Set SMART goals to get ahead in your career.

Where would you like to be in one year? In five years? What experiences will help you achieve that? What interests and skills would you like to use in your career? Setting a career goal is about deciding where you want to head in your career, and noting the steps needed to reach that point.

What are examples of typical career goals?

1. Increase professional knowledge and training. Whether taking a college class, a workshop offered by an employer, getting a certification, or other, this is a common goal. It can be useful both if you are looking for work, or are already employed.
2. Increase earnings. Being underpaid often detracts from motivation and performance. Making changes to earn more increases enthusiasm for most jobs, and motivates a job search.
3. Improve low-functioning work processes or relationships. This goal area can make the daily work experience more positive and rewarding.
4. Have new experiences. Whether volunteering in your community or at work, joining a professional association to meet new people in your field, or introducing yourself to people you never talk with, new experiences fuel interest in your career.
5. Attain a leadership role. Many people feel their ultimate goal is to lead in their career or organization. Establishing the steps to achieve a leadership role makes it possible.

How to set goals

A popular acronym can help you write effective goals. Try the SMART system for your career goal.

Specific – Aim for a specific, concrete area for your goal or steps. For example, “make ten job search calls following up on my LinkedIn connections” vs. “make some networking connections.”
Measurable – To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions such as: how much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?
Attainable – Goals are most attainable when steps are thought out clearly and allow enough time. How do you intend to accomplish your goal? Which actions follow on other actions? Is the goal realistic given where you’re starting from? It should be a challenge, but also achievable.
Relevant – A relevant goal is one that really matters to you and to the end result. Is it worthwhile? Is this the right time? Does your goal relate to other efforts or timelines? Does it require resources that are currently available?
Timely - A goal should be grounded within a defined time period, both for clarity and to give your action urgency. When do you want to begin? When do you want to complete each step?

Tips to achieve your goal

- Write down the steps. Write down your career goal and the steps to get there. This will help you remember and achieve each step. Post your list where you will see it often.
- Set deadlines. Give yourself a date to complete your goals by. Write the date when you actually finish each step.
- Reward yourself. Taking steps toward goals is hard work. Think of small rewards to give yourself when you complete any step, to help you stay motivated.
- Have a goal partner. Find someone to help you stick to your plan: a friend, co-worker, a job coach, or someone else. Discuss your goals, and check in with them when you complete steps. If possible, do the same for your partner!

Career One Stop, part of the US Department of Labor and the American Job Center Network

Advance Your Career Development By Setting These Three Career Goals

by Nora Hahn

In soccer and other sports, a “hat trick” refers to three successes of the same kind, within a game or match – a career goal for any player. The U.S. women’s national soccer team (USWNT) recently made international headlines for a hat trick by midfielder Carli Lloyd which sealed the team’s victory in the final match of the FIFA Women’s World Cup Canada 2015 against Japan. Within the first 16 minutes of the game, Lloyd scored three goals to propel the U.S. women to victory in a stunning 5-2 win, a career development that certainly exceeded her wildest dreams.

The U.S. players are all soccer stars in their own right, yet several of the players admit they were not always so successful. Nearly half a dozen of them — including Lloyd — confess to not making the cut in their early years. They acknowledge that their determination to become the best soccer players in the world can be attributed to those initial rejections.

How can you pull off a “hat trick” in your career... especially if you’ve had some setbacks of your own? It may take longer than 16 minutes, but you can build your own winning strategy by focusing on scoring three goals:

- Focus on your personal professional development (internal goal)
- Focus on your public reputation (external goal)
- Focus on giving back to your community (altruistic goal)

**First, focus on your own personal professional development.** Whether that involves attending seminars, writing a blog, taking part in a skills-development team, starting a business book club, or whatever else, take the time to develop your own skills and networking capabilities. At Sungard Availability Services, for example, a grassroots effort began in the IT department to start an Institute for Emerging Women Leaders (IEWL), a program designed to provide leadership development opportunities to the women of the company. The IEWL has recruited dozens of women at the company who are now leveraging their skills to influence both their decisions and colleagues.

Don’t have a group inside your own company? No worries. There are a lot of groups out there. For instance, Lean In – the non-profit organization created in response to Sheryl Sandberg’s book by the same title – offers community-based groups you can join online. Lean In Circles are small groups who meet regularly to learn and grow together. Circles are as unique as the individuals who start them, but
they all share a common bond: the power of peer support.

**Second, work on your game face – your public persona.** Sign up to speak at a conference or to conduct a webinar. Go swim where the big fish are – otherwise, how will they ever know that you’re in the pond? I know – public speaking can be terrifying. If that’s the case for you, then get some coaching and start small. Talk to a local networking group about your favorite business topic. Then move up from there to larger venues. Practice makes perfect, and soon an audience will energize you. For example, Sungard AS’ Tracey (Forbes) Rice, Vice President, Software Business Development, frequently speaks at industry conferences. She sees it as a chance to connect with her peers, while getting out of the office to represent her company in the outside world. Tracey recently spoke to the **DRJ Spring** Conference about Preventing Chaos, with practical steps for **orchestrating resiliency**. Instead of looking at chaos as a problem for **business continuity**, she suggests her audiences look at chaos as an opportunity to create an ordered universe.

**Third, give back to your community.** Here is where you can make your mark doing something you love. Volunteer at a local non-profit. Mentor other employees. (It doesn’t have to be part of an official “mentorship program.” Just go to lunch and chat!) Encourage creativity and innovation – in your company and outside of it. For instance, younger employees can conduct a social media workshop for their department or site. Those of us who are more “seasoned” employees would certainly appreciate it! Or, take a page from Sungard AS employees Sue Clark and Cristina Greysman, who volunteer their time with an organization called Philly Women in Tech, which hosts an annual event that benefits **TechGirlz**. This 501(c)3 empowers middle school female students to become tomorrow’s technology leaders. So far, 400 girls have taken part in their **TechShopz** workshops. (P.S. You can conduct a TechShopz in your own community by downloading the **TechShopz in a Box** kit!) Don’t have a lot of extra time? Be nice to someone in the office. Sungard AS recently unveiled a “buddy program” to help new hires feel welcome and meet their officemates a little more easily. The first few days of a new employee’s tenure are extremely important, and it’s the little things that can make the biggest impact. Think how Carli Lloyd made former captain and retiring veteran Abby Wambach feel when she placed the team **captain armband** around her bicep in the final moments of the world cup, knowing it would be her last game.

In the end, creating your own hat trick is really about getting your internal, external, and altruistic goals right into the center of the net.