

Rule to Follow When Setting Wildly Important Goals

Rule #1: No team focuses on more than two WIGs at the same time.

This rule acts like a governor on an engine. There may be dozens or even hundreds of WIGs across the entire organization, but the key is not to overload any single leader, team, or individual performer. Remember, they are all dealing with the incessant demands of the whirlwind, or the day job. Keep this rule in mind as you consider the remaining three rules. If you violate this one, you will have lost your focus as an organization.

Rule #2: The battles you choose must win the war.

Whether it's a military conflict, or the war on hunger, cancer, or poverty, there's a relationship between battles and wars. The only reason you fight a battle is to win the war. The sole purpose of WIGs at lower levels in the organization is to help achieve the WIGs at higher levels. It isn't enough that the lower-level WIGs support or align with the higher WIGs. The lower-level WIGs must ensure the success of the higher WIGs.

Rule #3: Senior leaders can veto, but not dictate.

The highest levels of execution are never reached when the strategy is devised solely by the top leaders of the organization and simply handed down to the leaders and teams below. Without involvement, you cannot create the high levels of commitment that execution requires. While the senior leaders will undoubtedly determine the top-level WIG, they must allow the leaders at each level below to define the WIGs for their teams. This not only leverages the knowledge of these leaders, but also creates a greater sense of ownership and involvement. Simply put, they become more engaged in a goal that they choose themselves and that supports a worthy organizational goal. Senior leaders then exercise their right to veto if the battles chosen are not going to win the war.

Rule #4: All WIGs must have a finish line in the form of *from X to Y by when*.

Every WIG at every level must contain a clearly measurable result, as well as the date by which that result must be achieved. For example, a revenue-focused WIG might be: "Increase percent of annual revenue from new products from 15 percent to 21 percent by December 31st." This "from X to Y by when" format recognizes where you are today, where you want to go, and the deadline for reaching that goal. As deceptively simple as this formula may seem, many leaders often struggle to translate their strategic concepts into a single from X to Y by when finish line. But once they've done it, both they and the teams they lead have gained tremendous clarity.

