



Setting healthy workplace goals.

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Workplace
Health and Wellbeing Academy

Introduction to goal setting.



Protecting your employees' health and wellbeing while they're at work is important. Adults spend, on average, one-third of their waking hours at work.

So the workplace is a key environment to develop and maintain healthy goals. And having healthy employees leads to a healthy business with less sickness absence, staff turnover and increased productivity. Although you can encourage healthy behaviours, supporting your employees to set effective goals may be a key step to help them succeed.

Benefits of goal setting.

Whether it's eating healthier, being more active or managing stress levels, try to prompt your employees to think about the aim or objective of their actions. Without setting goals, your employees immediately limit their chances of success. By goal setting, they're more motivated, have a sense of purpose and have more confidence too. And that's not all; how they set and think about their goals is important too.

Remember to encourage your employees to set achievable goals. If they are too high, their motivation levels will drop as time goes on. Make small steps to achieve a goal rather than aim for something that feels unachievable. This may come later.

There's lots of theory around how to set effective goals. But there are some key principles that you can share with your employees. If you can, share these tips and encourage your employees to practice them. See what works best and tweak them as and when you need to.

Setting healthy goals

Adults spend about one-third of their waking hours at work, so the workplace is a key environment to develop and maintain healthy goals.

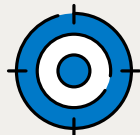


6 steps to achieving goal success.



1 Set behaviourally optimised goals

When setting a goal, encourage employees to think about a specific behaviour rather than a desired outcome. Rather than aiming to lose five pounds, for example, suggest targeting a behaviour that will help your colleague achieve their goal instead. It could be signing up to an employee benefit, such as a cycle scheme, for example. This would help to give them a healthier option of getting to work.



Encourage your employees to frame their goals as moving towards, rather than away from an outcome. To improve stress levels at work, you could encourage them to allocate times throughout the day to take a mindful moment. This framing may be more effective than focusing on what should be avoided, for example working through lunch.

Finally, encourage your employees to set and focus on one goal at a time. By doing this they may be more likely to commit to, and achieve, their goal.

2 Create an action plan – and prepare for setbacks

Encourage employees to break down their goal and create an action plan, including what they're going to do, where, when, why and with whom. Employees should also think about how often and for how long they'll do something.



One way to set a goal is to use 'SMART' criteria:

- specific
- measurable
- achievable
- relevant
- time-bound

3 Have fun

If you want to help your employees achieve their health goals, encourage them to create their goals around things they enjoy or are interested in. For example, if an employee enjoys running and wants to up their physical activity, they may be more likely to succeed by going for a run than joining a fitness bootcamp.



This type of motivation is known as intrinsic motivation. Research shows that we're more likely to succeed with goals driven by our intrinsic motivation (things that we personally enjoy), compared to extrinsic (external rewards like money or punishment if we don't achieve it).

Other studies looked at making a behaviour more enjoyable to improve the time people stuck with a goal. For example, watching television shows that you enjoy while running on a treadmill at the gym (and not at home) may be good motivation to keep going.

Encourage employees to think about how they could tie in a new habit with something that will motivate them more. They might want to combine it with a coffee, a phone call to a friend or a little treat afterwards?

4 Commit to achieve

Once your employees have set a goal, help them stick to it. There are various commitment devices or tactics that can be used to help your workforce achieve their goals. Suggest they commit to activities in a group, so they're less inclined to deviate from the plan. Meeting people to do an activity is a commitment an employee is more likely to stick to. And chances are, it will be more fun to do an activity together rather than alone.



It's only natural that barriers to completing their goals will crop up. Encourage employees to think about these situations and plan for the 'what ifs' so they can stick to their healthy goals. This is known as 'if-then' planning. For example, if a colleague's goal is to get outside during lunch time, then they might want to set an 'if-then' plan for when barriers come up. For example, they could leave an umbrella at work, so if it's raining, they can still go out at lunch.

A 'healthy lifestyle' might not be something that your employees find motivating. If so, encourage them to think about their reasons for being healthier - the why. For example, doing more exercise and getting fitter may help an employee to play with their children more, and enjoy activities as a family. While older employees may be motivated to do exercise and eat well to stay strong. The closer their reasons are to them - who they are and what they believe, the more likely they are to achieve their healthy goal.

5 Keep motivation high

Over time, motivation towards achieving goals may reduce. To help your employees boost their motivation and achieve their goals, suggest they set or tweak them to include a high-low range.



For example, if employees want to commit to doing some desk-based stretches twice a day, suggest that their goal is instead to do stretches between one and three times each day. The lower range is achievable, and the upper range is challenging – a great combination to keep motivation going.

6 Monitoring progress

Monitoring progress is crucial if your employees want to reach their goals. There are lots of ways they can do this. They can actively note down their progress toward a goal in a journal or app, or perhaps go one step further and publicly monitor their progress, for example on a leader board.



Another point to consider is whether employees track their progress in terms of how far they've come versus how far they must go towards achieving their goal. In the earlier stages, it may be more effective to focus on the progress made. As employees get closer to achieving their goal, switching to focus on what's left to achieve.



Resources

Visit [Bupa's Workplace Mental Health Hub](#) for a range of free information for both managers and employees on supporting good mental health at work.



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Notes

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