

SETTING GOALS FOR MORE THAN REWARDS

By Robert J. Tamasy

What factors do you include when establishing the goals you strive to achieve each day? Many business and professional people see goals and outcomes as permanently intertwined. For instance, goals may be expressed in terms of expected rewards. However, such thinking can become very short-sighted.

Max DePree passed away last year, but his wisdom lives on. He led the Herman Miller office furniture company for several decades, striving to give everyone in the organization a voice that was heard. As a result, it became known for its inclusivity and caring atmosphere. A noted business executive and author of five books, including *Leadership is an Art* and *Leadership Jazz*, DePree observed, "Goals and rewards are only parts, different parts, of human activity. When rewards become our goals, we are only pursuing part of our work."

Perhaps the titles of two of his other books, *Called to Serve*, and *Leading Without Power: Finding Hope in Serving Community*, offer a clue on what DePree meant about the pitfall of regarding goals and rewards as one and the same. Rewards can take many forms, but typically they are self-serving, focused on greater compensation, professional advancement, prestige and power. Or a company may set goals to increase profits or expand market share.

While such goals are not intrinsically wrong, they can keep us from embracing goals with broader impact and meaning. Such as helping others to grow professionally so they can realize their potential, even if it means moving on to opportunities beyond their current employment. Or casting a vision for the company to become a valued neighbor in the surrounding community. Or developing programs for addressing specific needs both within and outside of the organization.

Those can all result in a sense of gratification, but will not necessarily enhance the corporate bottom line or one's annual income. As DePree suggested, establishing goals apart from desired rewards can ultimately prove to be, we might say, more rewarding. Here are some principles from Proverbs that address the importance of giving as well as getting:

Giving can be very gratifying. Sometimes the act of generosity results in tangible returns at a later time. Or it may simply provide the satisfaction of being of aid to others. "*One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed*" (Proverbs 11:24-25).

Serving others is an act of service to God. Sometimes we find ourselves inclined to think, "Someone should help those people." Some of those times, it may be us that God is expecting to provide the needed assistance. "*He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward him for what he has done*" (Proverbs 19:17).

Setting goals beyond tangible rewards tests the motives. Lines between right and wrong can easily blur for goals established solely on the basis of intended rewards. Goals set primarily for the interests of others help to clarify inner motivations. "*All a man's ways seem right to him, but the Lord weighs the heart*" (Proverbs 21:2).

© 2018. Robert J. Tamasy has written *Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace*; *Tufting Legacies*; coauthored with David A. Stoddard, *The Heart of Mentoring*, and edited numerous other books, including *Advancing Through Adversity* by Mike Landry. Bob's website is www.bobtamasy-readywriterink.com, and his biweekly blog is: www.bobtamasy.blogspot.com.

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. What is the process you use for setting goals? Do you typically try to make your goals both measurable and attainable?
2. Do you agree with DePree's statement, "When rewards become our goals, we are only pursuing part of our work"? What is your understanding of what he meant in saying this?
3. How can we set goals that are not rewards-centered? In an environment when sales and profits can mean the difference between success and failure, even survival, do you think it is realistic to establish goals without linking them to specific rewards?
4. Which of the principles cited from the book of Proverbs seems most meaningful for you? Explain your answer.

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about principles it presents, consider the following passages:

Proverbs 16:2, 17:3, 28:27, 31:8-9; Ephesians 2:10; Colossians 3:17,23-24