“Goals Aren’t Important” Outline
by Barry Carlson

The speech covered 3 questions to help us unlock the key to achieving success:

**Question #1: Why set goals?**
As Alice in Wonderland discovered, “if you don’t know where you’re going in life, all roads look the same!” Goals will help you define which path in life is right for you.

Experts tell us that approximately 97% of Americans never set goals, and if they do set one, they don’t ever take the time and effort to put it in writing.

I personally believe that the **#1 factor** for success in any individual or organization is the willingness to set, pursue and achieve goals! Ask yourself this question: “Are you ready to be what you were born to become?” Figure this one out and life gets easier, and more fun, to be sure! God put you on this earth to succeed….it’s your job to figure out how. I truly believe that goals are the first step!

Like the little baby Tiger, I learned early in my career that goals will bring out of each and every one of us that which we were created to be; that goals can turn goats into tigers and mediocre people into peak performers. I’ve seen it happen hundreds of times in my life. Someone who wasn’t going anywhere all of a sudden discovers what they want, when they want it and how they’re going to get it and there is no stopping them! There’s no more beautiful discovery than that! In short, goals cause you to confront yourself with that which you were intended and created to be. By the way, when was the last time you confronted yourself…..isn’t it about time?

It seems that too many people are afraid to **LIVE**. They don’t play to win, they play not to lose. I believe it was Ralph Waldo Emerson who once said, “Do not fear living…fear dying with the music still in you.” When you set goals in your life, you are appointing yourself as the conductor of your own music. After all, if you don’t…who will?

**3 conclusions out of the many I’ve arrived at after years of spending time with the top 3%’ers:**
**Conclusion #1…If you have no goals of your own, the fear is you may spend your entire lifetime comparing yourself to other people.”** Without goals of your own, you’re likely to waste your life looking at the outside of other people rather than examining the inside of you! And, without goals of your own, the only place TO look is at the outside of other people!
So, the question begs to be asked, “While you’re wishing you had what someone else has, what are you doing with the skills, gifts and talents that God gave YOU? Have you ever noticed that half of the word of life is IF? Set and pursue goals and the “IF’s” in your life will become “WHEN’s!”

**Conclusion #2**…For the past 35 years, I’ve believed that “People without goals envy, while people with goals envision.” By envision I mean they see, dream, predict, imagine, and visualize. In short, by setting goals you will stop the envying cycle and will start the envisioning process!

**Conclusion #3**…The 97% who don’t set goals are destined to spend their entire lifetimes…many times unknowingly…helping the 3% who do set goals achieve theirs. It stands to reason that you’re either going to be a part of your own goals by design or you’ll be a part of someone else’s goals by default. And that my friends, is the major difference between a roaring tiger and a bleating goat!

The name of my talk is “Goals Aren’t Important”. And I mean just that. You see, I don’t believe goals are important…I believe goals are VITAL! Not just to your survival, but to your success, your happiness and your life’s fulfillment along the way….I believe goals are VITAL!

**Question #2: Why don’t people set goals?**

**Let’s look at 5 Key Reasons:** (I’m sure there are more, but these 5 stand out in my mind)

1) **Some people are just plain lazy!** The “entitlement mentality” in this country is running rampant! Granted, some people can’t work, but on the other hand, many people don’t want to work! Until a person decides to change this, they will continue to be sub-mediocre at best.

2) **Little is taught and few are sold!** Goals are not a subject schools teach….what a crying shame! Along with Math, Science, English, History and the other subjects, wouldn’t this one be as important, if not more so, than any others? I’ve spoken at several high schools and I’m here to tell you that students are starving for information on setting and pursuing goals!

Regarding the fact that “few are sold”, the only thing I’ll say here is that since 97% of Americans don’t set goals, there are very few passing the baton. It is my hope that this outline can at least provide my audiences with some basic information to pass along to their children, grandchildren, friends, neighbors, relatives and co-workers

3) **Many people feel they have no control so they stop dreaming!** As we grow older many people succumb to the feeling that they don’t have total control over their lives. They begin to falsely think that the government is in control, or that their spouse controls them, or their boss, or their co-workers, etc. When they were young they dreamed passionately, and they could tell you exactly what they wanted to be when they grew up. Then, when they reached adulthood, they stopped dreaming, many settled for a job they didn’t really like, and they began to feel that somehow others were in control of their lives. I have to say that NOTHING was ever further from the truth, but once you quit dreaming, it becomes a harsh reality.

4) **Many don’t know what they want out of life.** Approximately 7-8 out of every 10 students tell me they don’t know what they want to do after high school. However, this isn’t just relative to young people. I talk to 30, 40 and 50 year olds all the time who have no idea what they want to be when
they “grow up.” I tell them the best place to start is to ask themselves, “What is my passion? What do I love to do?” Then find a way to get there! It may take time….it most certainly will….but in the end it’s always better to pursue your dreams than to “settle” for something less.

5) **Many people have a “fear of failure.”** One of the biggest problems in setting goals is that there’s **risk** involved which people are naturally adverse to; and one of the most challenging roadblocks in overcoming risk is getting out of your **comfort zone!** I discovered early on that the height of my success was always going to be in direct proportion to the depth of my “zone.” And, I can tell you for certain that the most successful people I’ve known had the “shallowest” zones!

I once heard a mentor say he believed that the saddest words of tongue or pen were these 4 words, “What might have been.” To me, there’s nothing as sad as a potential winner who’s losing, and he/she doesn’t know why. Almost without exception you can trace it back to a lack of goals and an unwillingness to take a risk because of a debilitating fear of failure. I can honestly say I’ve never experienced much success inside my zone!

**My 4 Rules For “Successful Failure” (I didn’t write these so I’m not taking credit for them):**

Rule #1: “You cannot be a winner and be afraid to lose.”

Rule #2: “You can’t learn less, you can only learn more.”

Rule #3: “The more you do, the more you’ll fail. The more you fail, the more you’ll learn. The more you learn the more successful you’ll become.”

Rule #4: When you give yourself permission to fail, at the same time, you give yourself permission to EXCEL!

Close your eyes and ask yourself this question: “What would I do, what would I be, what would I become, if I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that I could not fail?” In other words, what would you do with your life if you weren’t afraid? I firmly believe that to dream of the person you want to be and to wake up every day and **NOT** do something about it is a terrible waste of the person you are.

**Let me share 3 ways I’ve found to help overcome “The Fear”:**

**Step #1: Change your perception of failure.** In his book *Failing Forward,* author John Maxwell wrote, “The difference between average people and achieving people is their perception of, and response to, failure. Nothing else has the same kind of impact on people’s ability to achieve and accomplish whatever their minds and hearts desire.”

Ask yourself, “Is failure a good thing or a bad thing?” Most people tell you it’s bad, when in reality, it can be either good or bad. The fact is it’s whatever you choose it to be! If you’re one of those people who thinks that failure is bad, you can change your perception by choosing to see the value in failure. When you grasp the concept of **learning** from failure, you find that it really IS a good thing!

**Step #2: Understand that failure is an event, not a person.** You personally are no more a failure after you’ve failed than you were before you failed. So your attempt failed…big hairy deal! That does **NOT** make YOU a failure…far from it! Learn this lesson well or every time you fail it will damage your self-esteem, and nobody needs that when they’re trying to reach their goal!
Step #3: Learn from these 8 words: Success is never final, failure is seldom fatal.
Successful people use failure as a stepping stone…unsuccessful people use it as a stumbling block. The average millionaire goes bankrupt 3½ times before finally making it. Why do they finally succeed? Because they are driven by passion and passionate people don’t quit! Secondly, their perception of failure is far different than the average person. And as you know, passionate people never look at failure as being fatal….only as a chance to more intelligently start again!

When people tell you it can’t be done, or criticize you for trying, remember what a great speaker once said: “Don’t ever let someone else’s opinion of you become your reality!” Pity the criticizer whose only function in life is to diss others because they just can’t muster the guts to do something big on their own. Use their negativism to fuel the passion within you!

Think about the examples we discussed who didn’t let failure become fatal….“Star Failures” such as: Coca-Cola, Walt Disney, Charles Schultz, Heather Whitestone, Jewel, Elvis Presley and Michael Phelps. Remember Jobs, Gates, Zuckerberg and Williams who all dropped out of college yet become billionaires because they followed their passion and never let failure become permanent!

Remember, it’s not where you start in life, it’s where you finish. Many people struggle with finishing what they start, because without a strong focus on a goal, when road-blocks get in their way, they simply fold. It is well documented that setting and committing to goals in your life will cause you to **FINISH** the things you start.

**Question #3:** What are the steps to achieving your goals?
As I see it, there are 3 steps. They’re simple in theory but they take planning, commitment and action!

**Step #1** You’ve got to **SET** ‘em!
**Step #2** You’ve got to **COMMIT** to ‘em!
**Step #3** You’ve got to **Take Action** and go **GET** ‘em!

**Let’s look at Step #1:** You’ve got to **SET** ‘em!
Here are 5 important steps in setting goals: (There are more than 5 steps no doubt, but these 5 are a great place to start!)

1. **Put them in writing and read them out loud twice daily.** Why? Because experts tell us that when your hand writes it down your brain thinks it’s real! Also, because a Columbia University study discovered that 84% of all learning comes through the eyes, 11% comes through the ears, so when you read your goals out loud you’re using 95% of the senses it takes for you to learn and to grow. One last reason to read them out loud...(it’s just a personal belief I have)....is that when you **state** them, you **create** them!

2. **Visualize yourself already having achieved your goal.**
Experts tell us that it’s easier to achieve something that your mind can see you already possessing. Oprah, (and several others), said, “If you can see it and believe it you can achieve it.” Understand that dreaming **does** matter….why? Because it allows you to become that which you aspire to be in the most important place on earth...in your mind! As I once heard world traveler, Dean Jacobs, say, “Dreams are the birthright of all humanity.” You have as much right to dream big as any of the 7 billion humans on this earth! Yes, YOU! Just remember to believe in those 9 very important words:
“The me I SEE is the me I’ll BE!”  SEE yourself winning every day and it will eventually come to pass!

3. **Make sure your goals are specific & measurable.** It helps tremendously to know precisely what you’re shooting for. It stands to reason that you can’t hit a target you can’t see. Remember that goals are all about focus, and where focus goes energy flows!

4. **Goals must carry a deadline.** There must be an end to your goal, for without an end there will be no sense of urgency; without a sense of urgency there will be little or no commitment; and without a commitment there truly is no goal. Without a deadline a goal is just an open-ended wish and “someday” will always be its battle cry.

5. **Don’t share your goals with anyone…except those who want you to win.** Find mentors in your life. Hang with the “right” kind of people. Here’s a somewhat sad but true fact…most people really don’t care if you win in life….that’s fine….find the ones who do! Ask yourself this question: “Are the people I’m following going where I want to go?” It’s a proven fact that you will take on the attitudes, successes and failures of those with whom you associate. So, choose wisely! Any success I’ve had in my own life began after the day I decided that I couldn’t always control who I had to be around, but I could always control who I followed around!

To conclude step #1, I want to say that I personally set goals in 4 categories each quarter. They are:

1) Spiritual Goals
2) Goals For Helping Others
3) Business Goals
4) Personal/Family Goals

At the end of each quarter I review them. If I haven’t accomplished a particular goal, I re-evaluate it and ask myself if it is important enough to move to the next quarter’s list. If it is not, I discard it and replace it with a new one that has a higher level of importance in my life. This way I am constantly reviewing and re-evaluating my life’s work and what I want to accomplish. And by the way, I find that if I pay attention to numbers 1 and 2 above, numbers 3 and 4 are much easier to accomplish!

**Let’s look at Step #2: You’ve got to COMMIT to ‘em!**

Most people dream of success; some people even go so far as to plan for success; however, very few people in life ever commit to really being successful. Again, ask yourself, “What am I doing with the skills, gifts and talents that God has given me? AND, how successful could I be if I significantly increased my level of commitment today?”

The question “Commitment” always asks is: **“What are you willing to give up…to sacrifice…in order to achieve your goals? And if you do, what are you really capable of?”**

This story wasn’t in the speech because of time restraints, but do you remember Gabby Douglas, the gymnast who left home and went to live and train in Iowa, in order to try to qualify for the Olympic team in 2012? Story has it that she called home 7 months before the Olympic trials and said she wanted to quit because she was homesick and disheartened. Her mother and sisters talked her into staying and told her not to give up. She agreed and instead of quitting, she recommitted herself to her goal. Lo and behold, 7 months later, at the ripe old age of 16, she was crowned the **BEST** all-around gymnast **in the**
world, winning two gold medals at the 2012 London Games! She also became the 1st African-Amer-
ican to ever win the All-Around! What if she would have quit 7 months earlier? My, oh my, com-
mmitment is a beautiful thing, is it not? What aren’t you committed to today that you really should be, and if you do, how will your life change for the better?

One of the greatest lessons I’ve learned in my life was from Craig Cassell, a quadriplegic artist who taught himself to draw beautiful pictures with a pencil in his teeth! I showed you several of his pictures during the speech. After 7 years of knowing him and watching the commitment he had to being the finest artist he could be….even though he was paralyzed from the neck down….I came to this realization: That you and I should never let success go to our heads, but more importantly, we should never let failure go to our hearts. Craig never let the failure of diving into that river and becoming paralyzed go to his heart. Thank you Craig for a wonderful life lesson….may you rest in peace.

Once again, let’s ask the question above only in a different way: What are YOU willing to give up in order to achieve YOUR goals….and if you do, what are you REALLY capable of?

Finally, let’s look at Step #3: You’ve got to Take Action and GET ‘em!
So, how do you get ‘em? Very simple….by starting….by taking action on what you say you want out of life! As Dean Jacobs, the author of “Wondrous Journey”, who has traveled to over 55 countries, said in a speech I attended in 2015, “A goal becomes a distraction if you have no plan of action!” Once you’ve dreamed the dream, set the goal and devised the plan, it’s time to get off the couch and move! My observation after 35 years in business is that it’s the start that stops most people. Have you ever noticed that you can’t steer a parked car? And by the same token you can’t steer your life in the direction of your dreams until you quit waiting on others and get yourself moving. I have a personal belief that God won’t help you achieve your dreams either, unless you’re willing to show Him that you’re serious about achieving your goal. You do this by acting on what you say you want out of life!

Remember, it always has been, and it always will be, that action creates rewards….never inaction! If you say you want something in life, don’t sit around waiting for an invitation. Life is yours for the taking, but you have to step up and take ownership of it through your actions! As I saw printed on the back of a T-shirt recently, “You don’t have to be great to get started, but you do have to get started if you’re ever going to be great!” Come on….do yourself a favor and…get moving!!!!

My final thought is this:
I believe with all my heart that “People with goals are out to break records, and people without goals are out to break even.” As Gandhi said, “Your smallness does not serve the world.” Why not set goals and go for all the gusto this life has to offer? We are only on this earth for a flicker, so why not set some goals, get out of your comfort zone, take some risks and be the best you can be.

In closing I ask you….are YOU ready to be what YOU were born to become? GO FOR IT!!

Wishing you all the best life has to offer,
Barry Carlson, Professional Speaker and CEO of MidAmerica Speakers Bureau