

## Shoot At Something

By George Hedley

Leadership is simple. First, you have to know exactly what you want for your company, your department or your project team. I speak to business owners and ask, “What do you want?” They respond, “I want to make a profit.” I ask, “How much?”—“As much as I can get.” “What if you can’t get very much?”—“That’s not enough.” “Then how much do you want?”—“More.” “More than what?”—“More than I’m getting now.” It becomes obvious that these people really do not know what they want, nor do they have a clear target to shoot for.

Examples of clear targets include: “\$500,000 net profit per year.” Specific. “Sales to be \$1,000,000 per month,” or, “The project team’s goal is to make \$50,000 on this job and get at least 2 referrals from the customer,” are also good examples. Leaders know what they want and communicate specific clear targets and deadlines for their people. Then, and only then, can you develop a plan to get what you want. More is never a target. More than what? There are three steps to get what you want:

1. Know what you want
2. Have a written plan
3. Always track and make progress towards what you want

You can get pulled off track by day-to-day business activities daily. Things go wrong, customers call with immediate needs, equipment breaks or people do not show up. These daily inconveniences pull you off course and take you away from your number one priority, which may be bottom-line profit, sales or customer service. You need a written plan to keep on track and measure your progress. I recommend written charts and graphs that can be posted for all to see. This clearly shows progress toward results.

### KEEP TARGETS CLEAR AND SIMPLE

According to *Fortune* magazine, a top quality of America’s most admired companies is laser-like focus. These companies have a clear, single business focus of what they are trying to achieve. For example: Wal-Mart—low prices; Nordstrom—customer service; GE—be number one or two in every business it undertakes. To me, that is not a path most small and medium business owners take. They try to do too much and be everything to everyone, instead of staying focused, doing what they do best and only setting a few simple and attainable goals.

People and companies without clear written targets and goals are surpassed by those that have them. It is very poignant to mention that those companies with written goals almost always achieve them. Those that do not have written goals often get the leftovers. I always ask, “Have you got a measurable target? Do you have three clearly defined goals? What do you want to achieve this year?” In my survey of over 2,000 business owners, only 30 percent had written goals for sales, overhead and profit. No wonder some companies struggle.

### DO YOU USE SCORECARDS?

Can you imagine playing a golf course without greens? Score doesn’t matter. After four hours, you stop and go to the bar and start drinking. There would be no excitement. There would be nothing on the course to shoot for. No targets or scorecard. Sound bad? Sounds like most companies to me.

What are you really trying to accomplish? To get the results you want, you have to know exactly what you are shooting for and have a scorecard to keep track of progress. When you hit a bad golf shot, you can make the necessary adjustments to get back on course. In business, you have different terrain and obstacles along the way to overcome. You need information and feedback to make adjustments as you go, targets to shoot for and a scorecard to keep track of progress. Get everyone involved by giving them clearly visible targets, written goals and a scorecard.

### USE CHALLENGES AND INCENTIVES

As a construction company owner, it often amazes me when I go out to a jobsite and ask the field superintendent, “When are you going to get this part of the project completed?” He says, “Well, I think we’ll get it done in a couple of months.” I then ask, “How did you come up with that completion date?” He then says, “Well, I talked to the subcontractor’s job foremen and we sort of agreed we could all get it done by then.” I ask, “Do you think you can finish it a week or two early?” He says, “Well, yeah, we probably could.” “Why don’t you?” “Well, there’s no real need to. We’re OK, we’ll finish it on schedule.” I say, “Wouldn’t it be better to finish early?” “Yeah, but it doesn’t really matter that much, does it?”

As a leader, start challenging basic assumptions. Give people something to shoot for and a scorecard to track the progress. Offer competitive targets, challenges and encouragements like: “If I give you \$100 for every day you finish early, do you think that might make a difference?” Then it’s, “Oh yeah, I know we can finish at least a week early, maybe even more.” Leaders clearly lay out what is wanted, draft a blueprint to achieve it and track the progress towards the goal. They also use incentives and challenges to get people focused to achieve the desired end results. When it is just the same old-same old, people often give the minimum instead of maximum effort. Everyone wants to be a part of a winning team. Lay out a path to victory for your employees and watch them hit a hole in one.

*George Hedley is the best-selling author of [Get Your Business to Work!](#) As an entrepreneur, speaker and business coach, he helps business owners build profitable companies. Hedley can be reached at 800-851-8553 or by email at [gh@hardhatpresentations.com](mailto:gh@hardhatpresentations.com). For more information, visit [www.hardhatpresentations.com](http://www.hardhatpresentations.com).*

