

Day 3

We all have twenty-four hours in a day, so why do some accomplish so much more than others? Though we readily point out lack of time as the problem, it is rather a lack of direction which inhibits success. With any endeavor worth pursuing, you will stand at the base of a mountain trying to figure out how to reach the top. While mountains can appear insurmountable and time-consuming, you merely need a compass to direct you, and you can make it to the top. In the climb for winning a scholarship, writing clear step-by-step goals acts as your compass. With these goals, you will have a sense of direction and purpose, and suddenly, you will find you have the time to achieve success.

Many may scoff at the idea and think a simple “I want to get a scholarship and get to the top” goal will suffice, but imagine several hikers all at the bottom of the mountain all with the same ultimate goal. Just as a winning letter of recommendation can help you stand out, goals catered specifically to you provide you the roadmap to get there with more success.

Together, let’s help you figure out the best way to get to the top of that mountain.

The Objectives

1. Appreciate the value of setting goals
2. Understand how to create S.M.A.R.T goals
3. Map out your steps

Appreciate the value of setting goals

Your daily endeavors rely on achieving goals: what you plan to do that day, what you want to achieve in school, how you strengthen your weaknesses, what talents you will nourish and how, what you want to achieve at work etc. While you may not consciously or intentionally set a specific goal, you are acting based on your life’s desires. In essence, your daily endeavors reflect what you value, and without setting goals, you become subjected to whatever life throws at you. To accomplish anything, a goal must be created, charted, and realized whether subconsciously or consciously.

So then why take the time to specifically write down and chart a conscious goal? Ken Blanchard, one of America’s best-known business and leadership experts, said in his book *The Heart of a Leader*, “According to research, goal setting is the single most powerful motivational tool in [your] toolkit. Why? Because goal setting operates in ways that provide purpose, challenge, and meaning. Goals are the guideposts along the road that make a compelling vision come alive. Goals energize people. Specific, clear, challenging goals lead to greater effort and achievement than easy or vague goals do” (150).

With these clear, purposeful goals, you will reach your destination sooner and make more of an impact when you get to the top.

Create S.M.A.R.T Goals

The application process can feel like a daunting task, and in order to combat it, you need to break it down into manageable components: search for scholarships, create your winning story, gather letters of recommendation, write your resume, gather your resources, and write the winning essay. With each component, you need to create goals which help you succeed and feel motivated in each step of your journey. Goals are important, but weak goals are almost as bad as no goals at all. If your goals do not

help you stay motivated and do not help you achieve success, then you are thrown into a life of happenstance and chance. So your goals all need to be S.M.A.R.T goals.

S-Specific

With a generic goal, you do not have a clear path, but a specific goal keeps you on the right path. If your goal is simply to write a good scholarship essay, you will end up writing a letter, but it may or may not be a good one. This general goal served no purpose in guiding you to your end desire: writing a winning scholarship essay.

However, a specific goal like *brainstorm great ideas for my essay by writing down significant events, people, and accomplishments in my life* will guide you to your end result. You know specifically what you need to do to work towards writing that winning essay.

To ensure that your goal is specific, you could ask the following questions

- What exactly do I want to achieve?
- Where? How? When?
- Why do I want to reach this goal
- What are the conditions and limitations?
- What are all the ways I can get to where I want to go?

M-Measurable

Now, how are you going to know you met your goal? To drive continual effort, you need to measure your progress and stay on track. In order to assess whether a goal is measurable, you need to ask how you will know when you have met your goal.

So how are you going to know when you have generated great ideas for your essay? To make a goal measurable, you can either add criteria or add a date. For this example, let's add criteria for the specific goal created above

I will assess my brainstormed list to ensure I have content which highlights what motivates my actions, issues I have dealt with, solutions I have created, and major successes I have experienced.

If your brainstormed list meets each of the criterion listed, then you know you have accomplished your specific goal to *brainstorm great ideas for my essay by writing down significant events, people, and accomplishments in my life*. If you have not met each of the criterion, you are not done with that goal.

A-Attainable

This is very personal as you have to ascertain what you can achieve. For example, perhaps launching right into brainstorming events in your life feels like a daunting task. Maybe, for you, you need to start by talking with your friends and family to get your brain thinking. In this case, your goal might be *discuss*

my unique qualities with my friends and family in order to generate some thought about experiences that led me to possess those qualities. While your end goal is the same—write a winning scholarship essay—your step by step goals should cater to your needs.

We established earlier that goals can motivate you, but if your goal feels daunting or not attainable, you will feel overwhelmed and unmotivated. In order to keep your motivation high, each goal you set must be attainable.

R-Realistic

If you think you can accomplish your goal, then it is probably realistic. To be realistic, you must feel capable and willing to do the work. This does not mean you create low-achieving goals. When you set your goal too low, you don't exert much energy; therefore, you are not as motivated. High goals which push and challenge you garner more growth and effort. High goals do not equate unrealistic. You know yourself, so be honest with what you can realistically achieve, but do not shoot too low, or you will not make it to the top.

T-Timely

Deadlines prompt action, so give yourself a concrete deadline. Each goal should be grounded within a time frame. Without a time frame, you may lose motivation and become susceptible to procrastination.

In our example goal, you want to brainstorm for your winning application. And to measure it, *you will ensure you have content which highlights your motivations, issues, solutions, and major successes.* Now, when will you assess your progress? When will you complete it?

Your timeline needs to be realistic and flexible as it can feel discouraging if you are too stringent on the time since life happens. However, do not bend the time table to suit laziness or procrastination. Time is money, so in your pursuit of scholarship money, you need to use your time wisely.

For each goal, you should set a clear deadline for when you expect to check off that goal and move to the next.

Map out your steps

As you can see, creating goals for each step of the application process is going to give you a better chance of reaching the top before the other hikers, and help you to stand out once you get there.

Each component of the journey—searching for scholarships, writing the application essay, writing the resume, obtaining solid letters of recommendations etc.—should be broken into specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely goals. These goals in essence map out your steps and keep you motivated throughout the process.

If you enroll in the paid course, we have already created S.M.A.R.T step by step processes for every part of your application. The ground work has been done, and you can just launch right into achieving these goals. As time is money, this will save you time.

Today's Action Item

Begin by writing your own S.M.A.R.T goals for the component taught last time—obtaining a winning letter of recommendation. Or if you know you want to be a scholarship winner, enroll in our course, and get started right away in achieving these goals.

By enrolling in the course, you will already have your step by step plan mapped out with clear goals to keep you focused along the way.

If you are not ready at this time to do that, then create your own specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely step-by-step smart goals to help you get that winning letter of recommendation.