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Resource One Big Thing_Start Stop Behaviors

File Type PDF

Explanation

When creating a leadership development plan, it's helpful to anchor with one primary area of focus. The Leadership Circle calls this One Big Thing. Another key step in this process involves establishing measurable 'Start' and 'Stop' behaviors. The following pages are an excerpt from Leadership Circle materials with advice on how to craft a helpful One Big Thing statement as well as 'Start' and 'Stop' behaviors.

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One Big Thing

The One Big Thing goal should reflect work within an area in need of improvement according to your Leadership Circle Profile, and based on feedback you have received from those with whom you have shared your results. The One Big Thing should address a change in leadership style, performance or belief that you want to instill into your leadership approach. It is to be written as a statement of affirmation of what you aspire to be/do as a leader (first person, action statement).

The goal should focus on how you will show up in the organization rather than on specific behaviors. The goal will drive many specific behaviors, but its aspirational aspect should provide energy around an outcome that reflects an effective leader.

Writing a One Big Thing Goal

- Think of the outcomes of this goal – is this the overall change you want to achieve?
- Avoid “by” and “rather than” statements. These types of statements will be candidates for the Stop Doing and Start Doing behaviors you will identify.
- Be concise and emphasize one and only one area of development so that a clear focus is achieved.
- Focus on the outcome – not example behaviors.

One Big Thing: Examples by Creative Stance

- Relating
 - “I will develop my team’s esprit de corps and capacity to collaborate with each other.”
- Self-Awareness
 - “I will be a composed leader, keeping my positive presence even under fire.”
- Authenticity
 - “I will clearly assert my ideas, suggestions and observations, even when it’s uncomfortable to do so.”
- Systems Awareness
 - “I will broaden my awareness and view things from an integrated perspective.”
- Achieving
 - “I will unify my team around a common purpose and strategic focus.”

Examples of Poorly-Worded One Big Thing Goals

Below are examples of One Big Thing goals that are poorly-worded and will be less effective in driving action and improving leadership performance:

- **One Big Thing:** “I will be a better leader.”
 - *Problem:* Too vague – doesn’t provide any motivation or energy in a specific direction; hard to determine if the goal is achieved.
- **One Big Thing:** “I will be a more creative problem solver, more effective communicator and will learn to trust my direct reports.”
 - *Problem:* Represents multiple goals – the lack of strategic focus means that there may be insufficient energy given to any one goal, thereby diminishing the ability to accomplish any of the goals; it is also hard to determine from feedback of others whether they are reacting to or rating based on all goals, or one or two goals in particular.
- **One Big Thing:** “I will be an effective decision maker by soliciting input from others and avoiding demanding my way in all decisions.”
 - *Problem:* Combines One Big Thing and behaviors – the “by...” phrase would be better cast as specific Start Doing and Stop Doing behaviors.
- **One Big Thing:** “I will show up to meetings on time.”
 - *Problem:* Too behavioral – reflects an action, not a leadership goal. You could identify the leadership goal underlying the behavior by asking what aspect of leadership you are hoping to change by engaging in this behavior. Do you want to be a better time manager? Or perhaps you are striving to be more respectful of others and value others?

Start Doing Behavior

Ideally, you will want to select a behavior that positively affects achievement of your One Big Thing and that you do not currently engage in (or engage in with minimal frequency). The behavior selected to Start Doing should be specific, concrete and observable so that it will drive action and so that outsiders can assess how frequently the behaviors occur.

- Written as a “rate-able” item – a behavior that can be scored on a scale.
- Worded as an action the leader engages in – raters should be able to see behavior demonstrated.
- Stated in the affirmative – a behavior that the leader is doing, not one he or she is trying to stop doing.
- Should not include a frequency (the ratings provided by others will determine if and how often the behavior occurs).
- **Example: “I will speak up when I have concerns, even if it makes others uncomfortable.”**

Stop Doing Behavior

It is vital to identify and engage in positive behaviors that will help you achieve your One Big Thing, but also to recognize and eliminate ineffective or problematic behaviors that are getting in the way of that achievement. The Stop Doing behavior should not simply mirror the Start Doing behavior. Typically, engaging in the Start Doing behavior would automatically eliminate its mirror Stop Doing behavior. Identify a Stop Doing behavior that is a proactive behavior that will be more of a benefit to achieving the goal.

- Written as a rate-able item (this can be tricky).
- Negative wordings make it difficult, if not impossible, for someone to rate the frequency of a non-event.
- Thus, the wording should be stated in the affirmative, as if you are engaging in the ineffective behavior. This will allow a rater to evaluate how often they are seeing the ineffective behavior displayed.
- **Example: “I blame others when things don’t go well.”**

PROBLEMATIC “ONE BIG THING” GOAL STATEMENTS (From actual examples)

1. I will develop my team’s capacity to handle some of my day-to-day activities by engaging them in collaborative “delegating” and development conversations and planning. This will include:
 - Setting time aside for strategic thinking and developing my team.
 - Probing deeper into the “why’s” before offering up a solution to problems that are brought up to me.
2. Increasing efficiency of HR systems by 25%.
3. Reduce drop-ins and interrupts by being COURAGEOUSLY AUTHENTIC when people drop-in. I do not practice this behavior, INTEGRITY. I need to be very clear on one-on-ones so there will be value and purpose to my work.
4. I will strive to approach all situations with grace and tact, and as a result communicate more effectively and increase my ability to positively influence situations and help gain mutual buy in or consensus.
5. I want to be sure that I’m promoting and growing my team by asking qualifying questions like “does what I just suggested make sense?” and “let me make sure I understand where you are coming from...” and then use that feedback to make adjustments “OK, so what if we....?”
6. Build and develop a Sales team to accelerate growth by putting others first and less Autocratic and Controlling behavior where it’s all about me – I want to be a selfless leader.
7. I want to play “above the line” in the Creative dimension with the senior leaders.
8. My one big thing is to consistently bring my full “voice” and perspective to the SLT meetings to continue to grow my overall contribution and value add. In addition work to be a catalyst for driving more alignment between the SLT and the Managers. I will be a mentor to my direct reports and I will be sure that they understand my expectations and know my opinions as expressed on the SLT.
9. As a leader, I will ensure that my staff thinks systemically and expresses creativity for the greater good of the organization.
10. I believe that I have the knowledge, experience, and ability to play a greater leadership role. In order for me to be successful in playing this role, and for others to see me and engage me in this manner, I have to demonstrate more confidence in my ability to contribute at this level.

REVISED “ONE BIG THING” GOAL STATEMENTS

(From actual revised examples)

*Note: Revisions below are not necessarily the ideals. They are improvements from the originals shown above. Too many attempts at revisions to an ideal can result in a participant being less committed to their One Big Thing – feeling like it is no longer their own.

1. I will delegate effectively, giving my team the guidance, coaching, support, and freedom they need to produce results. *[Note that some of the specific activities mentioned in the goal statement could become “Start Doing” behaviors.]*
2. *[Note: in other areas of the Leadership Development Plan, this leader mentioned how this might be done from a leadership perspective including focusing on strategic issues.]* I will improve my strategic focus and communication, creating opportunities for increased efficiency in operations.
3. I will be courageously authentic and as a result create value in my work.
4. I will positively influence situations, increasing mutual buy-in or consensus.
5. I will promote teamwork and create a positive environment for growth – seeking first to understand and then ensuring that I am understood.
6. I commit to being a selfless leader who puts the good of the organization and the team before my own.
7. *[Note: other areas of the plan helped to hone in on the specific creative behaviors such as sincere and consistent communication.]* I will engage in sincere and consistent communication with senior leaders.
8. I will contribute to the Senior Leadership Team and organization by actively presenting my ideas and ensuring that others understand my perspective / expectations.
9. I will develop my staff, providing mentoring on how to think systematically and creatively, and hold them accountable for results.
10. I will engage leadership more assertively, as a strategic business partner, to become a greater voice on business and strategic issues.

TIPS AND TRAPS IN CREATING PULSABLE ITEMS

Select one, and only one, *Start Doing* and one, and only one *Stop Doing* behavior

When leaders provide more than one *Start Doing* and/or *Stop Doing* behavior, select the behavior that:

- Provides the clearest evidence that the One Big Thing goal has been achieved.
- Is specific, concrete and observable.
- Will drive action (or prevent action in the case of a *Stop Doing* behavior) and that can be assessed by others for frequency of engagement.

Case Example 1: We would choose behavioral goal #2 as a good candidate for a “Start Doing” behavior and #3 as a good candidate for a “Stop Doing” behavior (with some minor tweaks as indicated in the next section).

CASE EXAMPLES

Example 1: Siegfried

Siegfried has completed the Leadership Circle Profile and noted that he is weakest in the area of Achieving, particularly in terms of “Decisiveness.”

When analyzing challenges he has in making decisions, Siegfried noted that he doesn’t always have all the relevant information.

A main factor that contributes to Siegfried’s poor decision making is that he puts off decisions until the last minute, and sometimes misses opportunities altogether.

Siegfried’s has set a One Big Thing goal of *“I will be an effective decision maker.”*

Other behavioral goals that Siegfried has identified include:

1. I will identify the most important matter relevant to my decision.
2. I will solicit input from others before making decisions.
3. I will stop procrastinating when it comes to making decisions.
4. I will quit letting others bully me into making decisions that are not wise.

Stop Doing behavior)

Behavioral goals need to be stated as an action the leader engages in, which others can observe.

Case Example 1: We might rewrite behavioral goal #2 as: "Siegfried solicits input from others before making decisions."

And we might rewrite behavioral goal #3 as: "Siegfried waits too long to make decisions."

Watch for the use of negatively worded items

Use of negative wordings such as "does not" or "will not" makes it difficult, if not impossible, for someone to rate the frequency of the "non-event." Pulse items always need to be changed to the affirmative, rephrasing the behavior as if the leader is engaging in the negative behavior.

Case Example 2: We might rewrite Abigail's behavioral goal #3 as: "When interacting with others, Abigail is overly critical or harsh."

Watch for double-dipping

CASE EXAMPLES

Example 2: Abigail

Abigail noted that her Leadership Circle Profile scores were lowest on the Relating dimension, and that she had high scores on the Distance measure within the Protecting dimension.

After considering the behaviors that contribute to building healthy relationships and comparing them to what she does now, Abigail wants to try holding regular meetings with her direct reports to share her vision and direction. Today, she does this only sporadically.

Further, Abigail noted that one behavior getting in the way of healthy relationships is her tendency to be overly critical of others when discussing ideas or problems. Thus, Abigail has decided to stop using demeaning or critical language when engaging others.

Abigail has set a One Big Thing goal of *"I will build healthy relationships and engage others."*

Other behavioral goals that Abigail has identified include:

1. Frequently and openly sharing my vision, direction and expectations with my direct reports.
2. Stop withholding my expectations from my direct reports.
3. I won't be so critical or harsh during interactions.