

# Setting Positive Goals

Research has shown that positively valenced goals based on opportunities are more engaging and motivational than goals that avoid a particular outcome. A few examples are given below:

## Avoidance Goals

- *"No less than 60% of customers retained per quarter."*
- *"We will stop getting negative customer reviews."*

## Positively Valenced Goals

- *"Grow customer retention to 80% per quarter."*
- *"We will increase 5\* reviews to 90%."*

Whether you are helping others set performance management objectives or brainstorming strategy goals as a team, you can use this exercise to enhance motivation and commitment with approach goals.

# | In Practice

Practice identifying avoidance goals and reformulating them as positively valenced goals.

## STEP 1: Recognizing

- a. Write down your goals for your meeting in the left column below.
- b. Reflect on your answer. Can you identify any negative outcomes that these goals are aiming to avoid? Briefly note what you identify in the center column,
- c. Can you identify a positive future for each? Make a brief note of each in the right column below.

Goals	Negative Outcomes	Positive Outcomes
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**Tip:** Avoidance goals often include phrases such as *“no less than...”* *“will not...”*, and *“avoid”*.

## STEP 2: Reformulating

Consider the outcomes you listed in the center column and revisit the goals associated with them.

- Are they avoidance goals?
- Can you list a positive outcome for each in the right-hand column?

Use the space below to reformulate these avoidance goals. Try to find a way to rephrase your wording so that your goal is positively valenced. A few examples are provided for you.

### Positively Valenced Goals

*"I will offer more ideas in meetings."*

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*"We will achieve a 5:1 ROI for this product."*

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## References

- Coats, E. J., Janoff-Bulman, R., & Alpert, N. (1996). Approach versus avoidance goals: Differences in self-evaluation and well-being. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22(10), 1057-1067.