

To heck with rigid goal setting!



Setting goals can be a good way to motivate yourself to work toward what you want, no question. But Stephanie Vozza, writing for *Fast Company*, wants you to hold on just a minute.

“Goal-setting research has shown that goals are great and horrible at the same time,” says Adam Galinsky, a professor of business at Columbia Business School and leading researcher on the topic. “Internal stretch goals can be good motivators for people who want to perform, stay focused, and get engaged.”

The downside is that goals can lead to undesirable behaviors and unintended consequences. Keep these things in mind:

You might inadvertently narrow your focus. Don't let your focus on a goal cause you to overlook other important aspects. You may miss great opportunities or better alternative routes to achieving what you're really aiming for.

You could sacrifice one goal for another. If you have multiple goals in mind, you might concentrate too hard on one and ignore the others.

You may be tempted to quit trying once your goal is reached. If you're working hard and performing excellently to get a promotion, you might decide to relax after being promoted. Don't slack off once you've achieved a goal.

You could be lured into something unethical. In some cases, people turn to unethical behavior to meet difficult goals. For example, some people might falsify financial statements to meet earnings goals.

When you miss a goal, it can feel like a failure. This can happen even if the goal is only slightly missed. Don't let fear of more failure cause your performance to slip, and don't lose perspective on your overall effort and progress.

You might kill your creativity. Rigid goal setting removes randomness that can lead to creative breakthroughs. You need the flexibility to try new things and adjust your career as you move forward and learn.

— Adapted from [“Why Setting Goals Can Actually Make You Less Successful,”](#) Stephanie Vozza, *Fast Company*.