

How to Set Organizational Goals

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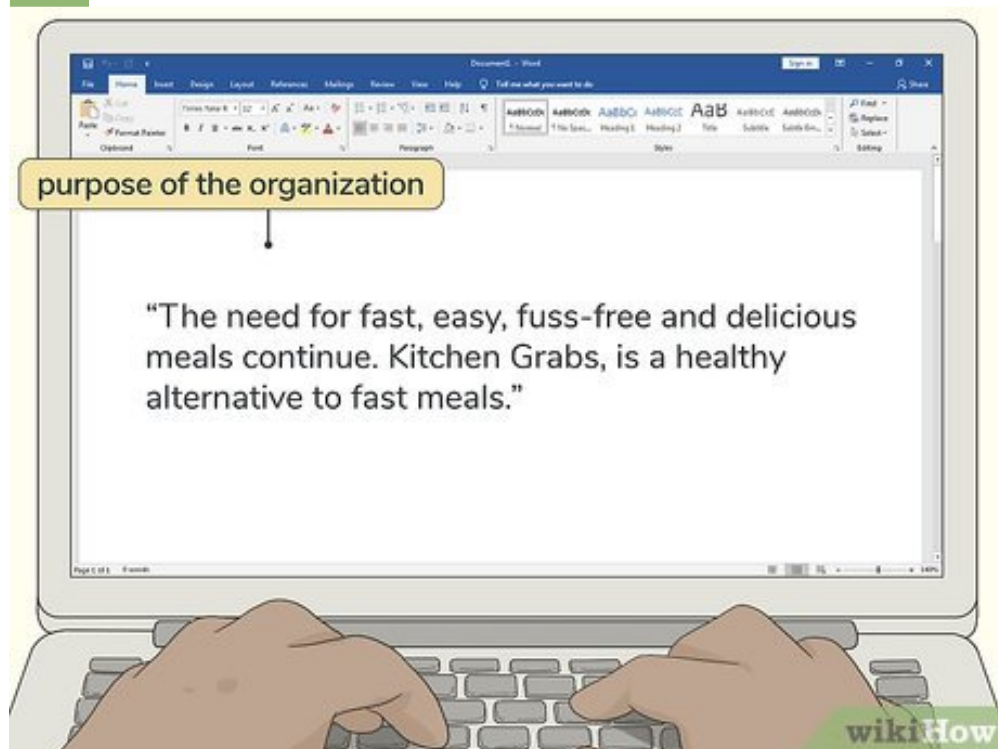
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Goals are important for any organization. Whether it's a business, club, or nonprofit, clear organizational goals give employees and volunteers a concrete objectives to work towards. However, setting those goals isn't always easy. Many organizations forget this step, and as a result, things don't run as smoothly as they could. Whether you're just starting a new group or have been involved for some time, drawing up a list of clear goals can really revamp any organization. Think big, break things down, and talk it through with your team to develop goals that you can all accomplish together.

Method 1

Method 1 of 4: Brainstorming Your Priorities

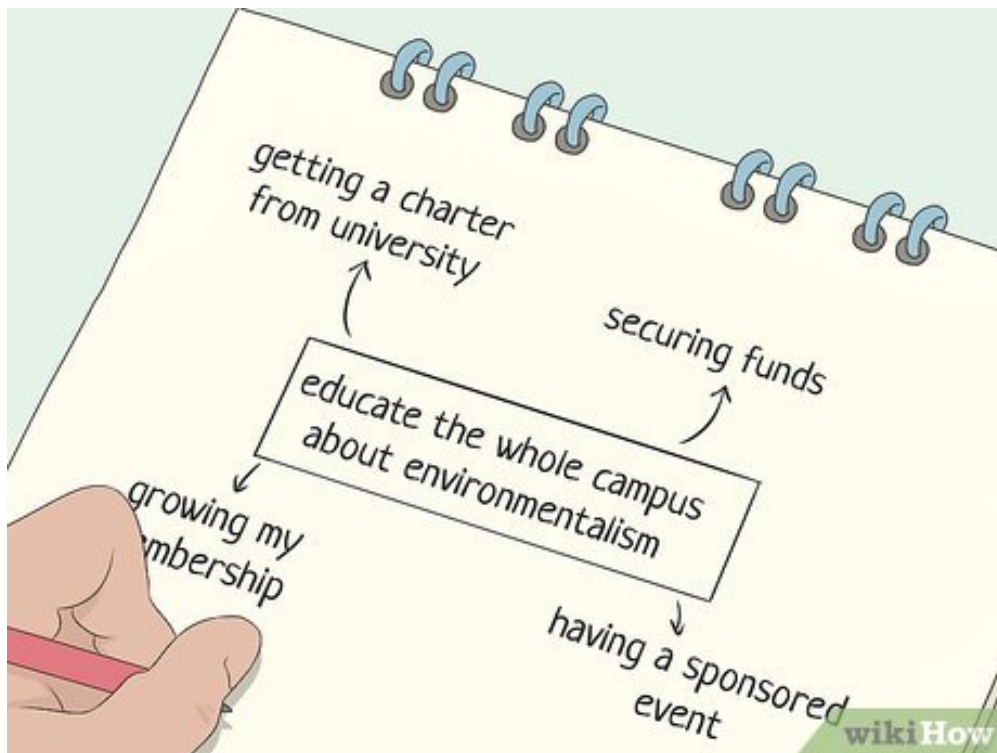


- 1 Name the purpose that your organization exists for.** Deciding on specific goals requires thinking big from the start. Consider the organization you're a part of and think about what its purpose is. You can then use that purpose to draw more specific goals.^[1]
 - For instance, if you run a nonprofit food bank, your purpose is probably providing food for needy people in your area. Use that to guide your goals.
 - A business, however, would have a different purpose. Its purpose is to make money by providing a particular service or product to its customers. A brewery, for example, exists to produce good-quality and tasty beer for its customers.
 - This process works whether you're just starting a new organization, or have an established organization that's struggling. Always start with the big ideas and get more specific.



2 State the top results you want to see from your organization. With your organization's purpose in mind, then consider what ideal results you'd like to see from your organization. Since you're only brainstorming, it's okay to overreach a bit on your desired results. You can make them more attainable later on. Think about what would make you feel like you accomplished your mission.^[2]

- If you run a food bank, your ideal result might be eliminating hunger in your town. This is a bold result that you might have to whittle down, but it's a good starting point to guide your later goals.
- For a business, your ideal result would probably be more profit or growth-oriented. It might be to grow your plumbing service into the largest plumbing provider in your county.
- Your results don't have to be so grand. If you're starting a new environmental club on your campus, your ideal result might be educating the entire student body so they start recycling all the time. Again, this might not be an attainable result, but it will help you develop your goals.



3 Map out the steps you would take to reach your ideal result. Your ideal result won't accomplish itself. That's where your goals come in. Think of each goal as a step toward your ideal result. With that in mind, consider the individual steps you'd have to take to reach that result. Each one of those steps could be goal for your organization.^[3]

- If you were forming a campus club and your ideal result is educating the whole campus about environmentalism, then there are several goals within that. A few goals could be getting a charter from your university, securing funds, growing your membership, and having a sponsored event. Each one of these is an important goal.
- If you run a business and your ideal result is doubling your sales, then think about the goals you'd have to reach to achieve that result. You'd have to recruit skilled salespeople, increase your advertising, and secure a source of affordable products.



4 Divide those results into short, medium, and long-term aims. All goals need a timeframe. Think about the goals you're considering and how long it will realistically take to reach them. It's important to have long-term goals to keep your organization motivated, but also short-term goals to keep you on task. Generally, short-term goals take less than a year, medium-term goals take 1-3 years, and long-term goals take more than 3 years. Mix in some of each to focus your organization.^[4]

- For a business, a short-term goal could be increasing your social media advertising presence. A medium-term goal could be investing in more training for your sales staff. These 2 goals will help you reach your longer-term goal, which is raising your business revenue by 50% within 2 years.
- Try to balance your list out. For example, if you have 4 long-term goals but only 1 short-term one, then you're missing some important, smaller goals. Add some more short- and medium-term goals to get you to your larger goals.
- The timeframes may change in different situations. For a campus club, the timeframe is shorter since the members will eventually graduate. A few weeks might be short-term, a few months might be medium-term, and 1-2 years could be long-term.
- Businesses and organizations usually describe short-term goals as tactical, and medium- or long-term goals as strategic.



5 Write a rough draft of your goal ideas. It's always important to come up with a concrete list of your goals. This helps you visualize what you're trying to do. After brainstorming, write down a few of the goals you're considering. Then use that list to adjust your goals in the planning phase.^[5]

- Remember that you don't have to write down how you'll achieve each goal yet. This is still the brainstorm phase. You can get more specific while you consult with some stakeholders and ask for feedback.

Method 2 of 4: Collaborating with Others in the Organization



1 Schedule a brainstorm session with colleagues or stakeholders. You shouldn't try to develop goals alone, especially if you have other people who work in the organization. When all the administrators and employees understand the goals, the operation runs much smoother, so it's best to include others in the goal discussions after you do some brainstorming. Schedule a meeting with some of the main stakeholders for a discussion.^[6]

- It might take several of these sessions to really hammer out your goals. Don't rush the process.
- If the organization is large, then you probably can't include everyone in the discussions. You could try to break the process down a bit by having a meeting with your top managers, then having them schedule similar meetings with the people under them. They can then report back to you with their findings.



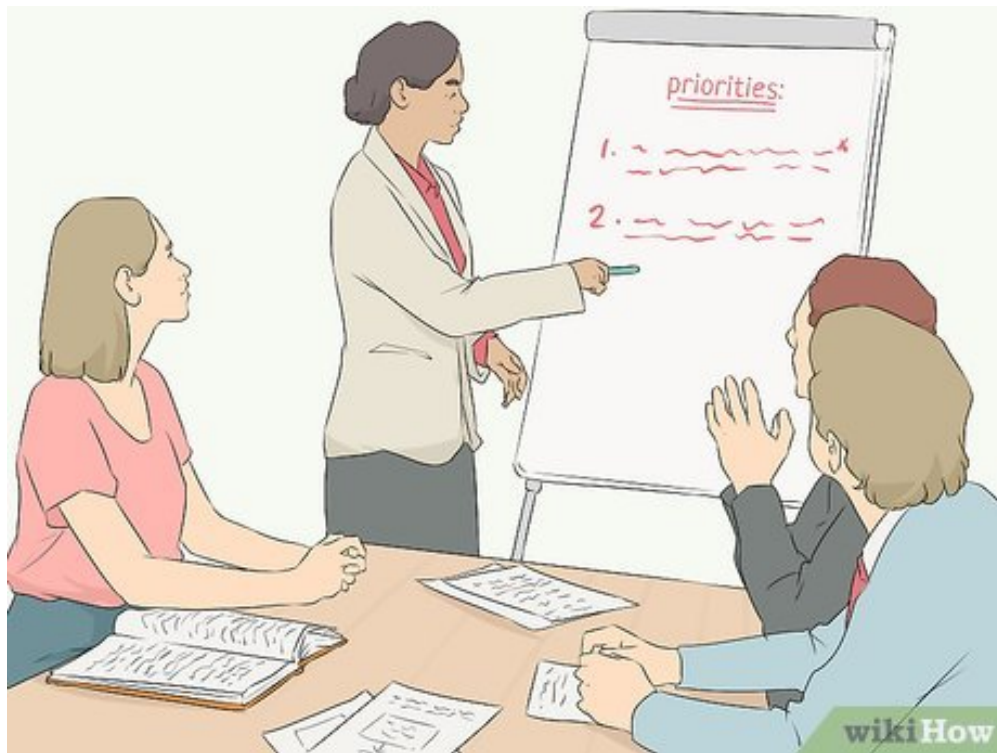
2 Present your ideas to all the stakeholders at the organization. Come to the meeting prepared to give a quick presentation on the priorities and goals you've brainstormed. Write your ideas down clearly so everyone can follow your points. Explain what you think the goals should be and how they accomplish the organization's overall mission.^[7]

- It might help to pass out a printed copy of your presentation for everyone. This will help them follow along and understand your ideas.
- Keep your presentation as short as possible. If you take up the whole time explaining your own ideas, you won't have any time left to discuss things with the group.



3 Accept suggestions and feedback from other stakeholders. Even if you're in charge of the organization, it's important to include others in the goal-setting process. They'll then feel like they have a stake in accomplishing the goals and be more motivated. When you're done with your presentation, open the floor to comments and suggestions. Listen attentively and jot down the ideas that your team comes up with. Consider how you'll fit them in to your overall plan.^[8]

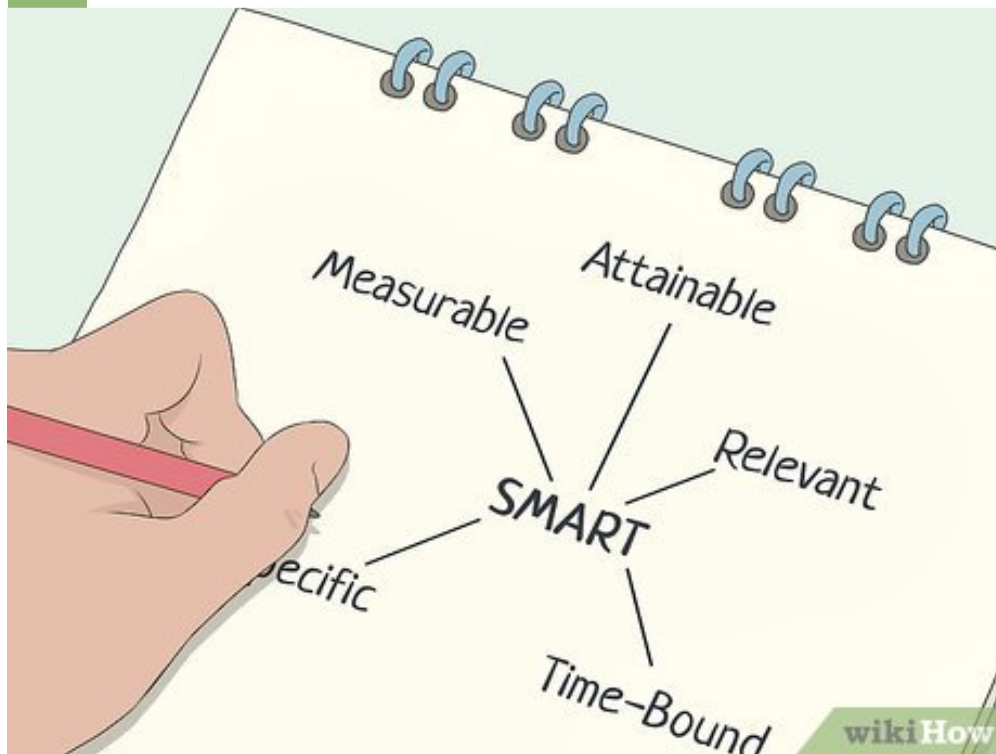
- This will go much more smoothly if you've already set the precedent that you're a good listener. Don't attack anyone for their opinions and thank everyone for contributing.
- You don't have to take everyone's suggestion. But listen to everyone and thank them for their input all the same.
- Some people might criticize your ideas. Try not to take this personally, as constructive criticism could be a big help in running the organization.



4 Prioritize goals that the group agrees with. During the discussions, it'll probably be clear that the group favors some goals more than others. It's best to prioritize these goals so the group feels more invested in accomplishing them. Draw up a top list of goals based on what the group favors.^[9]

- If necessary, try taking a vote on the goals. Write the main ones on a board and ask everyone to rank the ones that they like the most.

Method 3 of 4: Simplifying and Assessing Your Goals



1 Use the SMART acronym to guide you towards effective goals. In management, SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-Bound. Each of these categories is important for goal-setting. Keep this acronym in mind while developing goals to increase your chances of success.^[10]

- There are some different variations of the SMART guideline, but all have similar advice. Goals should be clear, measurable, possible or attainable, relevant to your organization, and have an end point so you can assess the success.



2 Choose goals that you can realistically accomplish. It won't help your organization if you pick goals that aren't realistic. When you're drawing up a goal list, consider and discuss whether or not the goals are achievable. Prioritize the ones that you know you can achieve to keep your organization working smoothly.^[11]

- This can be a group or a solitary process. If you aren't sure about whether or not certain goals are possible, then definitely discuss them in a group. Others can weigh in and let you know if you're being unrealistic.
- You might say that you want your club to convince the US government to change its environmental policy, but this isn't likely. It's better to think smaller for the time being, like getting your local government to clean up a polluted lake.
- Some goals might be attainable, just not in the timeframe you've set. For example, if you want to double sales within 2 months, that's probably not doable. However, it is possible within 18 months. Adjust your timeframe to make this goal more realistic.



3 Plan out how you will measure and assess your goals. You need goals that are measurable so you can track your progress. When you set a goal, make sure you discuss and decide how you'll measure it. That might include compiling spreadsheet data, conducting surveys, counting members, and other methods of quantifying information. Settle this early on so you have a plan in place when the time comes to measure the progress.^[12]

- Keep careful records to measure your goals. Whether you're trying to increase club membership or get more revenue, you need to collect data to assess your progress.
- If you're not good with statistics, it would be helpful to recruit someone who is. They can give you the clearest answer on how well you're progressing.



4 Break the goal into milestones to keep the organization on track. Milestones are small steps that you take to reach goals. Dividing the goal into milestones helps you track your progress and measure how close you are to achieving that goal. Work with others to determine what specific milestones you need to hit on the way to your goal.^[13]

- If your long-term goal is becoming the top brewery in your town, then some milestones could be securing funding, opening a physical location, getting a distribution contract, and approving designs for your bottles.
- Milestones work for short-term goals too. If you want to increase your company's social media presence by next month, then your milestones would be recruiting a team, setting a budget, and approving ad designs.
- When you hit milestones, celebrate! You and your colleagues have worked hard to get there. A little celebration when you hit milestones keeps everyone motivated to keep going.



5 Pick an end or evaluation date for your goal. All goals should have an end date so you can tell whether or not you were successful. Set a date to measure your progress and stick to it. That way, you can assess what you did right or wrong throughout the process.
[14]

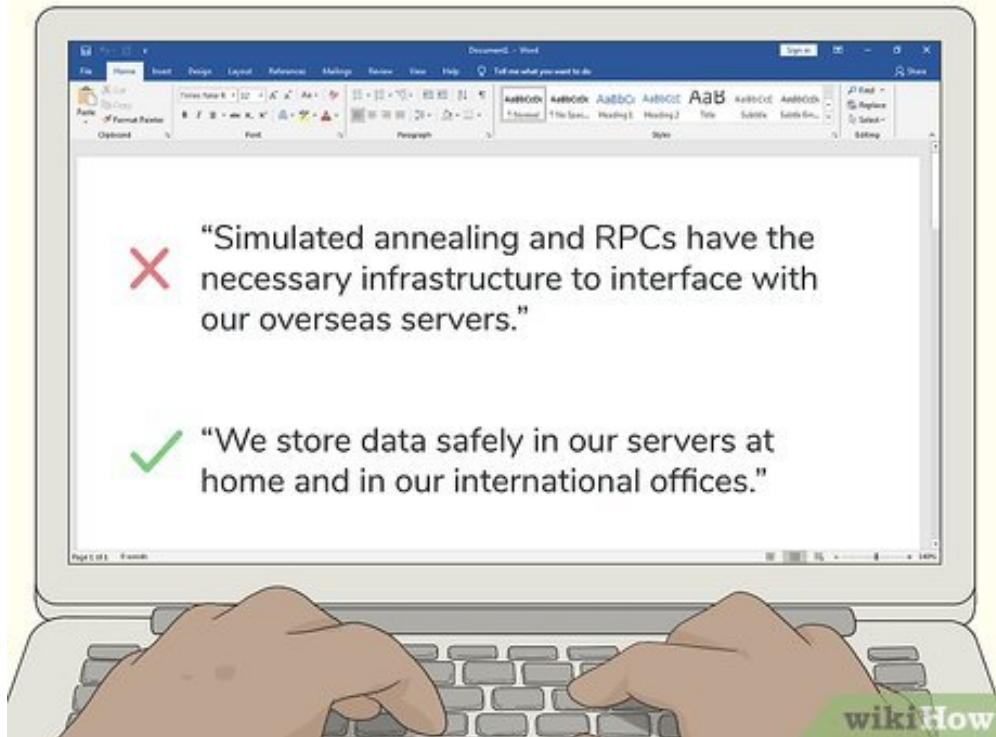
- A campus club might set a goal to increase its membership by 50% by the end of the semester. Plan on counting your membership on the last day of the semester to see if you were successful.
- For a business, your goal might be re-training your sales staff so they're more effective at closing deals. You could do a survey before the training and then another survey 6 weeks later to see if their knowledge has grown.
- It's also helpful to periodically review your progress before the end date. If you wanted to double the social media engagement for your business within 6 months, check your progress every month and adjust your approach if you have to.



6 Re-evaluate your goals every few months. Don't treat your goals as immovable or set in stone. The world changes, so your goals can change as well. Plan a re-evaluation every few months and make any necessary changes if your previous goals were accomplished or aren't working out.^[15]

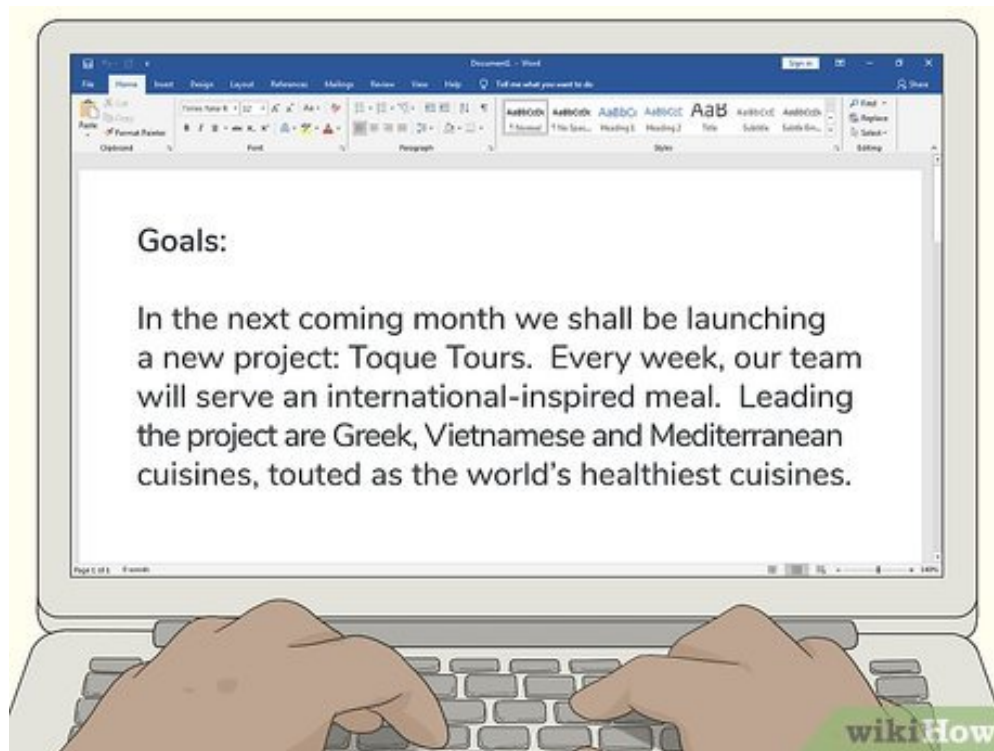
- You might realize that you were a little too conservative with some of your goals. If you wanted to grow your group membership by 20% by it's steadily growing by 50%, then make a higher goal.
- Don't be afraid to abandon goals that aren't working. You may have wanted to re-vamp your company's logo, but realize that consumers prefer your original logo. Feel free to scrap the changes and keep the original one.

Method 4 of 4: Communicating the Goals



1 Eliminate any technical language or jargon from your goal. Goals should be easy for everyone to understand, especially for people in the organization. When they can understand the goals clearly, they can work towards them more effectively. After you come up with a goal list, edit the phrasing carefully. Eliminate jargon and technical terms that make the goals harder to follow. State each one as simply as possible.^[16]

- Rather than saying “We want our social media ROI and PPC to improve by Q2,” it’s clearer to say “We want more engagement and clicks on our social media pages by the end of the second quarter.”



2 State the goal as specifically as you can. Unclear or nonspecific goals are confusing, and stakeholders won't know exactly what they're working towards. Always state each goal specifically, including what you want to accomplish and by what date. This way, everyone knows what they're trying to achieve.^[17]

- For example, don't say "We'd like to increase our membership." This is vague. Instead, say "We want to gain 100 new members by June 1."
- Another vague goal for a business is "We want to improve the mood in our workplace." This is a good idea, but not specific enough to achieve without more detail. You could make it "We want to host team-building exercises once a month and institute a casual Friday policy to improve employee morale."
- Unspecific goals are also hard to measure. It'll be difficult to tell whether or not your organization is successful unless your goals are clear.



3 Distribute the goals to everyone in the organization. Everyone in the organization should know the goals, not just the leaders. Even the lowest-level employees are helping the organization reach its goals, so they should know what those goals are. When you decide on goals, send a mass email or handout to everyone in the organization with the complete list.^[18]

- If you have an office location, then pinning the goals for everyone to see can help too. They'll always be reminded what the group goals are.
- Be open to comments on the goals from everyone as well. Just because someone is a lower-level worker doesn't mean they won't have some good ideas.



Tips

- If you're in a management or leadership position, be sure to monitor the employees under you and keep them on track. Provide any guidance that they need to contribute to the organization's goals.
- Show all of the other organization members that you're working towards the goal too. If you set goals and then disappear, the employees will feel much less motivated.
- Always congratulate the people in the organization when you hit goals and milestones. Celebrating along the way keeps everyone motivated to keep working.



Warnings

- Don't stick with goals that aren't working out. Sometimes, despite your best efforts, the goals you set aren't realistic or doable. Know when to reset. Continuing to focus on a goal that isn't working can damage the organization.
- Don't overreact if you don't reach the goals you set. This can happen even with good planning, and you'll hurt the organization if you respond poorly. Instead, take a step back and assess why you didn't hit the goal and how you can improve.

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This article was co-authored by **Sydney Axelrod**. Sydney Axelrod is a certified life coach and the owner of Sydney Axelrod LLC, a life coaching business focused on professional and personal development. Through one-on-one coaching, digital courses, and group workshops, Sydney works with clients to discover their purpose, navigate life transitions, and set and accomplish goals. Sydney has over 1,000 hours of relevant coaching certifications and holds a BBA in Marketing and Finance from Emory University. This article has been viewed 8,293 times.

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