

Having Goal May Not Motivate an Individual – Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Goals are anticipated positive future states or events which a person strives to achieve. The terms aim, objective, and standard are widely used synonymously. Other related concepts, however, like intention, norm, and task can be distinguished from goals because they emphasize the action itself rather than the anticipated future state.

The importance of a goal for motivated action is beyond doubt. Action theories, for instance, use goal as the key element for defining action—their object of interest. Many motivation theories also see goals as key elements and illustrate their motivational effect with a metaphor: The goal “pulls” the action.

Goals are seen as an effective means for promoting motivation and are therefore used as an instrument for leading and motivating people. Locke and Latham’s (1990) goal-setting theory is based on the assumption that the motivational effects of performance goals mainly determine a person’s performance on work-related tasks. An application of this notion can be seen in Management by Objectives (MBO), a popular leadership method that aims at transforming a company’s strategic goals into individual goals. It is expected that inasmuch as an employee accepts and adopts the negotiated goals, he or she will be better oriented and more motivated than without a goal.

Nevertheless, if we are to explain motivation, it is not sufficient to study the goal and its features alone. It is important to additionally consider the characteristics of the person, since the value and motivating power of a given goal depends heavily on the specific needs of the person. Kehr’s (2004b) compensatory model of work motivation and volition, for instance, states that a goal should match the person’s basic needs and motives in order to be motivating. To complicate the issue further, some related approaches emphasize that a goal should also fit in with the other goals for which the person strives.

By discussing the aforementioned approaches, this research-paper will highlight the motivating potential of goals but also explain why goals may sometimes also lose their motivating force. To introduce the topic and to bridge the gap between theory and practice, we will begin by presenting a case study. The case starts by introducing Lokesh, the character, who has a goal. We would therefore expect him to be highly motivated to pursue his goal. Alas, Lokesh feels thoroughly demotivated. What could be the reasons for the lack of motivating power of Lokesh’s goal? To develop possible answers to this question, the researcher will scrutinize Lokesh’s situation more closely, and by referring to various theoretical frameworks, the paper will illustrate various conditions under which goals can lose their motivating potential. Our line of argument will proceed as follows: We will begin by focusing on Lokesh’s salient goal and investigate the characteristics of this goal. Next, we will include other pre-existing goals, which will enable us to discuss the potentially complex network into which Lokesh’s

prevalent goal may be integrated. We will then examine some specific goal relevant characteristics of the person: motive dispositions and volitional strength. As a final step of our analysis, we intend to broaden the view to include potentially relevant situational aspects. As a tentative solution to Lokesh’s problem, we will present two alternative sources of motivation: incentives that result from performing the activity itself and visions.

Keywords-- Management, Goals, Motivation, Demotivation

I. CASE STUDY: LOKESH, THE BRIGHT ENGINEER, FEELS EXTREMELY DEMOTIVATED

Lokesh, an energetic, outgoing engineering graduate, started his career as a trainee engineer in Novel Automotive India Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai based company 7 years ago. As a quick learner, he took hold of his work within few months after joining the organization and became one of the most popular engineer. A couple of months ago, his Technical Head - International Operations, Karan called him into his office to tell him about the company’s new strategic plan to expand its operation in Dubai.

Karan asked Lokesh whether he is interested to manage this ambitious project at Dubai. The project was to set up another factory through which they wish to cater to the international market. Whoever will be appointed will have to set up the whole thing and be responsible for all the International operations. Lokesh was initially worried, but Karan managed to convince him by offering him a promotion to the position of Technical Head - International Operations, along with a considerable pay rise. Finally, Lokesh and Karan agreed upon an initial assignment of 12 months.

Lokesh took up his new role one month ago. With lot of plans in mind and only a few of personal belongings and business-related materials, but without his family, he left for Dubai. However, shortly after arriving in his new, factory in Dubai, Lokesh began to lose his drive. Now, after only 1 month in the country, he feels completely demotivated. Day after day, he sits in his factory and has no energy whatsoever to make plans or contact people in order to build the factory. Never before has he experienced anything like what now appears to be a total loss of morale and stamina.

II. DOES LOKESH HAVE A “SMARTCH” GOAL?

First, allow us to focus on the goal itself. The start line is that the observation that people with roughly an equivalent talents and information might withal show substantial variations in their task performance. The explanations for such variations are seen within the undeniable fact that additional victorious folks typically have a goal. Their goal will encourage them to maximise their performance by influencing 3 dimensions of motivated action: direction, intensity, and period. First, goals direct behaviour toward actions that are necessary to succeed in the goal. Second, goals verify the intensity of effort that's endowed in goal accomplishment. Third, goals verify, particularly once no deadline is obligatory, the period of effort. An inordinateness of empirical studies have known 2 specific options of goals that are particularly relevant for top performance: goal specificity and goal problem. Philosopher and Latham's (1990) goal-setting theory thus states that specific and troublesome goals, in general, cause high performance. This can be as a result of folks tend to match the labor they invest in goal accomplishment with the problem of the goal. Thus, they compensate higher goal problem with larger effort. Things are comparable for goal specificity: If a goal isn't specific (e.g., a “do-your-best” goal), it's a lot of easier to untimely get the confusion that the goal may need already been reached. In line with the goal-setting theory, several management coaching programs preach that goals ought to ideally be “SMART.” The signifier good stands for the attributes of AN “ideal” goal: specific (specifying the what, why, and how), measurable (availability of criteria for assessing progress and success), gettable (the goal isn't out of reach), realistic (availability of needed skills, resources, and time), and timely (clearly set time frame). Ideally, the same attributes ought to be supplemented by the attribute difficult (acronym “SMARTCh”), because the impression of being challenged by a goal clearly additionally adds to the motivating potential of a goal. Let us revisit to our case. Once examining Lokesh's main objective, particularly to expand the company's operation in Dubai and to cater to the International market through it, this goal may not be SMARTCh. On the contrary, Lokesh's aim to travel to Dubai may somewhat be abstract, complex, onerous to live, not timely outlined, maybe not gettable and thus not realistic, and consequentially not even difficult. A further basic determinant of goal-related performance is goal commitment. High goal commitment means the person considers the goal vital, is decided to achieve it, is showing emotion concerned, and doesn't quit within the face of difficulties. With relation to our case study, even though Lokesh may even have a selected and troublesome goal (e.g., to set up a plant & expand its operation worldwide), this alone may not be enough to encourage Lokesh. He additionally ought to be convinced of the requirement of such growth, to be committed to the

current assignment. Lastly, commitment to specific and troublesome goals isn't enough for top performance: to boot, the person has to have the desired skills and abilities. Goal-setting theory permits for this by declaring ability and self-efficacy (the talents someone subjectively believes him- or herself to have; Bandura, 1977) to be essential conditions of task performance. If Lokesh didn't have, or didn't believe to own, the desired talents to enter the International market, through set up in Dubai he would in all probability not even attempt to reach this troublesome and sophisticated goal. During this case, initial setting short and nonspecific goals may facilitate him to build up talents and additionally increase his trust in his talents. In sum, a more in-depth analysis of Lokesh's goal has shown why Lokesh, despite of having a goal, may feel more and more de-motivated. All of the goal characteristics mentioned higher than are potential reasons for Lokesh's lack of motivation and should have partially caused the present loss of energy and stamina. Does Lokesh's Goal Cause Conflicts with his other Goals? After having mentioned the psychological feature mechanisms of the goal itself, we are going to currently leave the complexness of reality. Usually, someone contains a complicated system of many goals, that ideally harmonize however may additionally conflict with one another and cause intrapersonal goal conflicts. Such intrapersonal goal conflicts occur once striving for one valued goal interferes with attaining another desired goal, or once a choice between some incompatible alternatives is needed. With relation to intrapersonal goal conflicts, it's necessary to think about the valence of the goal at hand, that is characterised through two opposing poles—positive versus negative valence. Positive valence refers to appealing, engaging aspects of the goal, initiating approach tendencies. Negative valence, in contrast, marks loathly goal aspects, inflicting rejection tendencies. Taking under consideration the actual fact that each positive and negative valences could be combined among one goal, Lewin (1931) formed a conflict taxonomy that distinguishes between three kinds of intrapersonal conflicts. Approach-approach conflicts arise if someone should decide between two appealing however incompatible alternatives (i.e., Lokesh wants to be with his family and friends, however he additionally needs to explore new opportunity in Dubai). Approach-avoidance conflicts occur if an option has positive still as negative aspects (i.e., Lokesh needs to experience a brand new culture however is additionally scared of behaving and acting in the wrong way). Finally, avoidance-avoidance conflicts describe the selection between two unlikable opportunities (i.e., Lokesh's selection between two unfavourable alternatives: either to travel to Dubai far-flung from his family and friends or to give up and admit defeat).

Of course, intrapersonal goal conflicts can be supplemented by similar types of interpersonal (social) conflicts. Indeed, in real life, goal conflicts are even more complex, since we are embedded in a social network of

relationships (i.e., one's boss, colleagues, partner, family, and friends), all of which embrace different roles and demands. Roles result from the expectations of society regarding appropriate behaviour in a particular position. If individuals engage in multiple incompatible roles, contradictory role pressures lead to a role conflict. Work- and family-related role conflicts are prominent examples of this in the current literature on organizational behaviour.

Irrespective of whether they are caused by interpersonal expectations or intrapersonal desires, conflicts among goals can have detrimental effects on goal attainment (due to decreased action and increased rumination about the conflicting strivings) and may lead to negative affect, depression, and psychosomatic complaints (Emmons & King, 1988). Moreover, Kehr (2003) showed that pre-existing goal conflicts which persevere over time might also impair the attainment of newly set goals. This might be due to dysfunctional thought processes absorbing attention resources. However, a positive side effect may be that a person, when identifying goal conflicts, may feel the need to clarify and reprioritize his or her goals. This is a step in personality development and fosters and ultimately enhances the person's coping resources relevant for future conflict resolution.

In order to analyse Lokesh's situation from the perspective of conflicting goals and roles, it is crucial to look at all of the aspects that Lokesh might have taken into consideration when making his decision whether to go to Dubai. Karan, Lokesh's boss, had resolved his initial doubts and convinced him to accept the foreign assignment by offering a promotion to the position of Technical Head - International Operations. But what might have been the reasons for Lokesh's initial worries? His thoughts after one month in Dubai might provide an answer here. Lokesh might be facing a strong work-family conflict. He might be missing his wife and kids, who are unable to visit him due to work and school obligations. This might be additionally exacerbated by increasingly tense telephone conversations with his wife, who feels uncontrolled and overburdened by the situation. Thus, Lokesh might be torn between his love and responsibility for his family and his desire to master the demands of his job. Moreover, he might possibly be experiencing a strong conflict between the initial expectation of furthering his career through this assignment and the opposite effect that has actually emerged—namely, the endangerment of his career. All of these conflicts might be occupying his attention and energy resources, making him feeling depressed and tired, and absorbing his initial motivation.

III. DOES LOKESH'S GOAL CAUSE CONFLICT WITH HIS NEEDS?

This section will investigate which further characteristics of a person moderate the motivational

potential of goals. Intuitively, one would expect that achieving a personal goal leads to satisfaction and well-being. However, Brunstein, Schultheiss, and Grassmann (1998) were able to show that this is not always the case. People who pursue goals which are not in line with their latent motives are less satisfied even if they reach their goals. Continuing motive-incongruent behaviour, can cause intrapersonal conflicts in terms of contradictory behavioural tendencies. This may than impair performance, well-being, and health.

But why do people pursue goals that are not in line with their underlying motive pattern? McClelland, Koestner, and Weinberger (1989) attempted to answer this question by postulating two different types of motives, implicit and explicit motives. Implicit and explicit motives are related to different characteristics of the person and are therefore empirically largely uncorrelated. Implicit motives are subconsciously aroused through certain situational cues and cause affective preferences and unconscious behavioural impulses. Commonly, implicit motives are thematically classified into the big three: affiliation (i.e., building and maintaining close social relations), achievement (i.e., meeting or exceeding personal standards of excellence), and power (i.e., seeking social influence, status, and dominance).

As implicit motives are not consciously represented, they cannot be assessed with self-report techniques. Hence, McClelland (1987) stated, "A scientist cannot believe what people say about their motives". The underlying notion is that many people are unaware of their implicit motives. Thus far, the only approach for accessing a person's implicit motives is to systematically analyse the affective preferences and spontaneous behavioural impulses of that person with a projective assessment tool such as the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT; Murray, 1943). The TAT uses ambiguous pictures and asks the person to write an interesting and novel story about what might have happened in the scene depicted on the picture. Here, the scene on the picture is meant to arouse the person's implicit motives. Implicit motive strength is then reflected in the thematic content of the person's fantasy story. An alternative method of measuring implicit motives is the emotion diary, which assesses the feelings of a person throughout a day. Situations that mostly release positive emotions and are experienced as enjoyable signify congruence with one's implicit motives. If, for instance, Lokesh mainly had positive emotions in situations associated with him leading and influencing people, he would probably have a strong implicit power motive.

Explicit motives, in turn, represent the person's self-ascribed motives. They are activated by social cues (i.e., expectations of the social environment) and cause cognitive preferences, which result in explicit action tendencies. As they are explicit, they can be assessed by self-report techniques. Analogously to implicit motives,

explicit motives can also be classified into motive categories.

What implications does this have for Lokesh? Setting motive-congruent goals requires self-awareness and sensitivity to one's own affective preferences—a process that is easily distracted by social and normative pressure. Like many people, Lokesh might have been unaware of his implicit motives. Let us assume that Lokesh has thought himself to have an achievement motive, but in fact, he might rather possess a high implicit power motive. This false impression of his own implicit motives might have additionally been consolidated by the impact of his boss, who tried to persuade him, leading him to accept the achievement-oriented goal of managing the project. However, having to start from scratch in a foreign country might frustrate rather than fulfil Lokesh's implicit power motive.

The issue is further complicated by the fact that people have not only approach motives (i.e., hope of success, hope of control, and hope of affiliation), but also fear motives (i.e., fear of failure, fear of loss of control, and fear of rejection). It is therefore possible that Lokesh has strong fear motives of which he was not consciously aware or which he simply ignored while building his goals. Now, sitting all alone in Dubai, his fear motives (e.g., fear of loss of control) might be aroused, causing avoidance tendencies, which in turn might additionally be responsible for Lokesh's demotivation.

Therefore, Lokesh's increasing demotivation may result from an underlying conflict between his explicit goals and his dispositional motives. This mismatch between his goals and affective preferences (which stem from aroused implicit motives) may cause unwanted behavioural impulses, making goal-related action become dissatisfying and aversive.

IV. HOW DOES LOKESH SUCCEED IN THE FACE OF HINDERING IMPULSES?

Kehr's (2004b) compensatory model of work motivation and volition leads to the proposition that volitional mechanisms are required in order to overcome motive-goal conflicts such as those described above. Volition is defined here as an array of self-regulatory strategies to support goals against competing behavioural impulses from aroused implicit motives. Therefore, volition compensates for lacking or insufficient motivation, hence the name of the model. Examples of volitional strategies include motivation control (i.e., developing positive fantasies, e.g., imagining a happy ending), emotion control (i.e., lifting one's mood, e.g., by going out for drinks), and attention control (i.e., focusing one's attention on the task at hand). Clearly, volition is an important means for keeping one's course of action on track in the face of motivation-related difficulties. However, volitional self-regulation does have several disadvantages.

Seen in this light, it becomes clear that the presumed conflict between Lokesh's explicit goals and his dispositional motives requires volitional strength to compensate for the lack of motivation. It is possible that Lokesh has limited volitional strength in that he may be unskilled in employing the appropriate volitional strategy or in flexibly shifting strategies. Moreover, Lokesh's attempts to deal with his insufficient motivation volitionally may in fact have depleted his volitional resources and thus aggravated the problem further. With increasing problems and depleting volitional strength, there is a likelihood of him slipping into the rigid self-control mode in which he simply forces himself to keep going through a rigid planning of actions (e.g., he strictly plans every step without allowing any flexibility for spontaneous actions) and negative fantasies. This may again block important cognitive resources and arouse his fear motives, causing aversive and distressed feelings.

V. DOES LOKESH FACE EXTERNAL BARRIERS OR OBSTACLES?

In terms of the difficulty of best external conditions of goal accomplishment, action theories like the theory of action regulation (Frese & Zapf, 1994; Hacker, 1994) can offer valuable concepts. Indeed, the goal constitutes a key component of action regulation, providing a degree of reference for the continued reappraisal of current results. Since action theorists conceive human actions to be hierarchically structured and thus to require regulation on completely different psychological feature levels, completely different goal levels will be distinguished: values; superior, long-run goals (e.g., to possess a successful career); subordinate, short-run goals (e.g., to successfully conclude the project); and sub goals (e.g., to formulate a project plan). Discrepancies between the given result and also the outlined goal can directly initiate a replacement operation meant to ultimately come through the goal. Thus, the goal conception here integrates motivational (the goal energizes or pulls the action) and psychological feature (the goal as point of reference) functions within the method of action regulation.

Regarding our case study, Lokesh could also be confronted with many adverse factors hindering his action regulation. First, the superior, long-term goal (to enter into International market) might not be adequately divided into subordinate, short-term goals and an appropriate action plan. Second, Lokesh could also be confronted with certain learning barriers, for instance having to become aware of the native inhabitants while not having a sufficient command of the language. Third, unfavourable performance conditions (e.g., frequent interruptions through telephone calls from Mumbai office) could result in further effort and impede proceedings in his daily work tasks. Fourth, he could face an absence of data relating to the native market additionally as social and business-related conventions.

This data deficit could also be in addition sophisticated by a lack of feedback concerning his performance and provides rise to appreciable feelings of uncertainty relating to the way to act in terms of the project and how to move adequately along with his team, customers, and business partners. Taken along, these aversive operating conditions would in all probability impede Lokesh's capability for a no-hit action regulation, that otherwise may need been adequately guided and motivated by his goals.

VI. CONCLUSION

To summarize this research-paper, setting motivating goals clearly needs the thought of a complex network of conditions: whether or not the goal meets concrete demands (i.e., a goal ought to be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely, and challenging); whether or not it harmonizes with alternative personally relevant goals and, even additional vital, with the person's implicit motives, needs, and preferences; whether or not the person features a command of restrictive methods for supporting goals within the face of competitor impulses and preferences; and whether or not external situational conditions support goal attainment. Motivation isn't forever always Goals however it's always concerning doing something joyously.

This highlights however vital it's not only to avoid blind acceptance of goals imposed by others, however conjointly to decide on one's own goals very fastidiously. As illustrated by the case of Lokesh, commitment to the incorrect goals might not solely destroy their psychological feature potential and result in reduced performance; it'd also cause substantial harm to one's personal well-being and satisfaction.

Therefore, we have a tendency to want to stress the value of (a) cognizance concerning one's own wants and preferences, (b) anticipation of potential conflicts with alternative goals or preventative external conditions, and (c) having the spirit to generally admit that a goal could merely not be appropriate for oneself. And at last, it shouldn't be forgotten that goals aren't the sole motivating agents: individuals may also be motivated by pleasing and satisfying activity, additionally as by a grand and moving image of the future—a vision.

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