

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,

measurable version is to save \$30,000 in each of the next three years to use on remodeling the barn during the following two years so that it will accommodate an additional 10 cows to the dairy herd by the end of year five.

While setting goals improves focus on and likelihood of accomplishment, periodic progress reviews are needed to maintain that focus and guide adjustments along the way. Regardless of how the goal is formulated, commitment seems firmer and motive to achieve it greater if it is expressed in writing. The very process of putting a goal into written form leads to greater clarity and precision.

Goals, priorities, and management plans certainly are not unchanging once set. When market prices rise or fall, family members marry, death claims a spouse or other partner, land is gained or lost, new laws are enacted, or other conditions change, it is time to review both the desirability and attainability of existing goals. The human, physical, and financial resources available for ranch and personal life may turn out to be less than was expected when the management plan was developed. As new personal interests and the unexpected emerge, especially in small family operations, business priorities change. In all businesses, however, periodic review and adjustment of plans are an ongoing part effective management.



A Goal-Setting Checklist

Here is a simple checklist of key issues in goal-setting for a work group or organization:

1. Are the goals realistic?
2. Are they consistent with the mission statement?
3. Has there been enough time to reflect on proposed goals before committing to them?
4. Did everyone who will have to live with the goals get a say in setting them?
5. Will others in the business commit to the goals?
6. Is there a plan to monitor progress toward attainment?
7. Do the goals allow for emergencies and the unexpected?
8. Do they allow for adjustment if necessary?