

— From the Pen of —
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Four Effects of Unclear Objectives

1. Unclear objectives lead to unclear methods of operation. The absence of a goal justifies almost any activity espoused by an individual under the guise of, “This is my burden,” or “This is my calling,” or “This is the Lord’s leading.” I do not mean to minimize this nor speak lightly of holy things. But I think there is more evasiveness in these pronouncements than most of us in Christian work are willing to admit, and it is tragic. If you do not have a goal, then any road will get you there.
2. Results cannot be measured without some prior expectation against which to judge them. In other words, if we do not have clear objectives, then almost any level or degree or quality of performance will satisfy the people involved. Almost any activity can be justified on an individual basis. This is where we are in missions and in our churches.

There are, however, some people who will never work in an organization. If we were able to devise an ideal organization, some people would never fit into it. Accommodate these people outside the organizational structures. Recognize that not everyone can conform to an organizational structure. If there are individuals who must work on their own, let them go! The great bulk of humanity, however, needs the kind of restraint and control provide by an organization.

3. If we are not clear on our objectives, we do not know when things are drifting. One does not realize it until a lifetime has been spent and then, suddenly it dawns, “I didn’t achieve it. I didn’t hit it.” Oh, we rationalize, we exonerate ourselves, we excuse ourselves, we make allowances; but in the end we find we have failed.
4. People in an organization cannot perform with maximum effectiveness if they are unaware of the goals, the purposes of their work, or how well they are doing in relation to the goals.

There are three main problems in managing workers. They are (1) uncertainty of the job, (2) how am I doing, and (3) where do I go for help? I have talked with scores of missionaries who have spent a term on the field and have not known how they were doing until they were ready to go home and had a prefurlough interview! One reason we

fail to tell people how they are doing is that some of us in responsible positions are insecure ourselves. We have not trusted the Holy Spirit to give us the courage to face a person and tell how he or she is doing. People want help. They need help. If we want to have effective management results, we will build into our situations ways for people to get help.

“Look, I’m having trouble with my wife and children. Where do I go for help?”

“I’m having problems with the local or national church. Where do I go for help?”

“I’m having problems in my own mind with some theological questions. Where do I get help? Is there a person or a group to which I can go for help?”

A good manager will establish a relationship with people so that they will gladly come and say, “I need help. Can you tell me what to do?”

In articulating these goals, we prepare a very basic foundation for all of our future performance. Goals are not always adhered to with equal enthusiasm by every member of the organization. People deeply committed come in, but they become disillusioned and need to be reminded repeatedly of the goals of the organization. We must be reoriented to the goal week after week, year after year.