



Is FE too goal-obsessed?



**The roots of “goal” =
a boundary or limit**



Goal setting and goal management are not the same thing i.e. how and why people set goals v how they pursue them

SMART is a process for goal setting
GROW is a process for goal management



Problems with SMART goals

- Reduced attentiveness
- Short-termism
- Higher risk taking
- Unethical behaviour
- Inhibited learning
- Focus on extrinsic rather than intrinsic motivation



Do SMART goals motivate?

Anne McKee's 1991 study shows that:

- Only 25% of people are motivated by them
- 25% prefer to work to an image of desired vision
- 25% focused on the steps towards the goal, rather than the goal itself
- 25% didn't plan at all

In all but the first group, SMART goals induce stress, reduce motivation, creativity and resilience



SMART goals “dull responsiveness to the complex and emergent nature of organizational life”

Weick et al (2007)



Coaching clients' critique of goals

- Over-goaled (Hospital Chief Executive)
'I already have 13 organisations setting me goals, I don't need a 14th'.
- Emergent (Head of major institution)
'I don't know what I want to address yet – by the time I do, the goal will be a thing of the past'
- SMART is too late (Manufacturing company MD)
'If I can set SMART goals don't you think I would have sorted it? It's the messy, wicked issues I want to look at'.
- Stakeholder conflicts (Newly promoted CEO)
'I know what my predecessor wants for me to achieve.... but I disagree – that is his way: I have mine'.



Coaches' and mentors' critique of goals

- Goals over-privilege the sponsor's agenda at the price of the coachee's agenda
- Goal setting is an unconsidered routine
- Encourage 'do more' in a society where 'do less' may be more valuable
- Goals serve the coach's need for clarity and control
- Clients may not be ready to set goals (or to have moved beyond them)
- Goals can be used as an excuse to avoid the painfully beneficial
- Goals save coach from having to be fully present



What research tells us

Recent studies of coaching and mentoring practice, motivational theory and goal theory all point to one conclusion – goal setting and goal management are much more complex, more systemic, and more emergent than standard coaching and mentoring dogma allows for



GROW should have been **VROW** (for Vision)
- Sir John Whitmore

“It’s one thing to establish a goal, but then do they remember it? Do other circumstances arise that cause that goal not to be the best goal?”



HBR Research Report, Jan 2009

- 200 executive coaches interviewed
- All but 9 coaches said that goals changed during the assignment
- Goals shifted to be more in congruence with clients' new insights about what they really needed and wanted



Goals & coach/mentor maturity

- Models-based need SMART goals
- Process-based seek solutions (so goals become part of the process)
- Philosophy-based may choose to free themselves and client from immediate or specific goals
- System eclectic enable the transmutation/ transcendence of goals



Is what matters a goal, or a strong focus on
an issue?
(Ibarra & Linebak, 2005)



When people set goals too early, there is
often a strong urge to hang on to them, even
when it is obvious it's no longer what they
want. In decision-making, it's called the
“sunk cost trap”



A typology of goals

- Performance
- Linear
- Plans
- Instrumental mindset
- Avoidance
- Proving
- Proximal
- Concrete
- Specific
- Learning
- Emergent
- Values
- Growth mindset
- Approach
- Improving
- Distal
- Abstract
- Interrogative



Progress towards goals can be affected by

- Motivation (how important?)
- Contextual awareness (how accurate is your picture of what is going on?)
- Ownership (who shares this goal and has a stake in its outcome?)
- Clarity (Can you envision the outcome?)
- Measurability (Will you be able to assess the outcome?)
- Stability (Is it a fixed or moving target?)
- Link to personal values
- Previous experience of goal pursuit (Do you have the habit of success?)



Goal hierarchy

- Do the goals align with the learner's higher order values?
- Do subordinate goals align with superordinate goals?



Boyatzis: when goals don't work

- They don't align with the client's own authentic values and vision
- They result from extrinsic requirements that activate the "ought self" and not the "ideal self"
- They are inconsistent with the client's learning style
- When people engage with the process without understanding what the task requires
- When the goal triggers high levels of anxiety



Deci & Ryan

Part of the job of coaches and mentors is to facilitate both intrinsic motivation and the internalization of extrinsic motivation



Robert Kegan

- Implicit v explicit goals: “goal-setting may not just be something that happens in the opening moments of a coaching process, but is something that could itself evolve”
- Technical v adaptive coaching challenges (adding “new software” to the client’s existing basic operating system v changing the basic operating system through self-knowledge)



Goal emergence and evolution

- Sometimes we don't know what we want or don't want till we've got it



Conversations about goals

- Identity
- Values
- Resources
- Purpose



When the learner presents a preset goal...

- Why *this* goal? Why now?
- Is it truly your goal or someone else's?
- Is it a subset of a larger goal, or a number of connected goals?
- How does this goal align with your values?
- What will achieving this goal replace? (i.e. what will you have to stop doing to achieve it?)



Painful goal honesty...



**Help somebody find their sense of purpose
and their goals will follow**



Thank you for listening

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