

## Keeping goals relevant over time

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It is highly unlikely that the goals employees set in the beginning of the year will match 100% with what they end up focusing on in December. This is why I suggest not spending hours and hours on trying to create a perfect goal plan that's probably going to be somewhat out of date in a few months. Set some reasonably well-defined goals, get agreement on the general direction, and then make sure you update them over time.

### Why goals need to change

Managers and employees should expect and accept that their goals will change throughout the year for many reasons. First, the needs of the business will almost certainly change at some point during the year due to unforeseen shifts in the external market or internal organization. These changes may reflect new opportunities or unplanned challenges, but when they happen, goals should be reworked to reflect them.

Another reason goals change is in fairness to employees. Many employees are asked to do more things than they have time to do. Ongoing goal setting helps manage priorities so employees are not overloaded. By keeping goal planning flexible and fluid, goals can change when certain projects require more time, or when a new priority arises. This helps managers and employees effectively manage how new projects fit in with all the other existing goals an employee has.

For instance, a new high-priority project may require that an employee stop other work and do nothing else until it's complete. This project should become a goal, because if it's that significant, then it's going to affect how the organization evaluates the employee's overall contributions to the company. And once this project is added to an employee's goal plan, other goals may need to be scaled back so the employee can reasonably achieve his or her objectives.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, there are times when a goal should be deleted from a plan. For example, a project started earlier in the year may be abandoned because it no longer supports the corporate strategy. It's usually not fault of employees the project has been stopped since the decision to fund projects is often made by people well above their pay grade. Although goals associated with the project may be removed from an employee's active goal plan, their existence should still be tracked. This ensures that, at the end of the year, employees still gets credit for the work they did, even though it is no longer an active goal.

### Check on your goals often...

The easiest way to change goals is during weekly or monthly operations meetings. These meetings are typically about discussing what needs to get done to support business operations so touching base on

goals plans is a natural extension of this. Some managers even use their own goal plans in meetings like this to make sure the team remembers what it is collectively responsible for achieving. A discussion can then ensue about how those goals – and the rest of the team’s – are going to be accomplished or changed as need be.

Technology can also remind managers when employees have – or have not – updated their goals in the last thirty days or last quarter. The managers can then remind their teams to review their goals to see if they are all still relevant or if they need to be revised. As a general rule, if a goal plan has not been updated at least once in the last three months, it is probably somewhat out of date.