

# **How To Achieve Goals -** and avoid the 7 pitfalls that may stop you!



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This E-Book is written to help all people achieve goals - no matter the background, aspirations, or track record. It is a practical and straight forward guide on goal setting, with no filler put in to make the book longer than it should be. In fact, you can read, and re-read this guide in around an hour, making it the ideal goal setting book to keep with you when you need a bit of a pick me up.

I have taught these principles in public workshops, in companies, and in universities, and the principles have been proven to work, and work very well. What gives me the most joy is when people approach me and tell me that the principles have changed their overall approach to goal setting and that they are more motivated than ever to achieve what they want to achieve. Therefore, I need to thank each and every person who has made this E-Book possible, as your feedback has enabled me to put this guide out so that it reaches a bigger audience.

Many, many thanks!

If you are ready to have some of your beliefs shaken up and are willing to put in the work needed to achieve a life of success, then I invite you to read on, and start on the path towards creating the life that you want to create.

### **A personal note**

Although this E-Books is 100% free for distribution, it would be appreciated that you respect what I have done and not change, copy, or take out sections in any way. If you are to quote any sections or re-use any of the contents, please ensure that you reference the Author (me!) and give due recognition. The information presented is a culmination of the my efforts in taking the time out to help people, therefore it is important that such rights are respected. It's the right thing to do!

## The guiding principle - balancing the odds

After working with leaders and goal achievers over the past few years, I have learnt that there is no single solution when it comes to achieve success. True, there are plenty of stuff out there stating that we can achieve goals easily by applying some kind of special formula or some secret, in reality that is not often the case. Whilst some of those claims do have merit, a lot of them take advantage of the fact that most (if not all) people want to achieve maximum gains with minimal effort, and this takes away our focus from how to actually achieve long lasting success.

To achieve goals, we need to position ourselves for success by creating a system which can balance the odds in our favor. In many ways, goal achievement has many parallels to investing the stock market - there are ups and downs (hopefully more ups!), some nerves along the way, some times when you just want to give up, and an exhilarating high when things go the way you want them to. But if you focus on shifting the balance of power towards you and become more of an 'investor' than a "gambler", you significantly increase the chances of success. Of course it doesn't mean that things will always go the way you want them to, but if you focus and apply yourself to succeed, you will get there (often times quicker than you expect to).

To increase the chances of success in the stock market, what does an investor need to do? They need to research and do what they can to put their odds in their favor. Some of this research could include stuff like analyzing the performance of the company, looking at the indicators, reading market news, and so on. After they had done the research and the indicators align towards one particular direction, they would be more comfortable to put their money into the stock and start investing. As they have balanced the odds in their favor, there is a higher likelihood that the stock price may go in their direction as compared to relying on "luck".

There's a big proviso here though. Even though the investor may do their homework and due diligence, it is not guaranteed that the stock price will indeed go up as many things outside of their control can happen. However, because they decided to be in the game, they will decide to make the smart decisions so they can increase their chances of success.

Gambling on the other hand, takes on a different approach. Those who take this approach may do a bit of research, or perhaps listen to a recommendation from a friend, and then invest their money in the hope that the stock price goes in the direction that they want the stock to go in. It's really a "luck of the draw" approach in this type of situation, as those who take this approach have limited confidence or knowledge about what the outcome is most likely to be. Instead of balancing the odds in their favor, they are leaving the odds up to luck. Nothing against responsible gambling, but I think we can all agree that this approach takes away a big element of control over what the outcome will be.

To bring this all together and tie it to goal achievement, it is advantageous to take an investing mentality to balance the odds in your favor when it comes to goals. Because seriously, why would we want to leave our goal achievement up to chance? We want to create systems to help us achieve the goals whilst also having control over the outcome.

How to do so will be covered as we go along but if you prioritize this approach when it comes to balancing the odds, you will be able to cultivate a level of control over the outcome you want to achieve. In addition, you will build up a high level of confidence in your abilities which would be important in setting up a strong foundation for you to achieve real success.

Here is an example used to illustrate both approaches mentioned when it comes to goal achievement.

#### Example of the investing approach

Goal: To lose 10 pounds of weight within 3 months

Approach: Remove all soft drinks and candy from the refrigerator, sign up for gym membership in the local neighborhood, set up a schedule for exercise and calorie consumption, stick to the schedule and track progress daily. Watch clips on Youtube on exercise routines and start applying them to find out what works.

#### Example of the gambling approach

Goal: To lose 10 pounds of weight within 3 months

Approach: Search the Internet for diet pills (so there is no need to cut back on chocolate), repeat positive self talk and affirmations (such as "I am thin, I am thin"), set up a schedule for exercise and calorie consumption but take the "weekend off" as a reward for the efforts done. Watch clips on Youtube about motivation but not really doing anything about it.

With the investing approach, the person is putting themselves in a position to succeed by reducing the factors that can distract them from their goal. They need to take action to lose the weight of course, but since their environment is supportive of what they do, they are more likely to stick to their goal. In business this is called "reducing the barriers to entry", as less barriers equals less obstacles. Although signing up for gym membership doesn't automatically mean that the person will follow through and actually turn up, the fact that membership is signed up (coupled with the fact that the gym is located in the neighborhood) increases the chances that the person will go. The more things added on that reduces the negative impact of external factors, the more likely of the chances of success.

One of the other benefits of the investing approach is that it helps to eliminate the excuses that hold people back from achieving their goals. In other words, it puts the person in a position to succeed because external factors not supporting them are taken away ("You like to eat chocolate but it makes you fat right? There are no chocolates in your refrigerator now, what other excuses do you have to eat chocolate?"). This approach really does work as the environment has an impact on how a person behaves. How much impact it has though ultimately depends on the person.

With the gambling approach, the person is firstly trying to find short cuts as they would like to minimize the amount of work possible in order to achieve their goal and to avoid doing any "real" work. So, they put priority on quick fixes and things that give them the feeling that they are actually doing something.

When they do actually take some "real" action, they try to find a way out to avoid the pain of going through the process, either by shortening the amount of work to be done, or giving themselves some time off to reward themselves for their efforts. When they eventually don't achieve the goal, they have an excuse and say things like "well, I gave it a try but it didn't work". Basically, they are putting their destiny on a few random things, hoping that one of them will stick and help them to achieve their goal.

In order for you to increase the chances of achieving a goal, any goal, the investing approach is the one which is most practical and most likely to lead to success. True, the gambling approach may get you there too, but then again it may not get you there either.

Avoid leaving the driving force behind your success in the hands of others, or factors outside of your control, and you will be on the path towards success faster than you originally thought to be. Surprise yourself, and access the resources that you have both inside and outside of you, to change your life for the better.

## Common obstacles

There are many statistics out there that point out how those who write their goals down are more likely to achieve their goals as compared to those who do not write their goals down. Personally speaking, I don't really pay much attention to those statistics as they are just a snapshot of a particular sample size, but I do strongly believe in the power of writing down goals. Writing down a goal gives your goal a sense of purpose, and a sense of formality that you want to achieve them. However, just writing a goal down is not enough as it must be followed by action. You can't just attract a goal to you by just thinking about it.

That sounds easy enough right? Write a goal down, take action, and then you will achieve your goal. There must be more to it than that!

On a practical level, if achieving goals can be simplified to that one easy to understand sentence, how come most people don't end up achieving their goals? What are some of the obstacles that people face when on the way to goal achievement success?

Listed here are seven of those pitfalls and pointers on how you can navigate around them successfully.

### **Not taking ownership**

I have met some people who believe that they want to achieve a goal, but then expect others to do it for them. They think that it will happen automatically due to some expectation that they have created and they are not willing to put in a lot of work in order to make it happen. Logically they know that they should take ownership of their own goal, but due to their backgrounds or experience, they sabotage their goal achievement abilities before they even start.

Linked to this is the “b” word - blaming. Blaming others for your current situation will not bring you closer to your goal, it just transfers your decision making power to factors outside of your control. Blaming doesn't change anything.

If you want to achieve anything in life, you need to take full ownership of it. Other people can help you and support you on your way, but the success or failure to achieve your own goal is tied back directly to you.

### **Limited track record of success, leading to lack of confidence**

If you feel that you have not achieved anything noteworthy in the past, you may lack the confidence to achieve something in the future. It's natural to think this way, as asking someone to achieve a lofty goal requires confidence that they could do it and see it through. Identifying the things that you have achieved in the past is an important step, as you will then realize that yes, you can do something and that you have achieved something before.

### **Too far out into the future**

Let me put it out there, I am not a strong believer in long term goals. I believe in setting a long term direction of where you want to be in a few years time, but I do not believe that most of us should set a goal which stretches out past 6 months. Some of us can do that, but honestly, most of us cannot not.

Why? Because life happens. Things come up which require our attention, or plans change which can affect our goal. We may start off with the best intentions, but then something happens and we abandon our goal before we reach it. True, unexpected things may not come up and we can reach long term goals, but why put ourselves in that situation? It's about balancing the odds in our favor right?

Instead of setting one long term goal, set yourself a short term goal that is linked towards your longer term vision. After you reach your first short term goal, set another short term goal. Doing it this way will build momentum and increase your level of confidence in achieving bigger things.

### **Do it because I have to, not because I want to**

If we set a goal that doesn't motivate us, we probably will not achieve it. That is why we need to set a goal that we want to achieve, and not set a goal that we don't want, but think that we need to because of some other reason. Let's say that your boss told that you need finish reading a training manual because it will help you to network better during social events. You may not even like going to social events, but feel that you need to do it because your boss asked you to. At the beginning, you may decide to read a section every day but after a while, you will notice that instead of reading a section every day, you read a section every two days. After a few days, you may end up forcing yourself to read a section once a week, because you don't want to do it.

To increase your chances of achieving a goal, make sure that you decide on a goal that you want to achieve.

This will give you added motivation to take the steps necessary to achieve the goal, and is a lot more powerful than setting up a goal that you don't want to achieve, but have to achieve. Also, make sure that the goal is set for you. Do not set goals for another person, as they may not want to achieve the goal that you set for them. Leave it up to them to set their own goals.

### **Lack of discipline**

How many times have you decided to do something, start it, and then stop halfway? This issue affects many people and is a major obstacle towards goal achievement. The lack of discipline comes down to a variety of factors, but it is mostly due to a lack of motivation. If we are motivated to do something, we will tell ourselves that we will do it. If we are strongly motivated to do something, we will make sure that we do it!

However, building up discipline takes time, even if we are motivated towards reaching the goals that we set for ourselves. After discipline is built, I believe that it is easier to maintain it than it is to maintain motivation, since our motivation levels can change on a regular basis. Once we build up discipline in a certain area, it becomes part of our foundation and is hard to break.

To build discipline, you need to overcome an initial pain barrier. Let's say that you set yourself of saving up \$1000 USD a month, whilst you are currently saving only \$500 a month. To save this amount, you may need to give up certain things, such as entertainment and buying new clothes every week. At the beginning it may be difficult as you are breaking and challenging certain patterns and processes that you have been running for quite a while. So, you need to force yourself to maintain this discipline within the first week or two. After two weeks, it becomes easier. After a month, it becomes part of your routine and habit, in that you will find it difficult to spend money unnecessarily. And the good thing is, breaking a habit is hard! So once you build it up, it's easier to maintain. Building up discipline till it becomes a habit, that's the tough part. But, the toughest part is the beginning. Once you get over the hump, it becomes a heck of a lot easier.

### **The goal does not link to a grander purpose**

What good is a goal if it doesn't lead to anywhere? Using the previous example of saving money, the goal of saving \$1000 USD a month would become increasingly powerful and a lot more motivating if it links to say, buying a house, or taking your family on a vacation. Having a goal just for the sake of having a goal is ok in some aspects - it builds discipline and it gives a sense of purpose for a short while. However, having it link to something grander, something amazing, and something fulfilling, will increase the chances of it being realized.

### **The goal is not written down**

Having a goal written down makes it official. Having a goal only in your head is similar to not having a goal at all. It is just something you want to do, or just an idea that you in your head. Ideas come and go, so if you don't write your goal down it can get replaced by another idea, and then you may not start doing anything at all. Writing down a goal builds commitment and focus, and cultivates a sense of ownership of you wanting to get stuff done.

So yes, in order to start on the path of successfully achieving goals, you must write your goal down. However, there is a certain structure and format to write down the goal in a way that is effective and to increase the chances of success.

Those in the business world, especially in project management, have probably heard of a S.M.A.R.T Goal. This ensures that the goal written down fulfills some criteria so that it sets a strong foundation for goal achievement success. However, when it comes to personal goal setting, particularly when it comes to short term goals, the traditional S.M.A.R.T criteria loses a bit of its luster.

### **We forget**

Ok, we are human so we forget sometimes! I was reading an article the other day stating that most goals are forgotten two weeks after being set. Think about "New Year Resolutions"! Apparently gym memberships spike up at the end of the year and the beginning of the year, and then the gyms are half empty by the time February comes around. Scary stuff!

This concludes this E-Book on how to achieve goals through balancing the odds in your favor to steer you towards success. Goal achievement is a powerful thing that everyone should do - it drives our focus towards living an empowering life. The more action we take, the more momentum we build, and the more successful we eventually become. If you find this article useful and would like to read other articles that can help you become more successful in your personal and business lives, check out our site at [leaderin.life](http://leaderin.life)

### **About the Author: David Giang**

**From functionally overseeing a business with revenues of 1B+ USD to being a developer of leaders and coaches, David knows how to empower people to achieve real results through a unique blend of Western and Eastern approaches.**



*David has helped thousands of people around the world achieve success and has a proven track record in the four major value adding areas - training and consultancy, people development, corporate leadership, and academia. Having trained and coached teams within various MNCs, David has gained a practical understanding of how to help teams achieve real results regardless of their background. From an academic standpoint, David had attained two Master degrees, including MBA, from the leading management school in Australia, and is also a certified Master Coach and Trainer of Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), as well as other areas focused on the achievement of results.*

Many of the world's most successful people either works with a coach or have worked with a coach to achieve greater levels of success and satisfaction in their lives. As a success coach and trainer of coaches, David offers personal and group coaching remotely through Skype to anywhere in the world (the Internet makes many things possible!). Apart from having a track record of helping others achieve success, his rates are very reasonable for the results that he can help you achieve! You can email him at this address to find out more: [david@leaderin.life](mailto:david@leaderin.life)

Stop settling for what life has given you so far and start taking control of your future. Your future self will thank you for it :)