ClearCompany

EXECUTE ORGANIZATIONAL
GOALS
THROUGH ALIGNMENT

As professionals in a world that is now driven by self-improvement, we've become very skilled at setting goals. There is a plethora of mobile apps that exist solely to help us track goals and keep ourselves accountable. Goals are what keep us engaged, looking ahead and striving to be better. That's the same reason organizations spend hours, weeks, months and years planning and trying to execute them. But what good is all that motivation, strategy and planning if organizations can't execute those goals properly? Well, none really.

"Congratulations everyone! We didn't meet our goal, but maybe we'll get it next time. At least we learned some new things." Guess what? You're not going to meet that next goal if you use the same approach as the last. Hopefully, that's what you meant by "we learned some new things." Goals don't exist just to keep organizations engaged and looking ahead. When properly communicated and delegated, they lead to better business results. In fact, **recent research done by HBR** reveals factors most likely to bring organizational success include effective communication and high level of employee engagement, both of which can be facilitated by collaborative goal setting.

So what's your flaw? Why is your organization consistently short on reaching projected goals? That's the million-dollar question but let's start here: **goal alignment**.

What is different today from previous years is that the workforce currently has the upper hand in the job market and that's not shifting anytime soon. Their needs and desires have changed so quickly and significantly, making it critical for organizations to transform how they recruit, develop and manage employees.

Employees today want to be informed, involved and growing with their company. Here are some important facts to think about:

- 53% of surveyed employees say "a job where I can make an impact" is **important to their happiness**. So, most employees are looking for meaningful careers and want to see the impact their work has on the big picture.

- Employees who are **engaged and have high-well being** are 27% more likely to report "excellent" performance in their own job at work and by their organization. In other words, engagement = better performance.

- 71% of employees who feel **their managers can name their strengths** feel engaged and energized by their work. This tells us employees want to be better at their job, want more communication with their managers and are engaged when wthey get that.

What do these all have in common? **Employee engagement**. More specifically, engaging employees in the process of goal setting, both their own performance goals and the overarching goals of the organization. Giving them a peek behind the corporate curtain so they can help their company meet those goals increases engagement, transparency and job satisfaction and provides an end result that is cohesive and aligned from the top down. So, let's set the stage for effective goal alignment, starting with why goals fail.

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When organizational goals aren't aligned with the strengths and competencies of the workforce, they are set up to fail from day one. Did you know **employees who use their strengths every day** are six times more likely to be engaged at work, 8% more productive and 15% less likely to quit their job? Being out of tune with what your employees are capable of both now and in the future puts you further away from reaching goals because the framework on which those goals are built on is unstable, inconsistent, incomplete. However, this awareness and alignment of employee performance goals with organizational goals can't be achieved without the right roadmap and technology.

Tracking employee performance is the predecessor to goal alignment and having the right **goal tracking software** to keep projects on track, fuel collaboration and place the appropriate people in the right roles is vital to organizational success.

But software is just one step in aligning employee competencies with organizational goals, which is why so many companies struggle to achieve goals, even those that are meticulously planned out. Before your **goal tracking software** can really support goals, managers have to keep a few things in mind:

Know Your People

Aligning employee competencies with organizational goals starts with being aware of what teams are capable of, what each employee's strengths and weaknesses are. Managers that fail to do this aren't equipped to assign those employees to roles they can thrive in and ultimately get closer to the organizational goals, which brings us to our next point.

Set Employee Goals

When managers understand the strengths and weaknesses of their team members, they can start setting performance goals for those employees and work simultaneously to align them with organizational goals. Communicate and discuss those goals with the employee so that they can see where their performance should be headed and how it pertains to the bigger picture. However capable you might think your employees are; keep in mind goals should be reasonable, attainable and based on past performance and research-based projections.

According to Bersin By Deloitte's 2014 report, *High-Impact Performance Management: Using Goals to Focus on the 21st Century*, surveyed organizations that make it easy for employees to set clear goals were four times more likely to score in the top 25% of business outcomes. Additionally, surveyed organizations that have employees revise or review their goals at least quarterly were 3.5 times more likely to score in the top 25% of business outcomes.

Provide and Solicit Feedback

Managers have to instill accountability and ensure employees are buying into the goals being set for them. Getting there is easy: **feedback**. As each director, manager and team leader sees new goals, employees should be encouraged to give feedback on whether or not they are able to make these goals with the resources made available to them. And, in return, managers have to investigate: does this person have the reports and materials to illustrate why they can't achieve the goal? Is this hiccup due to inadequate resources or is the employee underperforming? With **goal tracking and alignment software**, obtaining these reports will make investigating a breeze.

According to a **recent survey conducted by 15Five**, 81% of surveyed employees would rather work for an organization that values open communication than one that offers generous workplace perks such as top quality health plans and gym memberships.
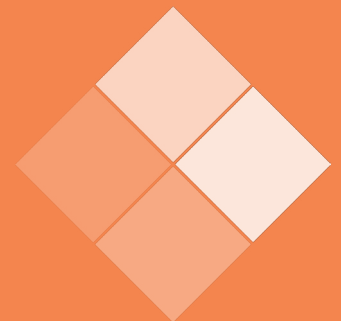
Goals can also fail if they **aren't stacked properly** and unfortunately, without a system to track each level of progress towards a goal, resources are wasted due to incorrect timing, missed steps, assigning the wrong people to roles, and more, without any awareness to your team that it's even occurring. This makes **goal progress tracking** impossible to measure accurately. Our own Laura Kukulan explains,

> "When building out goals for your organization, it's a great idea to bring in people who are skilled at efficiency and project management. These people can put members of the team to work contributing to alternate projects or other pieces of the goal if their piece isn't ready to be completed. Goals software with a transparent dashboard or Gantt chart will also assist in ensuring that goals are stacked properly and resources are not wasted on working toward a goal if the piece before that is not yet completed."

Having goal tracking software that keeps goals stacked properly will ensure that resources are being dedicated to the right people, for the right reasons and at the right time.

When it comes to goal setting, failing to effectively **manage accountability** wreaks havoc on organizational processes, creates tension with teams and directly contributes to goal failure. There's nothing like the weakest link on the team getting credit for work on a project they didn't do to suck the confidence and engagement right out of the other team members. Or, you could end up with a team of perfectly capable employees frustrated and confused because management has failed to properly brief them on the details of the project.

The **Workplace Accountability study of 2014**, which surveyed over 40,000 respondents from different job titles and industries, had startling findings that shed light on this epidemic:

- 85% of respondents said they aren't sure what their company is trying to achieve
- 93% of respondents said they are unable to align their work or take accountability for desired results
- 82% of respondents said they either fail or avoid to keep others accountable

A goals dashboard that shows who is responsible for what and the progress each person has made on deliverables, tasks, and deadlines gets rid of the accountability problem and gives employees some peace of mind that their talent and potential is being realized by management.

Tracking each person keeps employees accountable and organized for their part and helps reveal any low performers or "slackers" who aren't doing their part to reach organizational goals. As uncomfortable as it is to realize someone is not going to be able to perform like the company expects them to, having the technology to back up why someone has to be let go is going to bring you closer to meeting those precious organizational goals.

The advancement of goal tracking and alignment software has enabled companies all over the world to not only meet organizational goals, but also create a higher standard of work to grow their business further. All levels of the organization play some part in achieving goals and are far better supported and engaged with goal tracking software. What does this mean for the big picture?

Transparency

For starters, having a system with goal cascading creates goal transparency. What this means is the 53% of employees looking to make an impact in their work can visually see how their role in the overall projection of the goal contributes to the success of the organization. For example, an entry-level content creator might have a goal such as, "*Increase blog views by 10%*" which could then be linked to a higher-level organizational goal of "*Increase brand awareness.*"

Communications expert Bill Quirke is quoted as saying that **when employees understand their overall role** in business, 91% will work toward its success. But when they don't, that figure drops sharply to 23%.

Getting a peek behind the corporate curtain allows employees to see that the daily tasks they work on, no matter how seemingly trivial or tedious, *matter* and *make a difference*. What's more is that teamwork is solidified and reinforced through goal transparency because an entire department's projects can be viewed from a goal dashboard, ensuring members are keeping themselves and each other accountable for their goals with social collaboration.

But don't rely solely on your goal tracking software to create transparency. Managers should be regularly communicating with the team to ensure that everyone is on the right track, has the resources they need and is collaborating together for a satisfying and cohesive end result.

In a recent poll, 71% of employees felt managers **didn't spend enough time** explaining goals.
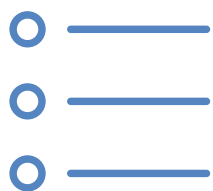
Employee Engagement

Transparency leads the way for employee engagement. Having goals mapped out with goal tracking software gives employees a visual component to the tasks they are already doing and increases awareness by constantly showing them what they are working towards and what it means for the rest of the team and, by extension, the organization. This constant engagement allows employees to internally evaluate their strengths and weaknesses everyday, helping them to hone in on what skills are providing the best results, what work process is most efficient and how they can enhance collaboration with their team members to reach goals faster and more effectively. Additionally, employee engagement is linked to higher performance, loyalty, job satisfaction and, consequently, retention.

Performance Reveiws

From management's perspective, **goal alignment software** makes the process of tracking employee performance so much easier. Being able to track each employee's progress on their goals in real-time gives managers specific benchmarks for which to base their performance reviews off of and in turn, employees have a dashboard that keeps them focused and engaged on the right things. Having a record of goal tracking to refer to gives managers specific scenarios to reference in employee performance reviews that will make feedback easier for employees to digest and understand. Because they have been monitoring their own progress over time, there shouldn't be any surprises when it comes to **constructive feedback and goal setting**. Our own Sara Pollock explains,

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"Performance management relies a great deal on members of the team being honest with one another. If your company uses 360-degree performance reviews, you'll get a much more well-rounded picture of where the issue is when it comes to achieving goals. If you have a review system with multiple inputs over the course of the entire project, you'll get even more insight into which team members need to more management and oversight than others."

HR

Effectively aligning goals leads to a better understanding of company goals and what it takes to reach those goals. This helps the recruiting department because they can narrow down their search by recruiting for specific skills new hires will need to thrive in your company's goal-driven culture. Additionally, job descriptions can be rewritten to more closely reflect an organization that is dedicated to reaching goals through the *right* kind of employee engagement and development. And this kind of in-depth and proactive way to **track employee performance** will help to continuously improve overall Quality of Hire.

These advantages extend all the way to new employee onboarding. Having the ability to track employee and organizational goals will make it clear what role a new employee plays in the grand scheme of things. Managers can more effectively communicate the expectations and goals during the onboarding process and, hopefully, instill in new employees a sense of accountability and drive. In turn, new employees will be able to keep themselves accountable and proactively engaged in their own development with their new company.

When organizations are able to create goal transparency, increase engagement and improve how employee performance is managed, goal alignment is no longer just two words mentioned in board meetings and strategy planning, it becomes a reality. **Goal tracking software** facilitates and enhances an organization's ability to strategize, plan and implement goals that lead to success, but what does this goal alignment look like? Essentially, there are three phases in the goal alignment lifecycle.

Phase 1: Goal Cascading and Assigning Roles

When a goal is set—whether on a small or large scale — breaking it down in step-by-step sub-goals is key to identifying which roles to assign to which employees. For example, if the overarching goal is to revamp the company's website, there will be several sub-goals broken down for each team from the marketing department:

Web Development

Enhance user experience, re-design site layout, improve back-end development for more sustainable and easy upkeep.

Design

Design and edit backgrounds for new site that replace stock photos with actual team photos to match desired persona.

SEO

Implement new keyword strategy for SERP optimization.

Content

Rewrite website copy for all pages to create a more customer-centric tone and persona.

Once goal cascading is mapped out, management can assign roles to the right employees in their goal tracking software, giving them a visual breakdown of each step in the organizational goal, who will be accountable for what and a projected deadline for each of those sub-goals.

Phase 2: Facilitate Collaboration and Execute

With the support of goal tracking software, teams that make it to Phase 2 are able to see each other's progress in the project as well as have specific steps with visual components where they can express concerns, celebrate progress or solicit help from other members of the team. Having a framework that keeps goals and progress organized and continuously moving is infinitely better than trying to keep goals organized through endless email threads or an insufficient intranet where things too easily fall through the cracks.

Phase 3: Track Progress and Take Corrective Actions

Having the right goal tracking software means teams can not only track their progress on goals, but each person is able to see how their own performance is developing over time. What's more is that having goal tracking capabilities let's teams see where they are excelling in projects and when it's time to take steps to change or enhance how something is done for the sake of the overarching organizational goal. Team leaders or managers can see how a project unfolds over time and take corrective measures in real-time to improve on areas that are lacking, before mistakes are made and to ensure deadlines are met.

When goals are met, managers are able to look back on completed projects and assess each employee's progress to craft and support the most comprehensive and constructive performance reviews possible, with verifiable and visually enhanced performance data.

Goal alignment begins with how employee performance is managed and spins an all-encompassing web of enhanced, rehabilitated business practices. The **best goal tracking software** will have capabilities that have the potential to improve on virtually every aspect of an organization's systematic processes. By having real-time insight into your people and their work, your organization can begin picking up the pieces of a broken and incomplete process, and finally start achieving goals in the best way possible.
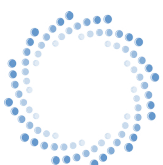
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