

Got Goals?

By Chris Casteel

The reason most people never reach their goals is that they don't define them, or ever seriously consider them as believable or achievable. Winners can tell you where they are going, what they plan to do along the way, and who will be sharing the adventure with them. Denis Waitley

I stumbled over this quote on one of those desktop 'Inspiration for Teachers' calendars the other day (a Christmas gift from a student). As I read it, I thought how closely it ties into our activity. Of course, I realize that it can be connected to almost any station of life. However, since I was desperately needing inspiration for an article – well, it just seemed destined to be written for the express purpose of color guard (or this article anyway).

The month of February is here, the Debut show has come and gone, and I would definitely declare (with great joy) that winter guard season is finally underway. The majority of instructors have put their design concepts and choreography into motion. Performers are busily soaking up directions and specifications in an effort to make their shows come alive. At this point, I don't believe that there is an instructor out there who desires to have an unsuccessful season. In fact, I know that all of you wish the very best for your programs. To be a winner (in whatever sense of the word you want to claim) is important to both instructors and performers alike.

The thing is we all can say "Yeah, we want to be successful", but in order to attain success, we need to define and set goals for both ourselves and our students. I am not talking about placing 1st, 2nd or 3rd at a tournament; awards are not goals. In my opinion, they are a byproduct of goals. Since I am writing of byproducts, make this goal setting thing be part of your team building exercises. Involve your performers in the process and the benefit will be twofold: ownership and vested interest in success. Setting goals throughout the season will help you celebrate success and enrich the experience for everyone involved.

Criteria for Setting Good Goals:

- Make sure everyone knows and understands the goals. Instructors need to share their vision with performers. This happens in the teaching process, but also in the goal setting process. Write the season's goals on a large poster board and place it where everyone can see it. This will create accountability and ownership for everyone involved.
- Goals should be believable. Just like the beginning quote, "The reason most people never reach their goals is that they don't define them, or ever seriously consider them as believable or achievable." Everyone involved must believe that it is possible to achieve the goals. If they are not believable, there will be no motivation to try. Also, just because

you believe that the goal is *possible* does not mean that you expect it to be *easy* or even probable. You need to set believable, attainable, but not impossible goals for your team.

- Set easy and difficult goals. At this point in the season you could have several of each. Just a bit of a disclaimer; limit the number of challenging goals that overlap during the season...this could lead to frustration or becoming overwhelmed. However, easy goals build good habits of follow-through and will reward your team with a sense of accomplishment and gratification. While the challenging goals will help your team to grow, it is ideal to have a mix of easy and difficult.
- When setting goals, be specific. Try to stay away from vague or general goals. They need to be measurable to the extent that both instructor and team can identify when they achieve it.

When you do reach those goals (big or small)...CELEBRATE!! Allow your team to feel their success. It may seem as if you are taking precious time away from rehearsal, but they will be motivated to attain more, to reach farther, and to push harder toward the remaining goals.

It is okay to change goals as you go through the season. However, do not change your mind so frequently that you never accomplish anything. Listen, your programs will change and so can your goals. While follow-through and persistence are among the most important traits related to experiences of success, so is the ability to re-assess along the way. Be honest in your expectations, it's okay to change your mind or take the goal in another direction. This is kind of the nature of our sport...we are constantly in the mode of evaluating, modifying and making better our initial instincts.

One more thing....So many of our performers equate success with a trophy. While there is absolutely nothing wrong with this, there are only so many trophies to go around. Goals can help your performers concentrate their time and effort, provide motivation, persistence and desire, establish priorities, and supply a roadmap to take them from where they are today to where they want to be at the end of April. It's a win-win concept that goes far beyond the gold-plated trophy.