

Launching 2023 with a Sense of Direction & Accomplishment

by **MICHAEL SIPE, President — CrossPointe Capital**

If you've been in business awhile, you have undoubtedly done goal-setting exercises. Perhaps you are doing one now in preparation for 2023. It's well-established that business leaders who establish and write down their goals are more likely to achieve them, and that those who don't set and write down goals fall short of their potential. This is also ancient wisdom. King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, wrote in the Book of Proverbs, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." The issue is not whether we should set and communicate goals, but perhaps how best to do so.



In my coaching work with CEOs and business leaders, we use a variety of tools to establish individual and organizational purpose, vision, values, goals, and action steps. Here are two unusual approaches that I've found to be remarkably useful.

Directional Statements. Nearly every goal-setting seminar I've attended starts off by asking the question, "What do you want?" Or it opens with the directive to, "Make a list of everything you want." And then you are charged to make your goal statements SMART: Specific, Measurable, Action-Oriented and Time-Bound. That's all fine, at the appropriate time, but as an opening move, I believe it takes us too quickly into the weeds and potentially leads us in a direction we might not wish to go.

Consider King Solomon's instruction on vision. The Proverb does not say, "Where there are no goals, the people perish." The Proverb speaks of vision, which is a directional concept. Therefore, I suggest, before you jump into a goal-setting exercise, that you ask the question, "What direction do I want to head?" Ask this question in the various domains of your life (Spiritual, Physical, Mental, Emotional, Relational, etc.), and for the various aspects of your business (Operations, Finance, Sales, Personnel, etc.). Your answers should not be quantitative or objective. Allow them to be subjective and qualitative.

Subjective and qualitative answers will prove to be especially helpful in filtering and shaping the goals and action steps you and your organization establish. Evaluate the goals and action steps within the context of your directional statements. As you consider a potential goal or a set of action steps, ask yourself, "Does this lead me in a direction I really want to go?" If the answer

is, "No," then it probably makes sense to re-evaluate the goal or action steps. After all, achieving a goal that takes you in a direction you don't want to go is clearly counter-productive.

Yet, I see leaders do this frequently. For a myriad of reasons, they set goals that are inconsistent with where they truly desire to head, and go after them with all their Type-A ferocity, just because goal-oriented leaders ought to achieve the goals they set...right? The visual metaphor that comes to mind is the image of a guy climbing vigorously up a ladder, only to discover it's leaning against the wrong wall.

Sometimes we can fail or fall short on reaching a goal, and yet in its pursuit, we can make dramatic progress in the direction we want to go. I've heard that called "failing forward." I suggest that failing forward is far superior to successfully accomplishing goals that take you places you don't want to go.

Therefore, before you launch your goal-setting exercise for 2023, ask yourself the question, "In what direction do I want to move?" Then weigh your goals and plans based on your answer. Confirm, adjust (or abandon) accordingly.

2023 in the Rear View Mirror. Goal-setting exercises are inherently forward-looking. They generate declarations about what you intend to accomplish. Most goal-setting workshops even teach how to write your declarations vividly to support your objectives. No matter how clearly you write your forward-looking goals, however, I bet at times you may have experienced a sense of reservation that often expresses itself as, "Yeah, but..."

This phenomenon is especially prevalent in organizations, where the leaders "set goals," and their would-be followers say, "Yeah, sure...we'll see..." If you're a leader, you know what I'm talking about.

Here's a different approach. Instead of projecting forward, do a little time travel and reflect backward. Play this game: Pretend it's December 31, 2023, and you get to write the story about what happened in 2023. It's not a projection, it's an imaginary historical report. Write it past tense. Write about what you experienced. Write about how you grew. Write about who you met.

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Michael Sipe, President
CrossPointe, Inc.

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Write about what you learned. Write about what you achieved. Write about the emotions you felt. Write about your sensory experiences: what did you touch, smell, taste, see and hear? Write about what didn't work and how you adjusted. Write about your surprising discoveries. Write about what happened for you personally, with your family and friends, and for your business.

As you write, suspend judgment and all the, "Yeah, but..." that often come with forward-thinking goal setting. Just write a story about what the year 2023 was like.

Here's why this is useful. First of all, I've done this for decades with leaders I've coached, and I've never had anyone write a story about how they achieved and experienced a year they didn't want. Second, this exercise allows you to visualize the year as if it really happened. It's a mind game that top athletes

and achievers in every field of human endeavor use to build belief. See, when something has already happened, you believe it. Think about when you hit a goal in the past. You believe you did it. Your mind treats a well-told, richly constructed imaginary story about the history of 2023 pretty much as if you had already experienced it, thus, your belief level will be high. Third, your "goals" for the year will automatically drop out of the story you wrote. And finally, your enthusiasm for 2023 will get a compelling turbo-charge.

Try these two exercises personally. Try them with your spouse and your kids. Try them with your team. Share the stories you each write and compare. I'm confident you'll have fun. I'm sure you'll learn a lot about yourself and the important people in your life. I predict you'll enter 2023 with a fresh perspective and a sense of direction, confidence and positive expectancy that will carry you through one of your best years ever. Send me a note at MichaelSipe@10xGroups.com and let me know what you experienced. Here's wishing you a happy and prosperous New Year!

*Michael Sipe is a local business coach and mergers and acquisitions advisor.
10xGroups.com • CrossPointeCapital.com*