

An Introduction to Mental Game Development

By Ted C. Buffington – “The Mindset Guy”

Goal Setting - Part 1.

This is the first of several articles in a series dedicated to understanding more about high performance mindsets and behaviors.

Goal Setting: Part 1.

Effective goal setting can provide a positive influence in all areas of your life. Simply put, defining goals and specific targeted outcomes gives you more control over your life. Clarity is power and setting sharp, clearly defined and measurable goals helps you stay motivated to achieve those goals.

Notice What You Notice

When you know what you want to achieve, you can quickly notice if you are moving closer to the goal or further away. You can notice what you have to focus and concentrate on to reach it or what are the distractions. Goal setting helps to establish long-term vision and short-term motivation.

Goal Setting Helps Self-Confidence

Achievement of a goal gives you the confidence and self-belief that you can achieve higher and more difficult goals. Committing and developing self-discipline to carry all the way through, makes future goal setting easier each time.

Commitment – Scale of One to Ten

Defining your commitment to your sport is the first step in setting sporting goals. Defining your commitment provides an awareness of the importance of the goal. If you define your commitment as having an occasional bit of fun then, your ‘plan’ for achieving the goal will be different than someone who chooses to dedicate his or her life to achieving excellence in the sport. Ask yourself, ‘on a scale of one to ten, how committed am I to achieving this goal?’ Notice what you notice about the answer. Remember, achievement is based on **Matter Over Mind** – If what you want matters enough...you won’t mind what you have to do to achieve it!

Role Modeling

Once you have chosen your level of commitment to the sport, the next stage is to analyze either the sport, or the position you play in a team sport. Work out the skills that you will need to have mastered to attain the level you want to reach within the sport. Do some research to help you ‘role model’ performance behaviors of people playing at the top level in your sport.

Set Performance Goals Not Outcome Goals

Goals based on outcomes are extremely vulnerable to things beyond your control. Set goals that you have as much control as possible like your own performance. There is nothing as demotivating as not achieving a personal goal because of things outside your control. Influencers like judging, bad weather, injury, excellence in other athletes, or just plain bad luck will most certainly happen sometime. It’s not what happens, it’s how you deal with those situations that make the difference.

Acknowledgement

When you have achieved a goal, take the time to enjoy the satisfaction of having achieved the goal. Take the opportunity to reward yourself appropriately when you reach goals and significant outcomes. Absorb the sense of accomplishment and recognize how you can use the process progress you have made to help you reach other goals.

Feedback: Goal Not Reached

A goal not reached should not be considered ‘failure’ but as feedback and awareness of the ‘What’s so’ – the actual reality of the situation. Let yourself discover the ‘missing’ between what actually happened and what you had intended to have happen. Perhaps:

- You didn't try hard enough
- Your technique was faulty and needs to be adjusted
- The goal you set was unrealistic etc.

Calibrate and adjust the goal if it was set too high, or to set goals to acquire new skills or build stamina. Finding the ‘missing’ is the kind of feed-back that turns everything into a positive learning experience - even not reaching a goal is a step forward towards perfect technique!

Feedback: Goal Reached

A goal achieved can be used as a ‘design template’ for launching you into your next goals: Notice what you notice:

- If the goal was easily achieved, make your next goals harder
- If the goal took a longer period of time to achieve than you would have preferred, make the next goals easier – (not too)
- If you learned something that would lead you to change goals still outstanding, do so

If while achieving the goal you noticed a ‘missing’ in your skills, set goals to provide what you need

Goals change as you mature - adjust them regularly to reflect this growth in your personality. If goals do not hold any attraction any longer, then let them go - goal setting is your servant, not your master. It should bring you real pleasure, satisfaction and achievement.

Remember:

- Not meeting goals is useful in improving technique and long-term success as long as you draw useful lessons from it and feed these back into your training program.

You should allow yourself to enjoy the achievement of goals and reward yourself appropriately. Lessons should be drawn where appropriate, and should be fed back into training.

As a final point, if you do not already set performance goals, or if you have not yet started thinking of your life goals, now is a great time to start!

If not this, what? If not now, when?

Next Month: Goal Setting – Part 2. The topic continues with Reasons Goal Setting Fall Apart and More Tips for Effective Goal Setting.

Ted Buffington, nicknamed, the “Mindset Guy,” is a writer, internationally recognized researcher, lecturer and trainer of performance & sports psychology methodologies. He created his popular Mental Game Development programs to enhance the quality and effectiveness of youth sports programs. The above copyrighted article is reprinted with permission from Achievement By Design®. For more information contact Achievement By Design at www.toachieve.com or call (817) 503-7488.