

Managers who know where they want the business to go are more likely to get it there. What is the vision for one year, five years, or 10 years from now? Will it suffice to stay the course, or will plans be drawn up to expand, alter product line, introduce new methods, or change in other ways?

Goals as Targets for Success



- What do I want to achieve and by when, through use of my time, abilities, land, equipment, and financial resources?
- What part will this ranch play in the lives of each member of my family and vice versa?
- How much more net income can we generate from this land over the next 10 years by replanting to another variety?
- What kind of relationships do I want to have with my employees, suppliers, and customers, and how will I know if I achieve them?
- What do I really want out of life?

Most people think about the future of their lives, families, and businesses. In doing so, they ask and at least tentatively answer questions like those above about hopes, dreams, ambitions, and concerns. Answers to such questions usually reveal or explicitly describe a goal—a purpose, result, or state of affairs to work toward.

Goals reflect personal values and beliefs, apparent opportunities, resource limitations, and relative priorities, especially when choices among them have to be made. They not only help to establish a sense of direction but also serve as benchmarks for measuring levels of performance and accomplishment, for individuals, as well as businesses. When goals are well defined, reasonable, internally compatible, and shared, they support agricultural operations in the short and long terms. People are more likely to achieve their goals when they know what they are trying to accomplish, by when, and how.

Management activity is goal-directed, and managers can use goals productively with employees to:

1. Guide performance

Goals that are clear and specific help focus the use of personnel time and energy.

Two stonecutters with different supervisors were asked what they were doing. One of them replied, “I’m cutting this stone into blocks.” The second replied, “I’m part of a team that’s building a cathedral.”

2. Challenge and motivate

The presence of a challenging, achievable goal encourages people to use their skills and abilities to the fullest.

3. Build job identity, understanding, and commitment

Sharing overall business goals with employees (and family members) helps them to see their part in the context of the whole, to better contribute outside of their routine tasks, and to take pride in collective accomplishments.



In all businesses, periodic review and plan adjustment is an ongoing part of effective management.

Setting Goals

Goal development can be individual or collaborative. In setting organizational, departmental, and individual goals within a business, managers face the choice of how much to involve others. No approach fits all circumstances. It is a good rule of thumb, however, to provide for at least some consultation with all people on whose understanding and efforts the goal achievement will depend. In agricultural operations where the family and business are interwoven, including all members in goal setting can help clarify expectations in business and non-business areas of family life.

Some people like to test the draft content of their shorter-term goals or objectives against “SMAC” criteria:

Specific. Does the goal unambiguously describe a target outcome and time for achievement?

Measurable. Is there a clear measure of goal achievement? If progress and completion cannot be measured, how can the work toward them be effectively managed?

Achievable. Challenging goals can encourage the individual, crew, department, or organization as a whole to “stretch,” but not if they cannot be met without superhuman abilities or other unavailable resources. Is there really a decent chance of meeting the goal?

Consistent with values. Goals that are not consistent with personal, family, and business values and beliefs are not likely to be met.

For example, a goal to remodel your dairy barn within the next five years does not pass the SMAC test because the goal is too vague. A more specific,