

Keep Goals on Track with Links to Learning

In my last blog, I encouraged readers to visit their goal progress so far for the year and to evaluate where their time is being spent. Hopefully you have done this yourself, and have analyzed how you are using your time and have identified any barriers that may be getting in the way of your highest priorities. Perhaps you are one of the lucky few who are 100% on track with your goals and every day, you are able to spend the majority of your time in high payoff activities. Or, perhaps you are like the rest of us who have had their priorities shift already, or have had various “fires” come up taking time away from higher priority goals.

In taking a look at my own progress, I made an interesting discovery about the nature of some of the “fires” that are getting in the way of staying 100% on track. First and foremost, I discovered that many of the fires getting in my way aren’t fires at all, they are simply preferred activities. In evaluating my accomplishments versus my burning “to do’s”, I noticed that there was a pattern in the goals getting bumped to the bottom of my priority list. The goals that were starting to lag all had one thing in common; they each would require me to use some skills in which I am not particularly proficient, meaning I would need some training or development to achieve these goals in the required timeline. I also noticed that the “fires” I am tending to jump on instead are tasks or actions related to the goals requiring skills in which I am already an expert. In other words, I’m prioritizing my goals or activities that require skills that come naturally over those that are going to stretch my skill set.

Does this mean that I’m not a willing learner? Not at all, it simply means that as humans we have a tendency to want to do the things that we know how or do well and will therefore gravitate toward those activities. This is one of the reasons that learning availability needs to be linked closely to your performance management process and ideally embedded directly into your performance management system.

In order to stay ahead of the learning curve and keep managers and employees developing, growing, and succeeding, timely training or on-demand learning opportunities that link to goals, projects and performance success need to be readily available. To keep employees prioritizing all of their goals, even those that will stretch their skills, training opportunities need to be relevant to daily work and performance measurements and should be offered through a variety of formats. It's important to think beyond "formal" training and encourage employees to be self-sufficient and seek out learning opportunities through a variety of resources such as in house on-demand e-learning courses, recommendations and access to online courseware such as [udemy.com](https://www.udemy.com/), and encouraged peer to peer learning. Whether you are a manager or an individual contributor, be sure to initiate discussions about learning opportunities as they relate to the achievement of your goals. If you are a manager, monitor team and individual training, development activity, and assignment progress to facilitate meaningful developmental dialogue. Finally, if you are able and have the resources, keep learning interactive and fun with gamification, learning credits, and incentives. The more we are learning, the more likely we are to keep all of our goals on track and not be so easily distracted by the "fires" or items with which we are more comfortable that tend to get in the way.