Defining Project Goals and Objectives

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The very first step in all projects: business, home, or education, is to define goals and objectives. This step defines the projects outcome and the steps required to achieve that outcome. People, including project managers, do not spend sufficient time on this step or complete it incorrectly thereby ensuring an unsuccessful project completion.

Poorly defined goals and objectives, or goals without objectives, pushes a project into overruns, territory battles, personality clashes, missed milestones, and unhappy clients.

Goals and objectives must be clear statements of purpose. Each with its own purpose that drives the end result of the project. Goals and objectives MUST be measurable.

**Goals are the "WHAT"**

Goals are broad statements applied to a project. Goals are the "what" of the process. In other words, "what" will the project accomplish? Projects may have more than one goal, but many objectives per goal. Do not confuse goals with objectives.

**Examples:**

1. **Website development goal:** Visitors will be convinced that global warming exists.
2. **Insurance company:** The Medical Insurance department will increase provider options by 10%.
3. **Physicians office:** Patients will not wait longer than 1 hour to see a physician.

**Objectives are the "HOW"**

Objectives are specific statements that support the goal. Every goal will have one or more objectives tied to it. In essence, the objective is the "how" of the process.

Always start an objective with an action verb. This ensures that the objective is measurable and that the projects end-result is addressed through the action of the objective. Each objective becomes a measurable milestone as well.
Examples:

1. **Goal:** Visitors will be convinced that global warming exists.
   - Create a table comparing the costs of addressing global warming today versus 100 years from now.
   - Illustrate the effects of global warming in a photo gallery.
   - Identify and address the "myths" of global warming.

2. **Goal:** The Medical Insurance department will increase provider options by 10%.
   - Identify provider options and costs.
   - Survey the customer to find out each options value.
   - Compare options to competitors.

3. **Goal:** Patients will wait less than 1 hour to see a physician.
   - Evaluate personnel requirements.
   - Purchase new appointment scheduling software.
   - Setup appointment confirmation schedule.

Keeping goals and objectives in the forefront of every project ensures that the project and the team are on the same page throughout the projects life cycle.

Whether in education, business or are running a household, clearly defined goals and objectives will support the projects successful result.

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