practices

A common situation in the AOD field is that new workers get thrown into advanced work practices. This can create a sense of threat to the professional esteem and confidence of the worker that is often perceived as a lack of workplace support. The worker will tend to work within the parameters of their existing practice skills, "do the best they can" and thus compromise the expected outcomes. In the worst case the worker will simply avoid the component(s) of the advanced practice that they are not skilled to perform.

For example, growing awareness of the comorbidity of AOD problems and psychiatric disorder has led to the inclusion of a Mental State Examination (MSE) into first contact assessment in many AOD settings. The Mental State Examination is a formal and systematic examination that clearly needs to be learned and practised under supervision. It is an advanced work practice with important clinical implications. The introduction of "Comprehensive Assessment" protocols without advanced skills training can compromise the wellbeing of the client and worker alike.

It is important to make sure workers are up-skilled before being exposed to advanced work practices (and the associated goals, objectives and expected outcomes).

5. Ensure sufficient resources and support are available

As discussed in the Worker Performance chapter, workers' capacity to perform effectively (i.e., achieve work-related goals and objectives) depends to a significant extent on the supports and constraints that operate in their work environment. For example, access to regular supervision has been identified as a particularly important issue within the AOD sector, especially in non-government organisations.[16-18]

LINK | **The *Worker Performance* chapter discusses factors in the work environment that may impact on workers' capacity to perform effectively. The *Workplace Support* chapter discusses strategies for managers / supervisors, coworkers and the organisation to provide support to workers.**

The importance of taking into account barriers to effective performance (and goal achievement) is often overlooked in the goal setting process. It is a central consideration, however, as unrealistic expectations can erode workers' motivation and commitment to a goal.

The goal setting process should include discussion with workers regarding strategies to maximise supports and minimise constraints in the work environment.

6. Ensure workers have the appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities required to achieve the goal and objectives

Although perhaps an obvious point, it is worthwhile to take the time to evaluate whether a suitable match exists between the work processes and outcomes required by the goal / objectives, and workers' capacity to achieve the required results.

LINK | **The *Professional Development* chapter discusses strategies to support and enhance workers' knowledge, skills and abilities.**

Troubleshooting

Setting goals for client outcomes

Improved client outcomes are a central goal for treatment providers in the AOD field. However, the relationship between individual or work team practices and client outcomes is often complicated, and can be difficult to assess fairly and accurately.

The factors that influence drug and alcohol use and treatment outcomes are complex, and client relapse is common. Careful consideration, therefore, should be given to goal setting for client outcomes. The key principles of setting specific (measurable) goals that are challenging (but realistic) are particularly important. Where possible, negotiating with individual workers and teams to identify appropriate and realistic goals and objectives is recommended.

Discussion and negotiation with workers about strategies for achieving client outcome goals can still be conducted when client outcome goals are set by external bodies (i.e., funders). When combined with regular feedback, rewards, and support (particularly from supervisors), discussions and negotiations are likely to enhance workers' commitment to achieving assigned or negotiated client outcome goals.

The quantity / quality dilemma

A common goal setting dilemma is distinguishing between goals focused on the quantity of work and goals focused on the quality of work.

Quantity work goals focus on:

- Completing a specific number of products / outcomes (e.g., seven reports completed, nine client interviews conducted by the end of the week)
- Frequency of particular tasks / behaviours performed (e.g., daily updating of case notes).

Quality work goals focus on:

- Achieving certain standards of work that reflects "best practice" (e.g., achieving high levels of client satisfaction with service provision).

If goal setting is focused only on quantity, then performance quality may suffer. The reverse is also likely to occur – goals that focus on quality are likely to result in a decrease in the quantity of workers' output.[1] Setting clear standards and benchmarks for both quantity and quality targets is recommended.

IN PRACTICE

Balancing quantity and quality goals in AOD work – the art of compromise

Flexibility and compromise are useful perspectives when managing quantity and quality goals. For example, keeping up-to-date case notes is an important task for clinicians and counsellors. An excessive adherence to daily updating of case notes may lead to truncated reporting when busy. It may be better to schedule an hour or two later in the week to catch-up, ensuring adequate notes are made (i.e., this is a compromise goal that bridges the need for regular performance and quality output).

Constructive responses to difficulties

Goal setting doesn't guarantee successful or satisfactory performance. As discussed earlier, goal setting needs to be supported by a range of strategies (feedback, supervisory support, resources, sufficient knowledge and skills) to be successful.

An easy mistake to make when evaluating why a goal was not achieved is to focus on the individual worker or team (i.e., looking for a skills deficit, lack of motivation, poor strategies and so on). The influence of the work environment and conditions on performance is often overlooked or underestimated.[19, 20]

As discussed previously in regard to client outcomes, AOD related work is often challenging, and experiences of success in terms of client outcomes can be difficult to achieve.[21] Open and constructive discussions with individual workers or teams may identify factors related to the work environment and individuals' knowledge, skills and abilities that create barriers to goal achievement. It may also be helpful to re-evaluate the goal itself (i.e., is it realistic and appropriate?).

Common quantity / quality dilemmas with goal setting in the AOD field

Managing quality and quantity goals is a common dilemma in AOD work. Both types of goals are useful but it is important to be clear about exactly what is being measured. Common examples include:

- Focusing on goals regarding numbers of clients being assessed but not addressing quality of the assessment process
- Providing cross-cultural professional development but not measuring the appropriateness of workers' engagement with Indigenous and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) clients.

These types of examples demonstrate the importance of having a range of goals, and reviewing goals to ensure they are consistent with the wider context of service provision within an organisation.

Constructive responses to difficulties include:

- Re-evaluating the goal (are the timeframes, outcomes etc. realistic?)
- Reviewing the supports and resources available (are they sufficient?)
- Assessing the strategies and techniques workers / teams are using to achieve the goal (are they appropriate, efficient, effective?)
- Considering the need for further professional development for workers and / or teams (do workers have sufficient knowledge, skill and confidence?).

LINK

The *Performance Appraisal* chapter discusses strategies to evaluate worker's performance and provide feedback in a constructive and positive way.
The *Professional Development* chapter discusses a range of professional development activities that can be used to build workers' knowledge, skills and confidence.

The most effective goals are SMART goals

Specific **M**easurable **A**chievable **R**ealistic **T**imeframed

Using goal setting to address workforce development challenges

Goal setting can be used to address a range of workforce development challenges. In particular, goal setting can be a useful tool to assist with:

- Successfully managing organisational change
- Supporting and motivating effective performance
- Supporting and motivating effective teamwork.

Successfully managing organisational change

A central component of change at the organisational, team or individual level involves goals relating to change. These goals can be expressed in terms of a change in strategic direction, the addition or removal of specific work practices, or the introduction of new methods of work practice. Organisational change may also involve setting, defining or changing goals and objectives. In all these cases the definition of what is effective, acceptable and successful work practice (i.e., the goal) has changed. Goal setting techniques can be used at each stage of organisational change:

Unfreezing

- Communicating change in terms of specific and challenging goals and objectives to be achieved
- Facilitating workers' acceptance of change (building self confidence, collaborating in setting goals and objectives for change, enhancing team / group norms and support, publicising goal setting within and outside of the organisation).

Changing

- Setting specific and challenging goals and objectives for individual and team work practice change
- Managing change with complex or difficult work practices
- Providing feedback, rewards and incentives linked to achieving the change goals / objectives.

Confirming / supporting

- Setting clear standards and outcomes (specific goals) to evaluate the change process against.

Supporting and motivating effective performance

Goal setting can be a highly effective tool to increase workers' motivation to achieve certain targets / outcomes – in other words to improve their performance.

Goal setting can be used as a tool to improve performance by:
- Clarifying expectations and standards for performance
- Enhancing motivation
- Giving workers a sense of achievement and satisfaction (with successful goal achievement)
- Directing effort and attention towards achieving specific performance outcomes
- Providing the basis for an effective performance feedback system.

Supporting and motivating effective teamwork

Setting team goals can result in significant performance improvements. This is particularly the case with tasks that require coordination and cooperation between team members.[22-24]

The basic principles for setting goals with individuals and teams are very similar. The foundation of successful group goal setting rests on setting specific and challenging group performance goals rather than easy goals or vague "do your best" exhortations.[22]

The most effective approach to team goal setting is to use a combination of both individual and team goals:[23, 24]

- Assign a specific and challenging team goal
- Set individual goals and objectives in terms of each team member's contribution to the group capacity to perform effectively.

Team performance is likely to be highest when team members are committed to both individual and team goals.[24] Commitment to team goals is likely to be strongest when:[22]

- Team membership is valued
- The team is highly cohesive
- Team members experience a sense of personal achievement and success when the team achieves its goal.

The *Developing Effective Teams* chapter discusses strategies to enhance team cohesion.

UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

Mechanisms underlying the impact of team goals on performance

It can be useful to understand the mechanisms by which setting team goals help to improve team performance.

Four main mechanisms have been identified:

1. Increased energy, effort and attention towards achieving the team goal[22]
2. Stronger sense of shared purpose and mutual gain, which in turn facilitates cooperation and helping behaviours[22, 25]
3. Increased communication, coordination and planning between team members[22, 26]
4. Increased evaluation, adaptation and revision of performance strategies.[22, 26]

Summary

Goal setting appears in many forms in AOD work, including targets for client loads, project deadlines, and changes to work practice that represent best practice. In this chapter we discussed a range of strategies that can be used to support workers' motivation and capacity to achieve their work practice goals. Two consistent messages throughout this chapter are the importance of:

1. Providing support, feedback and rewards for the process of striving towards a goal, as well as its final achievement, and
2. Setting challenging but realistic goals that accurately reflect workers' capabilities within their working environment.

When work practice goals and objectives are carefully planned and discussed with workers, they can be a powerful tool to support motivation, job satisfaction and effective performance.

Resources for goal setting

This chapter includes the following resources and tools to support effective goal setting:

- Checklist for effective goal setting
- Case study on using goal setting as a tool to improve client care
- Forms and templates: Individual and team goal setting tool forms
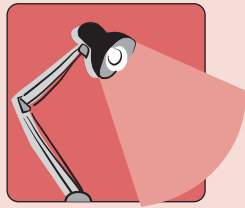- Recommended readings.

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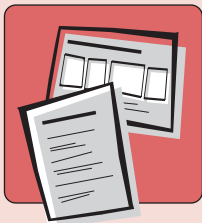
Checklist

for effective goal setting

Case Study

Using goal setting as a tool to improve
client care

Forms and Templates

• Individual Goal Setting Tool

• Team Goal Setting Tool

Recommended Readings

Checklist for Effective Goal Setting

Not all of these points will be relevant for all work settings and practices. They provide a guide to the basics of good goal setting.

Setting the goal

1. Is goal setting appropriate for this situation? ❑
   - Can performance outcomes be clearly identified and measured / assessed?
   - Can feedback on progress towards achieving the goal, and final goal achievement be provided?

2. Are the goals clear and specific? ❑
   - Do goals identify concrete, observable behaviours or work practices? (i.e., are they measurable?)
   - Do goals clearly indicate a standard or outcome that defines success (and progress towards successful goal achievement)?

3. Are the goals challenging? (i.e., perceived as worthwhile and will develop / extend the worker's skills) ❑

4. Do goals include standards for the quantity and quality of work? ❑

5. Do workers have the opportunity to participate in goal setting? ❑ For example, have individual workers / teams been involved in:
   - Identifying and prioritising key goals?
   - Negotiating timelines?
   - Identifying shorter-term objectives for a longer-term goal?
   - Discussion about the process and timing of feedback?
   - Negotiating rewards for goal achievement?

6. If workers' participation is not appropriate or feasible, does the goal-setter (e.g., a supervisor): ❑
   - Have the trust and respect of workers?
   - Provide a rationale or explanation for the goal?
   - Provide reward and recognition for the achievement of goals and objectives?
   - Provide support and encouragement?

7. Do workers have the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to achieve the goal? ❑

8. Are sufficient resources available to support workers' capacity to achieve the goal? ❑
   - Are goals realistic (i.e., able to be achieved with available resources)?

9. Is the importance of goal achievement communicated to the: ❏
   - Individual worker?
   - Team and / or wider organisation?
   - External individuals and organisations?

Working towards the goal

10. Have short-term achievement milestones been set? ❏

11. Is feedback provided on the process of working towards the goal? ❏
   For example, is feedback provided on the:
   - Effectiveness of performance strategies?
   - Achievement of short-term milestones?

12. Is feedback provided in an appropriate way? For example: ❏
   - Is there a positive context for feedback?
   - Is constructive and positive language used in the provision of feedback?
   - Does feedback focus on behaviours and strategies?
   - Is feedback tailored to the needs of the individual worker?
   - Is feedback a two-way communication process?

13. Are rewards and recognition provided for achieving short-term milestones? ❏

Achieving the goal

14. Will feedback be provided on goal achievement (or otherwise)? ❏
   - Will workers know they have succeeded (or know they have not successfully achieved the goal)?

15. Will rewards and recognition be provided for goal achievement? ❏

Setting goals for complex / difficult tasks

16. Has advice / instruction / professional development been provided regarding effective performance strategies? ❏

17. Has a period of goal-free practice been scheduled? (particularly important if workers are learning new tasks / behaviours) ❏

18. Has an allowance been made for a time-lag between goal setting and outcomes (i.e., improved performance)? ❏

19. Will feedback be provided on the process of achieving the goal (in particular the effectiveness of performance strategies)? ❏

Goal Setting as a Tool to Improve Client Care

Overview

This case study describes a goal setting intervention conducted in mental health hospitals and homes for individuals with chronic mental illness. Goal setting strategies were implemented to improve the quality of treatment provision and client outcomes. Both therapists and clients received a goal setting intervention.

The therapist and client interventions were based on Organisational Behaviour Management (OBM) techniques which included:

- Goal setting
- Feedback
- Positive reinforcement.

This case study describes the goal setting, feedback and reinforcement interventions received by therapists that focused on changing their professional practice.

The intervention program

Therapists underwent a one-day intensive training session which instructed them on writing behavioural goals as well as providing verbal feedback, graphical feedback, and reinforcement to clients.

A goal setting approach to client treatment sessions was introduced by making a number of changes to the structure and content of therapist-client sessions. The success of these changes was measured by monitoring weekly half-hour therapy sessions over a period of 10 weeks.

1. Treatment plans

Therapists and clients constructed treatment plans which outlined three treatment goals, how the goals would be achieved and the desired outcomes of the goals. Clients signed the treatment plan to confirm their acceptance of the conditions and any intention to comply with medication.

2. Session notes

Therapists were taught how to monitor and reinforce patients' goal progress. Session notes were redesigned with allocated sections for:

- Goals
- Client progress in attaining goals
- Session content
- Charts to track goal directed behaviour graphically.

3. Providing feedback and reinforcement to therapists

Therapists provided administration with a number of documents including session notes with attached copies of graphs, records of client hospitalisations and incidents, audio tapes and behaviour sampling sheets. The Director then provided feedback over the telephone regarding:

- Accuracy of notes
- Submittal of notes (timeliness)
- Client progress toward achieving goals (by examining the goal progress of two randomly selected clients)
- The extent goals were addressed by session notes and audiotapes.

Written feedback relating to the timeliness of paperwork submission and the accuracy of notes and graphs was provided in a newsletter that allowed therapists to monitor their own performance.

Therapists received praise when session notes were completed correctly and promptly and recorded medication compliance, hospitalisations, incident reports and session records.

Therapists who completed session notes on time and who completed 90% of their notes accurately for three weeks consecutively received a certificate signed by the Executive Director. The therapist returning sheets with (a) the lowest mean time and (b) the highest degree of accuracy received a monetary reward ($25).

Results

The goal setting intervention was successful in changing therapists' professional practice. Specifically, therapist behaviours improved in a number of areas, including:

- Setting appropriate (i.e., specific, measurable and challenging) goals
- Improvement in the quality of treatment plans
- Increases in client goal progress
- Increases in client activity level
- Decreases in the amount of time required to submit paperwork.

In addition, improvements in client behaviour were observed in relation to:

- Client progress towards goals
- Improvements in behaviours (e.g., hygiene, social functioning)
- Improvements in Patient Activity Checklist (PAC) scores.

Conclusion

This case study demonstrates the use of goal setting and feedback as an effective strategy to encourage and support professional practice change, and in turn, improve client outcomes. Key strategies of the intervention were training for therapists on goal setting techniques, and the provision of regular ongoing feedback that allowed therapists to track the success of their attempts to change their professional practice.

Source: Huberman, W.L. & O'Brien, R.M. (1999). Improving therapist and client performance in chronic psychiatric group homes through goal-setting, feedback and positive reinforcement. *Journal of Organizational Behavior Management, 19,* 13 - 36.

Individual Goal Setting Tool

A useful goal setting strategy is to set long-term goals and shorter-term objectives that indicate steps towards achieving a final goal.

Goals – the overall desired long-term outcomes; what you are aiming to achieve or change in your work

Objectives – more specific shorter-term actions, behaviours and work practices that are required in order to reach the goal

Current goal: _____

For the time period: _____

Objectives	Supports / resources required	Potential barriers / difficulties	Problem-solving strategies	Review date

Team Goal Setting Tool

A useful goal setting strategy is to set long-term goals and shorter-term objectives that indicate steps towards achieving a final goal.

Goals – the overall desired long-term outcomes; what you are aiming to achieve or change in your work

Objectives – more specific shorter-term actions, behaviours and work practices that are required in order to reach the goal

Current team goal: _____

My goal as a team member: _____

For the time period: _____

Objectives (for contribution to the team goal)	Supports / resources required	Potential barriers / difficulties	Problem-solving strategies	Review date

Latham, G.P. (2003). Goal-setting: A five-step approach to behavior change. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 50,* 212-247.

This paper provides a good overview of the key principles of effective goal setting. It provides useful insights into the process of goal setting including the importance of goal commitment, leadership and the measurement of goals and outcomes.

Pritchard, R.D., Roth, P.L., Jones, S.D., Galgay, P.J., & Watson, M.D. (1988). Designing a goal-setting system to enhance performance: A practical guide. *Organizational Dynamics, 17,* 69-78.

This article provides a useful guide for developing goal setting systems. Important considerations for the development and implementation of a goal setting program are outlined. These include factors such as providing feedback, measurement of goals and outcomes, and setting goal difficulty. The article also highlights common barriers faced during implementation of goal setting systems.

Locke, E.A. (2001). Motivation by goal setting. In R.T. Golemblewski (Ed.), *Handbook of organizational behavior* **(2nd ed.). New York: Marcel Dekker.**

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of goal setting. The rationale for goal setting as a motivational technique, and strategies to maximise the impact of goal setting on motivation and performance are discussed with reference to relevant research. This chapter is most useful for readers interested in workforce development theory and research.