

Value-Based Goals and Plans Will Take You Where You Should Want to Go

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Famed golf course architect Donald Ross knew how easy it is to mislead casual golfers. Before there were huge earthmovers to make brute-force changes in holes, Ross made courses more challenging by relying on subtle psychology. One of Ross's favorite techniques was to shape the tee box so that it pointed well away from the ideal landing area and straight toward trouble. Sure enough, most golfers don't notice this misleading alignment and aim their shots towards the area the tee box faces rather than at the ideal landing spot.

Golf courses aren't the only place where people are encouraged to act against their best interests. In everyday life, talented marketers take advantage of our susceptibilities to acquire money from us. We often feel relieved while following the marketers' plans, not quite knowing why we feel better . . . despite buying something we don't need, probably didn't want before we saw the offer, and perhaps cannot afford.

Imagine how much better it would be if we aimed instead toward what is good for us and those we care about, rather than unconsciously serving someone else's purposes that are contrary to our benefit.

Even worse than fighting off subtle psychological tricks, surveys suggest that most people don't have any clear goals for what they want to accomplish. Without goals, they may wander aimlessly through life. As evidence that such aimlessness happens, a number of my graduate school classmates have switched career fields more frequently than I have changed cars.

The following conversation in *Alice in Wonderland* perfectly captures the need for value-based goals:

“One day Alice came to a fork in the road and saw a Cheshire cat in a tree. ‘Which road do I take?’ she asked.

‘Where do you want to go?’ was his response.

‘I don’t know,’ Alice answered.

‘Then,’ said the cat, ‘it doesn’t matter.’”

People with goals most often focus on gaining more money or faster career progress. At the end of a career, however, most people say that they wish they had something more to show for their efforts than a job title and the money they’ve saved.

The right approach is to have lifelong goals based on your personal values, such as ones based on your religious beliefs, cultural heritage, or family history. Regardless of the challenges you face, values guide you toward goals that

- lead where you should want to go,
- direct you to the right actions, and
- steer you away from what you should avoid.

As a result, value-based goals can enrich your life spiritually, improve your family, enhance your relationships, increase your contributions, speed your learning, inspire your teaching, and enrich your efforts to make a difference in your society and community.

Let’s consider an example of how someone has applied value-based goals and plans. Mr. Rashid Mwanyoka was born the third child of eight in Tanzania, the son of a farmer who also kept dairy cattle. His family had a proud heritage of leadership, inspired in part by his grandfather who was the local chief.

Mr. Mwanyoka learned these values from his family:

- Respect for elders
- Compassion for the weak
- Caring for others who need help
- Protecting those who are vulnerable
- Employing good manners towards all
- Accepting one’s place in a community
- Leaders should behave appropriately towards those they lead

Impressed by the leadership that Mr. Mwanyoka displayed as a student, his grandfather wanted Mr. Mwanyoka to be a future chief of his people. Had such chiefdoms not been abolished by the Tanzanian government, his life might have followed quite a different path. Regardless, Mr. Mwanyoka chose the goal of being a responsible leader, employing the values his family taught.

During compulsory military training, Mr. Mwanyoka learned more ways to be a good leader. When it was time to start a career the economy was not doing well so he was fortunate to be hired as a technical officer trainee with the East African Posts and Telecommunications Corporation. The trainee program involved an intensive three-year technical curriculum, which was mostly conducted through in-house courses, culminating with a diploma granted by East African Posts and Telecommunications Corporation Training School-Mbagathi in Kenya.

His career received an unexpected boost when the East African Community dissolved, and each of the three nations had to establish its own government operations for mail and telecommunications. Mr. Mwanyoka was selected to be a technical officer for transmission, a post he held for four years. After that job, he was promoted to head construction projects for six years. After taking advanced courses in project management, he was promoted to head the department of Frequency Spectrum Management. He also traveled extensively in the world to attend various courses and seminars on Frequency Spectrum Management.

Once again, an unexpected government change affected his career. This time Tanzania chose to break his organization into three pieces (one for telecommunications, one for postal services, and a communications commission for overview). His new post was to head sales activities for one of the business regions in the company. This was an opportunity that seldom becomes available for technical personnel, and he was determined to make the most of it. He also went to Bath College in UK where he took a diploma program in Telecommunications Management.

Despite his career success, Mr. Mwanyoka wanted to do more for his family by further boosting his career. He decided to learn more business skills by studying online to earn an MBA degree. When he enrolled at Rushmore University, here is what he had to say about the importance of value-based goals:

“Value-based goals focus efforts and start moving us out of our ruts. If we take our eyes off the goal for any reason, we become unfocussed and careless, easily diverted from our objective.

“Goals have become my life engine: Planning and strategizing, along with evaluation and reporting, are all key aspects of using my goals to gain success.

“Personal goals are more important to me than my employers’ goals. My top personal goal is to create a progressive future for my family by providing the best education for my four children, two of whom are at the university while the other two are finishing their secondary-level education.

“My second personal goal is to develop my career to reach a higher level through the MBA program of Rushmore University. With an MBA degree, I’ll be considered for senior positions in the company.

“Company goals are specified in my contractual agreement and I work daily to meet those revenue and customer satisfaction goals.

“From the wealth of my 31 years of experience, coupled with doing more skill and knowledge development, I know that I have the ability to achieve or surpass these goals. I know that my strengths more than offset my weaknesses in getting where I want to go and in studying what I want to learn.”

While earning an MBA degree, Mr. Mwanyoka was pleasantly surprised to find that he could successfully apply what he was studying to his work, which accelerated his career progress. When he graduated at age 56 with 31 years of business experience, he described the MBA’s benefits this way:

“I now feel I have the courage to work professionally with high confidence, commitment, and enthusiasm. My writing skills and public speaking skills have improved. With these developments, I’m now ready to take on more challenges with my company.”

Since graduating, Mr. Mwanyoka has been promoted again. He now serving as a regional manager with responsibility for sales, marketing, engineering, finance, and administration. This job pays much more than he earned before. As a result, he has been able to upgrade his family's standard of living, send his third-born child to study for an undergraduate degree in Malaysia, and to refurbish his house. He is also better able to plan for his work and his career. He also made personal investments while studying at Rushmore, and his several real estate and farming projects are doing well.

In addition, Mr. Mwanyoka has gained confidence and applies greater skills in these activities:

- Making changes
- Creating better solutions
- Strategic thinking
- Thinking quickly
- Communicating
- Reading
- Learning
- Leadership
- Time management
- Writing

Have you developed goals, based on your personal values, for your family and career?

Have you fully enhanced your native abilities through new skills so that you can accomplish those goals?

What are you waiting for? Today can be the first day of the most successful period of your life.

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