

How to Set Big Hairy Goals

“Goals are one of the most misused and abused concepts in business and life today. Quite often, they’re set but not met, or set without providing realistic aims and/or equipment to achieve them. As a result, goal outcomes are often lowered until they are met or scrapped entirely in favor of new ones; ...and the fruitless goal cycle begins anew.” ~ Michael J. Burt and Colby B. Jubenville, PhD, Zebras & Cheetahs: Look Different and Stay Agile to Survive the Business Jungle (Wiley, 2013)

Setting a Big Hairy Audacious Goal (BHAG) can seem exciting and energizing.

First proposed by Jim Collins and Jerry I. Porras in *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies* (HarperBusiness, 2004), the term refers to a visionary goal that’s emotionally compelling.

A great BHAG drives us to realize achievements that exceed our expectations. It facilitates focus, concentration and the ability to ignore distractions. In simple terms, BHAGs help make our dreams come true.

But without proper exploration, planning and prioritizing, you may end up setting the wrong goal – one that can lead to disappointment, disillusionment, and a drain on energy and motivation. This type of failure makes it hard to start over again.

An effective BHAG motivates your mind (what you know you should do) and heart (what you care about most). It sufficiently challenges your abilities, without making tasks impossible.

Before setting a BHAG, examine your values, beliefs and purpose with a trusted accountability partner or coach. Once you determine what matters most (career, family, community), your goal – a natural extension of your values – will become clearer.

A Message from Nancy...

I have a couple of questions to ask you:

1. Is your business as successful as you think it should be?
2. Are you and your team able to pinpoint the solutions necessary to create positive changes to get where you need to go?



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But goal setting is not for sissies. It requires sacrifices: time, money and energy. Are you willing to overlook distractions, guard your time and energy, and resist old habits and routines?

Make SMARTER Goals

“Personal success and organizational success are not entitlements; they have to be earned every day. Reaching the big goals, keeping our eye on our own Big Hairy Audacious Goals, is achieved through daily actions in the here and now.” ~ Howard Behar, *It's Not About the Coffee: Leadership Principles from a Life at Starbucks* (Portfolio Hardcover, 2007)

A great goal must be SMARTER:

S = Specific
M = Measurable
A = Attainable
R = Realistic
T = Time-framed
E = Evaluated
R = Reevaluated

1. **Be specific** when you write down a goal. Narrow your focus. For example, “getting fit” is an outcome – not a goal. “Exercise regularly” is not specific enough. Be precise: “Ride bike 40 minutes, four times a week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday).” Start small; you can always expand goals as you progress.
2. **Measure:** Goals must include quantifiable measures. Track the minutes, days or times you engage in goal behavior. If you miss key targets, record what you did manage to complete. A formal log will track your efforts and help you make adjustments, especially on days when you lack energy or motivation.
3. **Attainable and Realistic:** Make sure your goal is attainable and realistic. If you know that 40 minutes on the bike will exhaust you or create stress because of time limitations, revise the goal to reflect what's truly possible. If you enjoy yourself, you're more likely to maintain the frequency required to meet your goal.
4. **Time-framed:** A goal must have a definable beginning and end.

5. **Evaluate** your goal to ensure it's not too easy. If you achieve it too quickly, you may have set the bar too low. Try stretching your goal by 10-20 percent. Conversely, if you're falling short on your goal, give yourself permission to reduce activities by 10 percent.
6. **Reevaluate** periodically. Regularly review your goal (and its alignment with your values) with your coach or accountability partner. If you're not hitting your goals, work with your coach or partner to identify the reasons.

Online Goal-Tracking Programs

Numerous online tracking programs can help you achieve your goals; some are even free. Here's a list of the top 10:

1. **Achieve Planner:** <http://www.effexis.com/achieve/planner.htm>
2. **Declare-It:** <http://www.declare-it.com/>
3. **Get Goaling:** <http://www.getgoaling.com/>
4. **GoalEnforcer:** <http://www.goalenforcer.com/>
5. **GoalPro:** <http://goalpro.software.informer.com/>
6. **Goalscape:** <http://www.goalscape.com/>
7. **GoalsOnTrack:** <http://www.goalsontrack.com/>
8. **Lifetick:** <http://lifetick.com/>
9. **MyGoalManager:** <http://www.mygoalmanager.net/>
10. **The Covey Community:** <https://www.stephencovey.com/goal-setting.php>

Are Your Goals Incomplete?

“Learning – from experts, workshops, trainings, practical experiments, therapy, coaches, observing and silence – is all good,” notes Starbucks' Howard Behar. “It's how we test and hone our values, our potential and our goals in the real world of life.”

Real learning occurs when you review your goal shortages with your coach or accountability partner. You can then revise your goals and work toward achieving them. The rewards you'll enjoy are well worth the hard work, time and commitment required.

