

**The following is an excerpt from the book
So Many Leaders, So Little Leadership
You can order a copy from the Store section.**

CHAPTER TEN: GOALS REVISITED

I've named this chapter "Goals Revisited" because I discussed the issue of goals in my first book, *Life Is a Gold Mine: Can You Dig It?* That discussion focused on setting personal goals, and I reiterated that *everyone* can and should set goals for their life. This book, however, is addressed to present and future leaders, so in this chapter we'll look at organizational goals from a leader's point of view.

John Haggai, founder and president of the Haggai Institute for Leaders in Singapore, writes, "Goal-setting is an ongoing discipline of the true leader. Failure at this point destroys the confidence of the followers because it destroys the credibility of the leader."ⁱ I agree.

It's one thing for a leader to speak about vision and mission, but it's quite another to bring that vision and mission into reality. Without clear goals that make sense to all involved, the vision and mission will never leave the paper on which they are written. And that will undermine the credibility of any leader, no matter how gifted or charismatic.

Haggai continues,

A vision is the foundation of all leadership. The leader's vision requires a commitment to act, which is called a mission. But the vision and mission are put into practice with a set of specific, measurable steps designed to achieve the mission. Those steps are called goals. The vision and mission will remain constant, but the goals should be reviewed monthly or more often. At that review you should assess what goals have been accomplished, examine those that are not completed, determine what corrective measures should be taken, and set new goals.ⁱⁱ

I've found the issue of goal setting to be where most leaders fail in the leadership process, especially (but not exclusively) those leaders in church or ministry work. This happens for the following reasons:

1. **Relying on the power of the vision** – Many leaders are visionaries who see the end result before it ever exists. They see it so clearly that once they have spoken it, they tend to think that it will take place simply because they have spoken it. A vision needs a mission and a set of goals if it is ever to become a reality.
2. **Changing the vision** – Earlier I stated a prominent leader who changed the vision and mission of a major organization three times in one year! Creative leaders tend to live in the creative side of their personality, and their own creativity can begin to work against their vision, because the visionaries are *always* ready to move on to the next “vision.”
3. **Lack of a team approach** – Because leaders usually have the vision, they find it hard to entrust that vision to other people with the experience and skill to bring it to pass. Consequently, visionaries can micromanage the process, involving themselves in every aspect of the operation and frustrating key, skilled people. This can kill the team approach to accomplishing a vision that is larger than visionary leaders can accomplish.
4. **Haste** – Most leaders are impatient when it comes to taking action. They see the vision and want it delivered *yesterday*. They're in a hurry, and don't see the necessity of setting three-, five-, or ten-year goals, not to mention regular accountability meetings to check the progress of the goals.

In my own experience of working with visionary and creative leaders, I've tried to use the annual budget process to focus the organization's goal-setting process. Let me explain.

Our budget process at Covenant Church of Pittsburgh, for example, is a mix of business and ministry. We begin our budget process for the upcoming year in September or October. First, I make sure that we are clear about what our income and expenses were in the current year. Then I look at those expenses and the income and determine what to carry over to the next year. Were there special one-time expenses in the current year or were there special donations that we can't count on in the coming year?

As part of this process, I then have the staff work on their own evaluations, which are due by the end of the year. I don't evaluate staff; I let them evaluate themselves and I review what they write. I ask them six questions as part of their evaluation:

- 1. Your Performance:** Please evaluate your job performance based on your responses that you submitted last December. In what areas were you successful? Where did your performance not measure up to your goals? Why?
- 2. Your church/job responsibilities:** What are your basic responsibilities as you understand them? What areas would you like to expand into next year? How can you do your job more effectively? What goals can you set for your area? What can you do to help reduce costs, increase productivity, or increase church membership in the coming year?
- 3. Your personal growth:** What steps will you take in the coming year to grow personally or professionally? This should include continuing education, new skills obtained, a book reading program, languages learned, etc. Are there any

conferences/training programs that you would like to attend to help you do your job more effectively?

4. The Great Commission: What will you do next year to help fulfill the Great Commission to reach all nations with the message of the gospel? This should include missions trips, volunteer outreach programs here at home, community involvement, and the like.

5. Your needs from leadership: Taking all of the above into consideration, what do you need from me and from leadership to do your job and accomplish your goals?

6. One Priority Item: What one *new* project do you think you can start in the coming year that will bring the greatest return to Covenant Church? (I will give you an example: for me, it's leadership training).

Along with this two-page evaluation, I ask each employee to submit a “wish list” for the budget. What is it that they would like to have or do in their area that will cost money and that is consistent with the job goals they're submitting to me?

When we have our estimated expenses, we mix in the items from the wish list and submit this first draft of the budget to the board of directors. It's at that level that we estimate what we think our attendance and income will be for the coming year. From that, we determine what new things from “wish lists” can be included in the budget for approval and what items must stay on the “faith list” pending income from special fundraising projects.

All this serves as the main focal point for our organizational goal-setting. From this, we determine our goals for

1. Annual attendance and growth

2. Annual income
3. Department-by-department activities
4. Individual activities
5. New programs and staff

We also determine what projects and activities we won't continue, for every organization needs to honestly and sometimes "ruthlessly" determine what it can't continue in light of current goals and staff.

It's not a sophisticated process, but it works in our setting (in 1999, we had gross revenues of just under \$5 million, a Sunday attendance in excess of 2,000 and a staff of 100 people, not counting the large number of volunteers involved in any number of ministry areas). The annual budget serves as our collection of goals for the coming year, and we've grown numerically and financially every year since I returned to Pittsburgh in 1995. In large part, I would attribute our lack of progress in other areas to our inability to set any specific goals and thus to focus our energies on where we want to go.

Is it time for some honesty in your organization and with your leadership? If your vision and mission are clear, why haven't you been more productive? Could it be a lack of clear goals for whatever reason? I encourage you to sit down with your leadership team and talk about this. Bring in an "outsider" you trust who can help direct your discussions and help you reach some practical conclusions.

Look at every area of your operation and then set practical, achievable goals that are consistent with your vision and mission. And then stick to them until the leadership team decides they are accomplished or need to be abandoned for new goals. Don't settle for strong visionary leadership that's always creative but never productive. Without

goals the vision cannot and will not be achieved. Don't settle for sounding good, but work toward doing good. Your vision is worth the effort.

ⁱJohn Haggai, *Lead On!* (Milton Keynes, England: Word Publishing, 1986), page 41.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, page 42.