

Dear EP Staff and Managers,

There are a large number of educational resources available, but often just finding the motivation to use them is the greatest obstacle. We encourage you to challenge yourself to perform at a level where you understand what is taking place in each procedure, function seamlessly with your physician and coworkers, and provide the best possible care to your patients.

To help, we have created an "Educational Goals" form that you can download onto your work or home computer and use as a tool to assist you in you creating, managing and documenting your learning goals and the steps you take to reach them. Open it up, save it and refer to it while reading this article. When used with the information below, you are guaranteed to successfully improve your abilities in the EP Lab.

Steve Miller & the Staff at EPreward

Outline:

- 1- Identify obstacles that hinder you from creating and achieving your goals.
- 2- Involve a support system of resources and allies.
- 3- Select a broad goal and the specific steps needed to accomplish that goal.
- 4- Set a realistic time line to reach the overall goal and its steps
- 5- Visualize the benefits and rewards from accomplishing your goal
- 6- Document the different classes and activities you have completed

First you need to make the decision to learn. Skilled staff is essential, as no physician is able to detect and address everything. Just one subtle clue that you pick up in a patient's history or physical, on an electrogram, or in a 3-D map can have a significant impact on the outcome of a procedure and a patient's life. Motivational expert Brian Tracy says "Happiness is the progressive realization of a worthy ideal". You will feel positive, energized, and self confident at having a concrete educational plan and progress towards that end. Make the positive choice to go forward in your profession.

#1- Identify obstacles that hinder you from creating and achieving your goals.

What is it that keeps us from setting goals? Understanding these obstacles is the first step to changing our attitudes towards using goals.

Internal Obstacles: It is said that goals are simply dreams with a timeline, as without the time element you just keep on dreaming while nothing is actually accomplished. Over 98% of the people in the world do not turn their dreams into goals and subsequently do not achieve what they are capable of attaining. Frequently an early experience with not reaching a goal leads to feelings of failure. This slide continues as disappointment in oneself creeps in, followed by a loss of self-esteem, which further spirals into an aversion to ever setting a goal again in order not to repeat this uncomfortable cycle of failure.

Sound familiar? The real failure here is not in falling short of reaching the first goal, but in never setting goals again and not achieving what one is capable of. Following the steps in this article, which are a synthesis of many sources on the subject and using the Educational Goals page we have created for you is guaranteed to put you on the path of professional growth. So forget the past and go forward with the tools and mindset necessary for success. These same steps and tools can be successfully used in other areas of your life as well.

Rodger Constandse describes four different "Goal Setting Personality Types": "the warrior, the explorer, the diplomat, and the scholar". Each of us has one or two characteristics that are dominate. "Your dominant archetypes dictate your natural goal setting tendencies. Understanding them will help you figure out the best way to go about setting and achieving meaningful goals, and how to avoid the common pitfalls faced by your dominant archetypes." I encourage you to read his article and learn more about yourself and these internal influences upon your learning... and living.

External obstacles: Create goals that align with your work environment. If you are a Tech whose only role is to scrub, it would be inadvisable to set a goal of performing 3-D mapping during a procedure. Should your situation change, you can expand your role and add new goals accordingly. If you have three children to take care of when you get home, don't set a goal to read for two hours every night. Other staff may feel threatened by your increasing competence and put you down. Acknowledge these factors and make adjustments. Your goals should adapt to your surroundings.

#2- Involve a support system of learning partners, resources and allies.

Support and encouragement goes a long way. Research has shown that [choosing a good fitting partner](#) for weight loss or exercise greatly increases the chance of success. Partners who share your desire to learn are very helpful as well.

If you are relatively new in an EP Lab ask one of the staff members who you respect if they will be a resource to help you during your learning process. If your lab has a mentor program, see if your mentor will continue working with you after your orientation period has ended. Remember, different skills may require different people so don't be shy about asking others for input in areas of their expertise. If you have been in the department a while, ask another staff member if they will partner with you so that both of you have a better chance of achieving your learning goals. Support is one of the biggest keys to success.

If you are a manager, there are always ways to improve your managerial skills and your department's performance. Talk with fellow managers and supervisors to help identify your areas of needed growth as well as being a part of your support system. Creating a partnership with one of these people will benefit you as well. Also, your own staff can be an excellent source of input. It is intimidating to ask the staff that you manage for feedback, but that act alone tells them that you value them and are working on their behalf. This may be much more helpful than the yearly anonymous checklist they begrudgingly fill out.

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Feb. 3, Sydney, Australia; Feb. 8, Tel Aviv, Israel; Feb. 22, Wialea, Hawaii; Feb. 26, Park City, UT.

See details on our [Conference Calendar page](#).

#3- Choose a goal of personal interest and list the specific steps needed to accomplish that goal.

First, begin with easily achievable goals that still yield positive results. Don't start with a difficult or unrealistic goal that sets you up for failure, as failure with your first goal increases the chances for failure with subsequent goals, or dropping them all together.

Think positive, excitement and control. Write down your broader goals and the steps you will take to reach them as positives and not negatives. A past goal for me was "I will scrub Atrial Fibrillation procedures in perfect harmony with the physician". Don't word it "I will not screw up when I scrub A Fib cases". Even though that was my fear, it did not make for a good goal. Choose topics that spark your interest and get you energized. Make these your early goals and save skills and knowledge that lack the same appeal for later.

If you need help in choosing or prioritizing goals, ask for input from your resources. If you have been in the EP lab one to two years, working towards the RCES credential through CCI is a good goal. Their "examination matrix" can be used as a study guide and describes all of the components for achieving this goal. EPreward has a [Training and Review](#) program that sequentially covers the knowledge areas needed to be competent in the EP Lab. Completing this program is a great overall goal as well.

If you are already a strong member of your department, and not sure of your learning needs, use the "Exam Blueprint" provided by the Heart Rhythm Society for the IBHRE examination to help determine areas where additional learning is needed. There is one for [Device Therapy](#) and one for [Electrophysiology](#). We have created word documents for each of these that you can save in your Educational Goals Folder. Attaining this certification is a tremendous goal for experienced EP Staff. Often there may be a salary incentive for credentialing as well. Your Electrophysiologist may also provide feedback to you for areas that need strengthening. Lead your fellow staff by example and encouragement as you are often the most influential person in the lab.

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#4. Set a realistic time line to reach the overall goal and its steps.

If you are new to EP it is hard to estimate how long it will take to learn a specific topic or become competent in a particular skill. Get feedback from your support system to help create a timeline. Another possible source of information is the manufacturer's reps, which can be very helpful in educational areas. Many reps have attained the higher certifications, have worked in and observed multiple EP Labs and can provide excellent input as to selection, prioritization and how long it takes staff to learn the different skills.

Set the Target Dates for each of your goals and steps in a realistic timetable. If you find your self falling behind, then reset them. There is no penalty for doing this when it is warranted. View your goals at least once a day. It is recommended that you use a word or [excel document](#) to copy and paste in here each of the goals you are working on, print them and tape them up inside a locker at work, at your desk, etc where you will see them every day. Excel will also allow you to sort them by your own Priority or Target Date. This is to make them more concrete and a part of your daily awareness.

#5- Visualize how you will feel and name a specific reward for reaching your objective.

Create a detailed image in your mind as to how you will feel when you have attained that goal. Visualize your coworkers looking upon you with confidence and rewarding you with a job well done, hear your physicians pleasure at knowing you will be assisting them, feel your patient and their families gratitude for the successful outcome of the procedure in which you played a key part. Feel your emotions inside as though these things were happening right now. This will help to create the reality of your accomplishment. It sounds a bit hokey, but it has been established in numerous studies the positive effects of this step in achieving your goal.

We propose that you add a physical reward as well. Treat yourself to something you enjoy such as a massage or a night out when you achieve the goal. You will deserve it.

#6- Document the different classes and activities you have completed.

Keep track of what you learn to reach your goal. Take notes for each of the activities you have completed in route to your step. A good friend once told me to "Write the next book you need to read." Writing as though you were teaching someone else helps you to learn more completely, and you may soon be the most knowledgeable member of your staff and find yourself teaching others. Your educational materials will now be all ready.

Conclusion: The above six steps seem involved, but actually only take a few minutes. And when used they are guaranteed to help you reach your goals. The forms we have provided are to make your process easier, but can be replaced with ones of your own as long as you follow this proven process.

Good luck on your learning adventure. Have a wonderful time during your Holiday Season.

Bridget, Doug, Jenna, Noor, Rhonda, William & Steve