

Questions to guide creation of well-designed outcomes

Defining the goal of a project is a critical step. Two frameworks for designing outcomes are 'SMART' and 'Well-designed' (from NLP). The questions below can guide you through the process of designing a goal or desired outcome.

- ▶ **Is it positive, and framed in terms of what you DO want?**
- ▶ **Is it specific, yet still written in plain, understandable language?**
- ▶ **Is it clear in what context you would like to achieve this, and when by?**
- ▶ **Can you imagine having achieved it? Can you describe how that feels?**
- ▶ **Have you considered the benefits and costs of having achieved this goal?**
- ▶ **What will you have to track and monitor in order to measure your progress?**
- ▶ **Is it realistic, in your control, and can it be achieved by you alone?**

Examples of well-designed written targets

- By November 2008, I will have built relationships with seven partners who have brought in £7000 of work. These partnerships will have been mutually beneficial and all involved will feel good about working together again.
- I will have reduced my 'ecological footprint' by 20%, and then have a 10% 'net positive contribution for the year of operation through offsetting and quantified contributions to social and ecological projects that have positive impacts. As a result, I will feel more confident in taking a leadership role in sustainability.
- My contribution to local economy has grown by increasing my use of local suppliers by 50%, by April 2008. I will measure this based on my invoicing and postcodes of suppliers. This will take more time, but result in a more sustainable local economy.
- I will take a deep breath and relax before every conversation with my boss, in the office, for the next month. This will help me stay calm, and will have the benefit of better conversations, an improved relationship, and happier workplace.

Example of well-designed outcome as a narrative:

I want to be a competent Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) practitioner. I will recognise I have been successful when I am comfortable at explaining and providing examples to others of how to apply the techniques, and have specific examples I can draw on from my own experience of successful application. I will have this resource by February 2009. I do not want this resource when consciously using it might interrupt moments of free-flowing engagement with others.

The resources I need are: training, time and opportunity to practice, record-keeping and diary system so I can track my progress, REAL need to use it in my everyday work and life. I need to practice everyday, only aim for 10% a day and focus on one technique at a time so it feels achievable. I need to prioritise it over other possible goals. Achieving this is within my capabilities and control.

The advantages are that I will be able to use it as a better communicator. Disadvantages are that I would have to talk about NLP and some people would think I am part of that 'cult'. I will lose time to do other things that I have some interest in.

It is worthwhile as it will give me a structured way to increase my consciousness of my own limiting beliefs and to correct any unhealthy thought patterns. It is an important contributor to the skill set I require to be a professional at creating healthy dynamics within organisations, communities and systems (starting with myself). It will also allow me to articulate and communicate powerful stories that motivate others.

It will help me avoid feeling like I have limited tools for dealing with the obvious barrier to my own success (and that of my life's work) which are self-limiting beliefs. The benefit is an increase in my professional competency, relationships with others, and the impact of my work / life.

APPENDIX

The above questions are an integration of the two tools below:

SMART goals are:

Specific

- * Well defined
- * Clear to anyone that has a basic knowledge of the project

Measurable

- * Know if the goal is obtainable and how far away completion is
- * Know when it has been achieved

Agreed Upon

- * Agreement with all the stakeholders what the goals should be

Realistic

- * Within the availability of resources, knowledge and time

Time Based

- * Enough time to achieve the goal
- * Not too much time, this can affect project performance

Well-designed outcomes:

The following 6 points can be used to characterise what is a 'well-defined outcome', i.e. Such that the thoughts or wishes are more believable, achievable. These are important questions to consider, as they build commitment to the outcome through creating a detailed internal representation in our minds.

1 Positive

What do you want?

2 Sensory Specific

How will I recognise when you have this?

How will you know when you have this?

3 Contextualised

Where and when do you want to have this resource?

Where and when do you not want this resource?

4 Self achievable It is very important that the outcome must be within their own realm of influence i.e. is something over which the person has control.

What resources do you need to be able to achieve this?

What do you need to do to achieve this?

Is this something which you, yourself, can achieve? Or does it require that OTHER people behave in a certain way?

5 Ecological the advantages and the disadvantages. There are always disadvantages in making a change - being alert to these keeps the person 'at cause' by making it their choice.

What are the advantages of making this change?

What are the disadvantages of making this change?

What will achieving this lose you? Become?

6 Worthwhile The motivation question:

Which of your values will be fulfilled by achieving this outcome?

What's important to you about getting this?

What will this outcome help you avoid feeling?

What is the benefit of this outcome?