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5 Methods to align company and personal goals

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Justin Lurie, Expert Contributor

With the holiday season upon us, managers and executives often complain about the lack of productivity at the close of the calendar year. By aligning company goals with employee (or personal) goals, an organization can be more productive throughout the year, including the holiday season. The following are five methods to align these goals for mutual success:

1. Clear company goals. If no clear organizational goal exists, it will be difficult to achieve outstanding company-wide results. Goal-setting allows staff in every department and division to make decisions with the long or short-term target in mind, and to achieve tangible results. The goal must be a vision that all can share, see and strive toward daily in every aspect of their roles and duties. There needs to be a vivid picture of success that all can relate to and be inspired by. Make it passionate (land on the moon) and not a rudimentary or boring number (sell 1,000 widgets a month).

2. Communicate the company strategy and vision relentlessly. Without a unified vision and direction, staff will never move in the same direction. The company needs to be explicitly clear on defining who it is as a company, its reason for existing, and make sure its goals and visions are communicated often and clearly. If staff members do not understand the company's role within the market, they will create their own differing versions and definitions. The strategy must be simple, clear and easy to articulate on how the company will reach its goals. Go beyond memorization and achieve internalization, or "buy-in," where staff believe in the vision and work to achieve it.

3. Employees set their own goals within the company framework. A staffer's goal must not be defined by the number of hours worked, but instead be a measurable metric that contributes to achieving the company-wide vision and goal. When employees set their own personal goals, they are often challenging, acceptable and rewarding to the company as well as the person. Personal goals are often the most immediate and effective regulators of self-action when clearly articulated and defined.

4. Avoid incentives; focus on attaining goals. Training and goal setting far outweigh the short-term gains brought by incentives and forms of coercion. Incentives create, at best, a temporary gain, but not a lasting change of behavior or mindset. On a regular basis, top-level management should communicate progress made toward achieving company-wide goals, and middle management share how each staff member's contribution affects the big picture.

5. Hire only the cultural fit. The company vision and strategy should be widely shared with potential employees to discover if they are willing and able to internalize the message. Could they work in an environment where goal setting and striving toward achieving the company vision is paramount? Hiring only those with personal goals and no desire for teamwork will be detrimental to the company. How could the company thrive when every person has an individual direction and strategy? Hire only those with skills who fit the culture, not just those who fit within the box for the position.

Justin Lurie is an independent strategy consultant and author,
<http://www.corporatestrategybook.com>.