

# 2600 Phrases for Setting Effective Performance GOALS

*READY-TO-USE PHRASES THAT REALLY GET RESULTS*

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# Introduction

## How to Use This Book to Save Time and to Write Compelling Performance Goals

**S**etting goals for your employees—or, more accurately, helping them set appropriate goals for themselves—is a very individualized and personal endeavor. Adding the right elements to the recipe, so to speak, therefore varies significantly depending on the individual’s needs and aspirations. Still, your key focus always lies in customizing a blueprint or template for success to help your staff members find new ways of increasing their own productivity, which of course improves your departmental and ultimately company performance.

## Creating Development Plans for Employees

So how exactly should you go about creating individual development plans for your subordinates, and, more importantly, how can this book help you get there? First and foremost, always ask your employees for their input. Without your subordinates’ involvement, drafting development plans in goal statements becomes hit or miss. Second, realize that employees will remain

loyal to their companies—regardless of headhunters’ calls luring them away to greener pastures—as long as they’re on a positive career growth trajectory and they feel appreciated for what they contribute. This so-called *psychic income* serves as the glue that binds workers to their organizations, and it’s clearly the most significant element of any development plan.

If you convince subordinates that achieving specific goals at work equates to adding vivid bullets to their resumes, then you’ll develop an accomplishment mentality that enables your employees not only to motivate themselves but also to reinvent themselves in light of your organization’s changing needs. That’s where an average manager or supervisor steps up to become an outstanding leader. Great leaders know how to set up their subordinates for success. Then they simply step aside and get out of the way.

When you describe the best bosses and mentors that you’ve had in your career, you’re more than likely to use the verb “to be” rather than “to do.” In fact, in all human relations, “beingness” typically trumps “doingness” because the greatest influencers on our lives were loving, supportive, caring, patient, and selfless in guiding us. And those traits all came much more from who they *were* than what they *did*. In other words, providing others direction and offering guidance is actually a lot easier than you think. It’s simply a matter of being a selfless leader who’s committed to balancing the company’s needs with those of the individual worker.

If you’re able to make this one paradigm shift in your belief system—that great leaders focus on *being* rather than on *doing*—you’ll cut a lot of stress out of your life and develop teams that will remain very loyal to you. Loyalty begets respect, respect begets devotion, and we all know that devoted employees will give you 110% of their efforts. In short, if you command employees from the top down, you’ll get no more than 100% of their efforts out of their sense of compliance. But if you can

touch their hearts and help them to love you as their boss and mentor, you'll build amazingly strong teams with lots of camaraderie and teamwork and, in so doing, catapult your own career to new heights.

With these simple premises in mind, understand that you're not responsible for motivating your team. Motivation is internal, and I can't motivate you any more than you can motivate me. However, as a leader within your organization, you are indeed responsible for creating an environment in which people can motivate themselves. And that fine distinction is where this book can come in rather handy.

## More Than Just a List of Descriptive Phrases

This book offers a lot more than just descriptive goal phrases outlining competencies and responsibilities. It provides wisdom and guidance on how to manage your career, lead your team more effectively, and inspire those around you to reach higher levels of individual performance and achievement. *2600 Phrases for Setting Effective Performance Goals* will provide you with insightful strategies to accomplish more yourself as well as through others, to serve as an effective career mentor and coach, and to help your company stand out from its competition. For example, when it comes to motivating and leading your team, look to phrases like these to minimize misunderstanding and open the lines of communication:

- ◆ Encourage individuality and foster an environment of respect and inclusion.
- ◆ Recognize that perception is reality until proven otherwise; therefore, always hold yourself accountable for your own “perception management.”

- ◆ Welcome and encourage others' feedback so that they are comfortable sharing minor concerns with you before they become major impediments.
- ◆ Nix conversations about politics, religion, or politically incorrect, nonwork-related issues, which are sure to foster resentment or frustration.
- ◆ Learn what you could change about your own behavior to invoke a different response in others.
- ◆ Understand that building on someone's strengths makes more sense than compensating for their weaknesses.

Similarly, you can become a stronger career mentor and coach by helping your subordinates grow and develop in their own careers if you:

- ◆ Encourage others to engage in random acts of kindness.
- ◆ Find creative ways of surprising your customers.
- ◆ Focus on making bad relationships good and good relationships better.
- ◆ Look for new ways of reinventing the workflow in light of our company's changing needs.
- ◆ Think relationship first, transaction second.
- ◆ Realize that people can tell more about you by the depth of your questions than by the quality of your statements.
- ◆ Separate the people from the problem.
- ◆ Heed Mark Twain's adage: "If we were meant to talk more than we listen, we would have two mouths and one ear."
- ◆ Always provide two solutions for each question you ask or suggestion you raise.

- ◆ Employ right-brain imagination, artistry, and intuition plus left-brain logic and planning.
- ◆ Convert “yes . . . *but*” to “yes . . . *and*” statements to acknowledge the speaker’s point of view and to share additional insights.

Likewise, recognizing that managing in corporate America today is fraught with legal peril for the unsuspecting leader, keep sage guidance like the following in mind:

- ◆ Never promise confidentiality before knowing the nature of the question or request.
- ◆ Employ the attorney-client privilege by copying our in-house counsel, asking for a legal analysis and opinion, and limiting your audience to as few individuals as possible.
- ◆ Recognize that the fundamental claim of *unfairness* may become the basis for a legal charge of discrimination.

Don’t forget the importance of finding your own work-life balance and peace of mind as you face the daily grind and challenges that come your way throughout your career.

- ◆ Practice the adage, “What you want for yourself, give to another.”
- ◆ Convince team members not to act on principle to the extent that their positions become rigid and self-justified, allowing for little compromise.
- ◆ Put others’ needs ahead of your own, and expect them to respond in kind.

- ◆ Realize that people don't necessarily resist change; they just resist being changed.
- ◆ Accept that no one does anything wrong given their model of the world; therefore, look for common interests and underlying concerns if you need to heal a wound on your team.
- ◆ Ensure that your team communicates upward and asks for permission up front rather than for forgiveness after the fact.
- ◆ Teach what you choose to learn.
- ◆ Help your team find individual and creative solutions by asking, "I realize you don't know, but if you *did* know, what would your recommendation be?"
- ◆ Change your perspective, and you'll change your perception.

Chock full of insightful guidance and career and leadership tips, this book is packed with useful information that you can apply any time of the year, not just during performance appraisals. So sit back and let *2600 Phrases for Setting Effective Performance Goals* serve as a handy guide and guiding hand to walk you through the challenging task of helping your subordinates set not only their annual goals but also the measurable outcomes to ensure they've achieved them.

## How to Use This Book

Much like the companion book, *2600 Phrases for Effective Performance Reviews*, this book attempts to serve as your ghost-writer and sage guide during the annual performance review.

Part I focuses on the characteristics and core competencies that are typically found in a company's annual performance appraisal document. Addressing matters like listening skills, communication abilities, interpersonal relations, and quantity/quality performance factors is a critical element in an individual's overall work performance. The book you now hold in your hands likewise focuses on setting specific goals around these very core competencies. The book's content works well whether you're challenged by an employee who may be a bit eccentric, quirky, or otherwise difficult to categorize and describe in writing, or whether you need specific phrases for writing your own performance goals.

Part II of this book will likewise follow the outline of *2600 Phrases for Effective Performance Reviews*, addressing goals for many of the most common positions found in corporate America today, such as sales and marketing, accounting and finance, HR, IT, legal, manufacturing, and operations. With this holistic approach toward individual performance goals as well as "role" goals for some of the most common positions in corporate America today, you'll have a cross-referencing tool to help you more clearly define your own thoughts.

The annual performance appraisal process covers both historical and forward-looking topics. The historical side looks at past performance relative to departmental and company goals as well as peer performance. The development plan, in comparison, sets the stage for future expectations and outlines the concrete and measurable outcomes that need to be reached to show that those goals were achieved.

Development plans, by definition, should be a two-way street. The exercise of obtaining agreement on the goals should be the glue between you and your employee or your boss throughout the review period. Following are some suggestions for creating individual development plans to help everyone stay engaged and self-motivated.

## Tips for Setting Effective Performance Goals for Your Employees

First, get your whole team onboard with your *achievement orientation* by creating a quarterly calendar on your departmental share drive that all team members can access. This simple spreadsheet gives everyone equal ownership of documenting their key projects along with updates and completion notes so that nothing falls through the cracks, achievements are codified for everyone to see, and completion can be celebrated.

With this group production tool in hand, you need to learn what motivates each player on your team. Assuming a span of control of roughly four to eight subordinates per supervisor, this one-on-one approach should be fairly straightforward and not particularly time-consuming for you. It may, however, require a somewhat significant investment of time by your subordinates, who may want to give some very serious thought to having you help them map out their career growth plans. Here's how it might work.

At first glance, you may come across as attempting to add to your staff's already heavy workload. But this kind of work is different because it's all about them and their career interests. So don't be surprised to see your strongest players involve themselves very deeply in this exercise. After all, you're helping them fine-tune their longer-term career goals while focusing on building their skills and accomplishments now. That not only helps them when it comes time to draft their annual self-review at performance appraisal time. It also helps them add significant bullets to their resumes. And the strongest players will always be resume builders.

Determine what motivates each individual member of your team by asking them to rank-order their priorities in terms of the following six guidelines:

*If you had to choose two categories from the following six, which would you say hold the most significance for you career-wise?*

- 1. Career progression through the ranks and opportunities for promotion and advancement*
- 2. Lateral assumption of increased job responsibilities and skill building (e.g., rotational assignments in other areas, overseas opportunities, and the like)*
- 3. Acquisition of new technical skills (typically requiring outside training and certification)*
- 4. Development of stronger leadership, managerial, or administrative skills*
- 5. Work-life balance*
- 6. Money and other forms of compensation*

Consider that the sixth option, money, usually ranks fourth or fifth in exit surveys, far behind the critical areas of recognition and appreciation, open communication and respect, and opportunities for career growth and new learning. In other words, within reason, people will typically look toward the psychic income derived from working more than the money.

Also, as much as people tend to focus on money matters when making career decisions—which they very well should within reason—consider this fact: Most people who enjoy their work, who feel as though they make a positive difference, and who are otherwise at or near the top of Maslow’s hierarchy in terms of self-fulfillment will stay put—despite headhunters’ offers of 10–20% pay increases. Retention is what setting performance goals is all about: In the world of talent management, we keep the best and the brightest and build on their strengths.

Next, once you have individually identified the top one or two areas, shift the responsibility for reaching those goals to your

employee. What can we do as a company to support you? What can I do as your supervisor to help you get there? What would it look like if this were happening for you right here and now?

Is there a risk of hearing pie-in-the-sky wish lists? Possibly. But that's easy enough to fix simply by reminding your employee about the realistic budget constraints you're under. What's more important, though, is that you're empowering your employees to develop a realistic and customized set of goals that will help them prepare for their next career move, either at your company or elsewhere.

And that last sentence isn't a mistake. Read it again: "either at your company *or elsewhere*." Yes, selfless leadership is about helping your employees see that you're putting their needs first. And that kind of prioritization is rare to find these days in leaders. But here's the trick: People tend *not* to leave leaders whom they admire, trust, and, in many ways, love. After all, how often are they going to find managers who put their needs at the top of the list, give of themselves so willingly, and are so willing to serve as career mentors and coaches?

Do you see the paradigm shift? If you're putting their needs first, if you're coming from beingness rather than doingness, if your wisdom guides them through some of the toughest trials they might face in their jobs, they're not leaving you! And occasionally when they do for career growth reasons, you'll be happy for them because you'll know deep down that you were an instrumental part of their newfound success.

But this approach has another benefit. When you get employees thinking in terms of hard-core accomplishments and develop an achievement mentality, they learn very quickly how important it is to rack up those bullets on their resumes. Offer to review your employees' resumes with them. Teach them to use their resume as a career map and as a future guide to focus their efforts. If they're building resume bullets, they're building achievements in their annual self-reviews, which means your

appraisal process becomes that much easier because they're doing all the work!

Think of this approach as the most creative aspect of leadership and management. You get an amazing amount of work done by a very focused and dedicated team. You're having fun while you're doing it. And you're teaching, by example, how your subordinates can one day in turn repay the favor by building happy, healthy, and achievement-oriented teams of their own. And don't forget all the admiration and respect that will come your way as a result of your selfless leadership style and wisdom. You'll be working less hard, getting more done through others, and garnering kudos from your own manager because of your outstanding leadership abilities.

Simply put, when you practice selfless leadership and put your team's needs first, you'll find that people will typically respond in kind. They'll work harder to demonstrate their appreciation of your leadership. They'll feel engaged and self-motivated, and they'll consequently find new ways of reinventing themselves in light of your department's changing needs. Equally as important, they'll hold themselves accountable for the end result. You can't ask for much more from any "dream team." Once you master this formula, you can replicate your success over and over again throughout your career.

And what better avenue do you have to start this engagement process than during the annual performance review? Setting future goals with your employee, as well as time frames and measurable outcomes, is what makes work fun. But setting goals once a year probably isn't enough for most people. Too many things change too quickly in business these days, and plans have to be tweaked and rearranged fairly regularly. So if setting goals based on the individual's strengths and areas of interest is the launching pad, then determining appropriate follow-up intervals is the logical next step in this yearlong trajectory.

Ask your staffers at the time of the appraisal meeting when

they'd like to meet with you again to determine progress against these goals and benchmarks. The ideal answer is quarterly: Three-month review intervals are healthy in terms of reviewing annual goals. So if a subordinate suggests a quarterly follow-up, simply ask for a calendar meeting marker for quarterly meetings spread over the upcoming twelve months.

Note that *they* send *you* the calendar invitation. *Their* career is at issue here, and you're offering to help. But always treat adults as adults, and allow them to take the lead in seeking out your guidance, not vice versa.

What if someone wants to meet in six months to review goals? That's probably okay, depending on the individual's level of independence, role knowledge, and tenure in position. My best recommendation, though, is not to allow an entire year to slip by without discussing progression toward goals, challenges, blind spots, and the like. Remember that the goal statement is in many ways the contract that binds you and your employee throughout the evaluation period. The individual development plan helps you both keep your eye on the ball, bond in overcoming unforeseen obstacles and challenges, and celebrate intermittent achievements that can be bulleted on a resume or on the employee's annual self-evaluation form.

If this sounds like the annual goal-setting process is more of a verb than a noun, you're getting the picture. Too many companies and organizational leaders see the annual performance appraisal as a *form* rather than as an ongoing *process* of engagement, interaction, achievement, and celebration. Performance appraisal becomes a mandatory annual paper chase necessary so that you can justify giving a subordinate a merit increase. And then all that paperwork goes into the individual's personnel file, never to see the light of day again until the following year. What a lost opportunity! The *process* is the point of it all!

*Change your perspective, and you'll change your perception.*  
In other words, change how you think of the annual review and

goal-setting exercise, and you'll experience a totally different outcome of the power it has to focus your energies, open the lines of communication, and keep everyone on track. Seen in this light, the appraisal process is the one annual exercise that the company leadership does for its employees to help them get ahead in their careers! It's no coincidence that the process strengthens not only your company but also your own individual performance as a leader. Don't ever let an opportunity like this go to waste!

## Tips for Setting Goals for Yourself

Most of us work 2,080 hours per year, and, for many of us, that's the bare minimum. But only one of those 2,080 or more hours is reserved for us. It is the one hour when we get to discuss our own assessment of how we've performed over that entire year, along with our goals for the next. And assuming your supervisor's onboard and in agreement with both your historical assessment and future game plan, then all the stars align, and we experience self-fulfillment through our work.

Now ratchet it up a notch: Instead of giving ourselves the gift of one hour per year, how about a 400% increase by giving ourselves four? In other words, what happens if we work together with a yardstick we've both agreed on to measure our personal progress and contribution to the company one quarter at a time? Personal progress and contribution to the company go hand in hand: If I'm adding skills and becoming a stronger player, then my company benefits because of my greater capabilities. I'm making a positive difference at work, and I'm keeping my skills up-to-date, my responsibilities fresh, and my resume targeted for future growth and stability.

This is a win-win-win for everybody: employee, supervisor, and company. And your yardstick—your individual development plan—should be kept front and center in your binder or note-

book so that you can always remind yourself of where you're going and rethink new and faster ways of getting there. If you are a supervisor, your employees' annual goal worksheets should be front and center in *your* binder or notebook. They should act as a constant reminder of the agreements you've made and of the goals that you want to help your team members reach. They serve as a creative guidepost to help you move your employees forward faster.

Simply put, both you and your employees are focused, bonded, and working together toward a common goal. And your contract with—or your pledge to—one another sits up front in both your binders so that it can be referred to often. Congratulations! You've just learned how to maximize the power of an incredibly simple tool that enables you both to excel in your respective careers while tremendously benefiting your company.

## A Final Thought

Although the examples throughout the book focus on both employee performance and conduct goals, the samples themselves can't replace the individualized goal-setting exercises outlined in this introduction. The big bang of the appraisal and goal-setting process always comes from making it an individualized and tailored action plan. That tailoring can come only from asking your employees for their input and involving them in their own career development. So, while no book can capture every individual scenario or describe every single situation, you've now got three separate ways of cross-referencing information to craft exceptional performance goals:

1. The individual's own customized development plan, which typically comes from the self-evaluation process prior to the formal appraisal (as just described)

2. A plethora of general core competencies that describe goal-setting samples for everything from leadership, teamwork, and time management to attitude, ethics, and emotional intelligence
3. A large body of role-specific goals for many of the most common positions found in corporate America, ranging from sales, finance, and IT to operations, manufacturing, and HR.

*But* that's not all. You'll also find the right words and descriptive phrases to communicate your thoughts and perceptions in a very concrete manner by *cross-referencing* within each group. For example, if you were looking to describe a staff member's leadership style or your own, you'd probably want to start in the chapter under leadership. But don't forget to cross-reference the chapter on supervision. For that matter, you may very well find helpful words and phrases in the sections titled personal style, staff development, conflict management and resolution, hiring and retention, and other categories listed in Part I.

Similarly, if you need to identify particular performance goals for, say, a staff accountant, that section is the logical first place to start. But also make your way over to the financial analyst, auditor, contract analyst, and controller roles. These titles vary greatly depending on the industry and on company size. So you can find additional nuggets of information in categories related to your primary target role.

At the end of the day, look to the goal-setting process as an opportunity to reinvent and strengthen your relationship with your team members and with your own supervisor. Remember, *what you want for yourself, give to another; each to his own without judgment; and life begins at the end of your comfort zone*. The wisdom in phrases like this can impact your entire career and outlook on life. So don't be afraid to stretch a bit here. And don't

hesitate to make yourself vulnerable if you're trying something new and for the first time. You can't overcommunicate at times like these and when others sense your genuine willingness to try to make things better, you might just find that they'll respond in kind.

So enjoy the journey, and don't forget that it's all about the *process*. I hope that some of the wisdom and the strategies in this book help you master the art of performance management and leadership. More importantly, I hope they help you fall in love with helping others to build their careers and realize their ambitions. That's the greatest opportunity that the workplace offers. In fact, you can give your company no greater benefit than the gift of a motivated, energized, and engaged workforce. You're in a unique role to assist your team members in getting there, and remember . . .

*Above all, teach your employees appreciation and gratitude because all good things flow from those two values.*