

## 11.2: Goal-Setting Theory

### Learning Outcome

- Explain goal-setting theory.

In the 1960s, Edwin Locke proposed that intentions to work toward a goal are a major source of work motivation. This theory has been supported in more than one thousand studies with all types and levels of employees. To motivate, goals must have **specificity, commitment, challenge, and feedback**.

Goals need to be **specific** enough to answer the who, what, when, where, why, and how of any expectations of the goal. Employees perform better when given specific goals than they do when given vague or abstract goals. For instance, a manager tells a stockroom worker to aim to unpack ten boxes by lunchtime rather than telling the worker to do as much as he can. The specificity of the goal now acts as an internal stimulus, and the stockroom worker has a specific objective to attain. One common approach is SMART goals. SMART stands for specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound.

The first step in creating motivation is creating commitment to a goal. Goal **commitment** is the degree of determination a person uses to achieve an accepted goal, and there are two main factors that determine it: importance and self-efficacy. The reasons a person has for attaining a goal, including expecting certain outcomes, comprise importance. A person's belief that he or she can achieve a goal is self-efficacy. If you commit to a goal, your performance will always be higher.

A goal is meant to present a **challenge** to an individual, but it should still be attainable. The level of challenge should be specific to each person to increase their motivation. The more challenging a goal is, the more focused you become on the task and the easier it is to avoid unnecessary distractions. You will be energized to work harder toward the difficult goal. For example, imagine a high jumper training for the Olympics. With one month left before the trials, her personal best is one-quarter inch away from the qualifying height. With the goal in sight, she's energized to train hard over the next month. People persist longer to attain difficult goals. Finally, and most importantly, difficult goals will allow us to develop strategies that help us perform more effectively.



Committing to a goal is one way athletes motivate themselves.

**Feedback** on a goal is an ongoing requirement to be aware of progression or regression. An employee will require feedback on how well he or she is progressing toward his or her goals. Feedback can help an employee determine what she has done and what she wants to do. The easier it is for an individual to monitor his or her own progress, the quicker the individual will be able to make adjustments, if needed, or continue without hesitating for feedback.

### Practice Question

<https://assessments.lumenlearning.co...essments/12280>

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