

S4 Steps to Success

Blog: Setting your Goals



Hi, I'm James and I'm a Development Worker at LIFT OFF. In my blog I talk about the importance of setting goals and of being kind to yourself!

Whether it's visiting the Taj Mahal, climbing Mount Everest, or buying a luxury car, we all have something in life that we want to achieve. From our private lives to our career aspirations, setting goals can lay the foundation for your first steps to success.

Before taking that first step to climbing Mount Everest, though, the key to unlocking your success lies in self-reflection. While you may have a big goal in mind, how are you going to get there? What small steps can you take **now** to pave the way to your success?

If I could go back to when I was 16 and in S4 (which is longer ago than I would care to admit now!) these are definitely questions that I wish I'd have asked myself sooner. Although I had the **long-term** goal of studying at university and getting a good job, I had no idea what subject I wanted to study, or what career I wanted to pursue.



It felt at the time like all my pals were already mapping out their lives before them and I was falling behind (Side note from an aging LIFT OFF Development Worker: never compare yourself to other people and remember that your best is **always** enough!). While I was trying hard at school, the longer that this feeling went on, the more worried that I became that I had no direct goal in mind.

When I look back at this period in my life now, I can see that I was getting bogged down thinking about the big long-term goals of getting to university and getting a good job without really giving myself a chance to develop any skills or experiences to help me achieve these big goals

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Blog: My Story



Ironically, worrying too much about my future was putting me off taking my first steps.... The mind is a funny (and sometimes very frustrating) thing!

The eureka moment came for me, though, when I was chatting to one of my teachers about my worries and he told me to set myself the **short-term** goal of gaining more experiences.

Short-term goals are valuable for so many reasons, but one of the biggest is that when you achieve a short-term goal, you feel a sense of accomplishment which spurs you on to achieve more. So after that chat with Mr Gray in my period 6 English class (I think we were reading *Romeo and Juliet* at the time), I decided to set myself the goal of broadening my horizons and seeking support from my school's Careers Adviser (some schools call the Careers Adviser an SDS Adviser now!).

Seeking this advice was the best thing I could have done as accessing all the support available to you is key to achieving your goals. Within a short period of time after chatting to my Careers Adviser, I had set myself the goal of gaining some work experience at a local newspaper office because of all my school subjects, English and Politics were my favourites.

Although I was really nervous when I turned up to the newspaper office on the first day of my placement, I was still proud of myself for taking that first step. After a packed few days chatting to editors and grizzled journalists, I came out of my placement with a huge sense of achievement. Achieving this short-term goal of gaining more experience not only gave me a feeling of control over my future, but also a sense of self-belief. If I could go to a big newspaper office and talk with all these journalists and editors, what else could I do?

Setting this short-term goal, although I didn't know it at the time, was the first step I took in planning my future – a future which would take me in so many directions including studying for a PhD in English, going to China for an all-expenses paid research trip, and undertaking a career in the field of Higher Education.

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Blog: Planning YOUR Journey

Setting yourself short-term goals allows you to gain experiences and insights which will help to inform your longer-term goals and achieve your ambitions. If you want to gain a certain grade in one of your Nat 5s, for instance, a short-term goal could be finding out what support is available to you. Are there any supported study sessions at school or online? Would your teacher be able to point you in the right direction? Undertaking these steps would give you the best chance possible of achieving your longer-term goal of getting the grade you are looking for in that Nat 5 (I could tell you all about the goals I had to put in place to get my Maths Standard Grade [showing my age again!], but that's enough for another blog!).

Remember, though, you can set yourself goals in all aspects of your life – not just your career or your academics. Pursuing a new hobby, learning a new skill, or planning something exciting are all goals which help to develop your confidence and belief in yourself. And although it is a cliché, it's still true that if at first you don't succeed, try and try again.



And keep on trying!

Although I may not *yet* have the keys to my Jag, and my trip to the Taj Mahal is currently on ice, I still set myself lots of goals using the **SMART** technique (more info attached with this blog!) and I'm working on getting there.

What "success" means to you, though, is a very personal thing. While taking the first steps can often be quite scary, there is so much support available to you and all of the team here at LIFT OFF are happy to help in any way that we can!