

# Why Goal Setting can be so Tough

By David Brewster

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David Brewster  
davidb@businesssimplification.com.au

Business Simplification <http://www.businesssimplification.com.au>

Seven years ago, I hated my job. I was constantly stressed. I was feeling unrewarded and unappreciated. Going to work was a chore and was basically something I did to get through to the next weekend. Not any more.

As 2002 comes to an end, I can honestly say that I now love what I do and the future looks even better. Reflecting on how this turnaround has come about has forced me to rethink the whole 'goal setting' thing.

My main conclusion is that goal setting has become too scientific and complex. I think the idea of the 'dream' has become lost.

The books tell us that, as individuals, we should be making detailed plans in order to achieve our goals - the step-by-step approach. I took this approach myself in an article this time last year about 'SMART' goal setting <http://www.businesssimplification.com.au/articles/issue5.htm>.

In business, the focus is on 'key performance indicators' and 'balanced scorecards' and 'triple bottom lines'. Meanwhile, 'vision' and 'mission' statements have become just another part of the business plan. They frequently come across as mechanical - even generic.

In 1996, I didn't set any real goals for myself. At least I didn't think I did. I remember being encouraged to write my goals down. To plan out 1 year, 3 year and 10 year goals. I couldn't do it. I felt so trapped in this job I disliked - and so unclear about what I wanted to do as an alternative - that setting 'SMART' goals was impossible.

But I did have a dream, albeit a very blurry one. For many years - since very early in my career - I had felt that I wanted to make a difference. To be in a situation to have a positive influence on peoples' lives. I also knew I wanted more variety (I hate routine). And I had always admired genuine 'experts': those who not only knew their specialty really well but also knew how to put it into practice.

Deep inside I knew these were things I wanted. It was hardly enough to build a detailed plan on. But with the benefit of hindsight, I now realise that this dream was fundamental to giving me the fortitude to break out of the bind I was in.

It was the dream that helped me see opportunities when they came my way. And it was the dream that gave me the courage to take a risk and actually pursue these opportunities.

There isn't space to go into all the details of my 'transition' here. There have been twists and turns along the way. None of it could have happened without the support of my wife, family and friends.

And I still have a long way to go. Plenty more dreams to pursue and goals to achieve. I feel, however, that I am now working from a solid foundation. As the dream has gained sharper focus, I can more readily work with concrete, 'SMART' goals. I can set 'key performance indicators' for my business.

Goals are important - both for you as an individual and for your business. But goals are like the frame of a house. They need to be built on a solid foundation. Your dream is that foundation. Remember this as you reflect on what you want to achieve in 2003 and your goal setting for the year will be much simpler.

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<mailto:davidb@businesssimplification.com.au>

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