

February 2016

Page 1



Keep your Professional Goals from Fizzling

2016 Goals



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Has your New Year's resolution to build your career already fizzled? If so, chances are you didn't have a strong plan to keep it going.

Making a plan gives you a road map to best identify your development goals and build the skills you need.

The first step is to establish a clear goal, says Juan Antonio Ruiz-Hau, senior vice president of strategic learning for Sure People, a learning and development platform. "Skill-building, training and education are all a means to an end, so the question you need to ask yourself first is, what's the end?"

Once that's set, here's how to make a plan to see it through.

- 1) Identify what you need. Don't get training just for the heck of it—figure out what you need to get to the next step in your career. If you're aiming for a promotion, look at positions up the ladder and the qualifications they require, says Kate Culligan, career strategist and performance coach. Talk to professionals who have the positions or skills you want, and ask them what training would most enhance your own experience.
- 2) Make your case. You'll probably need some buy-in from your manager or someone else who holds the purse strings. Connect the dots, Culligan says. Show your manager how this "new and improved you," with a freshly minted certificate, will improve outcomes for the company and department.
- 3) Create accountability. Once the goal and the path to attaining it are clear, commit to the endeavor, Ruiz-Hau says. Make it your personal mission to finish the training or class and keep your supporters—particularly your manager—involved with progress reports. Doing so can keep you on track and inspired if the going gets tough.
- 4) Review success. Once you achieve your goal, Ruiz-Hau recommends debriefing the process with your manager. Highlight what you achieved and talk about any lessons you learned along the way, he says. "Over time, help your manager feel good about the decision to support you by demonstrating how the new skill or ability has benefited the work of the team or the organization." This talk can help position you for another round of development when you're ready.

Source: <http://www.businessmanagementdaily.com/45383/keep-your-professional-goals-from-fizzling>



How to Tactfully get your Employees Out of Their Comfort Zones

It's no secret that workers generally tend to prefer the familiar when it comes to their jobs. They know what to expect and have confidence in their ability to perform up to par. But there are times when a manager may need or want to ask team members to do something different. Company policy changes might necessitate a new procedure. Or perhaps the duties of a co-worker who will be out for a few weeks must be covered. Maybe even you simply have a gut feeling that if given a chance, a certain staff member would thrive in uncharted territory such as representing the company at a conference. While resistance to change may be the first reaction, it certainly doesn't need to be the final one. Consider these hesitancy-reducing strategies when asking your team to broaden their horizons:

Think before you speak

"Framing is everything. If you know an employee resists branching out of his/her comfort zone, it's important to acknowledge that when presenting the task," says Leigh Steere, co-founder of Managing People Better, LLC. She suggests opening with statements such as "I realize that you prefer to do XYZ types of tasks. However, for the next two weeks, I need you to help me with ABC because ..." "By including the words 'help me,' you appeal to the employee's desire to please. Most employees want to be helpful, not resistant," Steere says. "By including a reason, you allow the employee to understand why you are making your request."

Cite past successes

Making connections between the new request and things the person has already mastered can build confidence. For instance, someone being asked to make a presentation to a potential client may view the assignment in a more positive light if you mention how well-received her PowerPoints are at staff meetings.

Provide assistance

Stress arises when people feel helpless, so assure the person that he or she will have plenty of support. This might entail assigning someone with more experience to work alongside them for the first day, checking in regularly to answer any questions, or offering appropriate tutorials and written guidelines.

Reassure that perfection isn't expected

Fear of failure keeps many workers from venturing outside of their normal activities. Knowing that management realizes that new skills take time to develop can reduce anxiety and help workers focus on the task rather than on the judgment of others. "Emphasize that mistakes or slow speed are part of the learning curve," Steere says. She suggests saying something like, "Just do your best. We don't expect you to be speedy at this at first. And you may make a couple of mistakes here and there, but that's OK and to be expected when learning ABC."

Break down goals into achievable units

An idea that comes across as "impossible" is bound to ruffle feathers. Splitting the ultimate goal into manageable parts restores calmness. "Every team member feels more comfortable by having set objectives with output and time goals against which the expectations are set," says Alan Guinn, managing director of The Guinn Consultancy Group, Inc. To get the ball rolling, it can pay to start with something relatively easy to accomplish. Then, build on this momentum as confidence levels and skill-sets grow.

Offer feedback and encouragement

Lastly, remember the power of kind words. Constructive criticism lets employees know that you are interested in their progress and didn't just "dump" a task on them. Similarly, show that you notice and appreciate their efforts. Phrases such as "I see you're working really hard at learning ABC" or "I am very pleased with your consistent improvement" encourage workers to excel at something new—and set the stage for future ventures out of the comfort zone.

Source: <http://www.businessmanagementdaily.com/45236/how-to-tactfully-get-your-employees-out-of-their-comfort-zones>

Ask Your EAP!

The following are answers to common questions supervisors have regarding employee issues and making EAP referrals. As always, if you have specific questions about referring an employee or managing a workgroup issue, feel free to make a confidential call to the EAP for a management consultation.



Q. How can I do a better job of holding my employees accountable?

A. Most supervisors know that accountability includes having employees answer for their results. But it means a lot more. Accountability is not just an after-the-fact assignment of credit or blame. It is a workplace expectation in the forefront of everyone's minds and ideal when it is part of the work culture. A culture of accountability is not difficult to establish, but you have to nurture it. It starts with defining accountability at the most basic level so that no employee is confused about his or her role in the organization or what it takes to do outstanding work. With this clarity, employees are compelled

to reach for outstanding results and want the same from their coworkers. Think of it as a pull strategy rather than a push strategy for results. Meeting with employees to troubleshoot barriers to achievement propels them to accomplish more. Later, holding employees accountable with proper rewards or consequences completes the loop. Accountability can backfire when a foundation for it has not been laid so that employees resent accountability and supervisors are hesitant to assign it.

Q. How do I get two employees whose personalities clash severely to get along? The EAP is great, but I think these two are beyond help. These employees have significant differences in their backgrounds, energy levels, values, attitudes, work styles, and more.

A. Despite the serious differences between your employees, it is not practical or possible to say all hope is lost. Realize that employees in severe conflict often find themselves stuck in the situation they are experiencing. What fuels growth of this toxic relationship is a lack of consequences perceived by the warring parties for continuing their dispute. Indeed, managers often back off, tolerate the conflict, hope for the best, and only intermittently get involved during brief crises. Your first step is to call or meet with the EAP to discuss the problem privately. Then examine your commitment to making improvement of the working relationship nonnegotiable, plan the referral, and make decisions about how you will respond should a resolution not be forthcoming. Predictably, both employees would like to be in less pain. This reality offers strong assurance that the EAP will be able to help.

Q. I don't want performance of my employees to suffer if a personal problem does not get resolved with help from the EAP. If I have ideas and advice to share that can help the employee, shouldn't I play this role of offering advice or counsel to protect the bottom line?

A. A supervisor can be very knowledgeable about an employee's personal problem, including how it originated, its historical progression, and perhaps where it will lead. It's tempting to step in and offer your counsel, but instead pass that information and knowledge to the EAP so your role as a supervisor does not become one of dual purpose—insisting on accountability, while also advocating tolerance and patience. When this happens, employees choose the role you will play, and it is predictably the latter one. This will lead to postponing important decisions crucial to maintaining workplace productivity.

Copyright ©2016 by The Frontline Supervisor

Information contained in this newsletter is for general information purposes only and is not intended to be specific guidance for any particular supervisor or human resource management concern. Some of it might not apply to your particular company policies and available programs. This information is proprietary and intended only for eligible EAP members. For specific guidance on handling individual employee problems, consult with Deer Oaks by calling the Helpline.