Prioritize

Align your goals with the needs of customers

The key to setting effective work-related goals is to keep your personal development and your customers' needs in mind. For example, customers may be frustrated by having to repeat information to more than one person in your organization. This customer frustration can be translated into the personal development goal of improving your skills with warm transfers.

Following are additional goal-setting issues to keep in mind:

■ **Set focused goals.** Goals need to be specific. Exactly what is it you are trying to achieve for the customer? Or what is it that the customer wants to achieve through you? It's imperative that you get down to precise standards or precise action steps in as much detail as possible." To get to that specificity, break your job down into its component steps or parts — the greeting, collecting information, analyzing information and problem solving, offering solutions, follow-up, etc. Then identify the areas in which you are weak and set goals for improvement.

■ **Set measurable goals.** You have to be able to measure your progress toward achieving a goal, otherwise there's not much point in setting it. Fortunately, there's much in a customer interaction that can be measured — whether it's customer satisfaction with the call, call resolution rates, call handle time, or simply the number of times you use the customer's name during a contact.

■ **Set firm deadlines.** Goals should be time-bound, and this is where the vast majority of reps make a mistake. They fail to set a time frame in which to accomplish their goals. Deadlines create a sense of commitment and urgency, and they hold you accountable to perform in a given period of time. But be realistic with the deadlines that you set for yourself. Successful goal setting takes practice, and it may take time to get good at estimating the progress you can make toward a goal and the time it will take you. Don't expect to hit the target on the first shot.

■ **Look for alignment.** Make sure your goals align with your company's goals and your department's goals. That's one reason it is important to start with the customer's perspective. Personal values, company values, and customer values can sometimes come into conflict, and goal-setting often fails when values aren't in alignment.

■ **Focus on a few goals at a time.** Attempting to do too much at once is a recipe for disaster. To avoid spreading energy over a vast terrain, focus your time and energy on a few well-chosen goals at a time.

■ **Get support for your efforts.** Making your goals public, or even sharing them with a few select others, can be a great motivator. In addition, in many cases we need the cooperation and assistance of others to meet our goals.