Goal-Based Effective Training

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ABSTRACT

Lack of realistic goals and coordination in planning and failing to predict the changing environment have all caused urgent decision making to replace thoughtful decision making in our current management system. This leads to the waste of a great part of human force’s power the consequence of which is the decrease in motivation for achieving goals. On the other hand, executing strategy is as important as having a goal and a strategy to achieve it. Execution entails having resources that match goals. Among resources, human resources are of considerable importance as the most valuable and the most effective asset of society and the driving force for plans. Since having expert workforce requires long-term planning and training, appropriate workforce should be trained in order to properly and precisely execute plans and goals. As it is clear to everyone, the training process of such workforce requires spending a great deal of time and cost. This demands the coordination of decision making, executive, and educational bodies, so that through goal-based training, we may ultimately have effective skilled workforce to arrive at Iran’s long-term goals.

Key words: Goal-based training, industry-university liaison, balanced scorecard, effective training

Introduction

Years ago, as I was a pre-college course student, we had a number of hens at home. My dad told me once: “Whenever you have time, get some wheat for the hens.” I accepted, took a bag and headed for a grain store near our home known as straw store. The owner was an old man who had assigned the great part of work to his sons. But he often took care of routine tasks and answering customers in order to spend his time. I told him: “I need some wheat.” “Go take it yourself,” he responded. I went in and as I was busy doing my job, I suddenly realized the old man is standing behind me. He said: “Son! How much educated are you?” With special pride, a result of teenage years, I told him: “My pre-college course is nearing its end sir!”

“What is your major,” he asked. I said: “Math and physics.”

“What benefit has this education brought you so far!” he said.

I responded: “I don’t understand what you mean!”

He said: “Can’t you still tell wheat from barley apart?! What you took is barley, wheat is over there.” I felt the walls are closing in on me. Ashamed, I smiled and said: “Sir! Ask me about integrals and differentiations, how should I know about wheat and barley?” He was not helpless to answer me, but he said: “Keep in mind that what you have learned will not help you solve your problems in life.”

Even though that old man’s argument does not seem very reasonable in the present era, it caused me to look at my surroundings more precisely and thoughtfully from then on. Recalling that story used to bother my soul and upset me at first, but after some time, my way of thinking changed and this question formed in my mind: Is what I have learned during these years really in vain? What is the application of what I have learned? This incident influenced my life and future education surprisingly and unbelievably, in a way that I studied lessons that I thought they would be useful for me in future with greater enthusiasm, by bringing up certain questions in my mind. I even used the help of other books and on the other hand, I did not pay much attention to lessons that I thought they were of no use. In fact, this story caused me to think more seriously about this issue: How is it possible to establish a practical liaison between science and industry? This is the same concern present authorities always talk about, and finally everything boils down to only a few conferences and perhaps books and papers, without any practical constructive results.

If we have no goals in life and we don’t know where we are going and we let go of rudder of the
ship of life, the environment will inevitably decide on our destination. If we do not know the greatest problem of our present managerial system to be lack of goal and plan, we should accept that failing to adhere to goals and lack of motivation for the execution of goals are among major problems of today's organizations. On the other hand, the managers' decision making orientation changes from thoughtful to urgent decision making has escalated this dispersion and lack of motivation in the long run. This eventually causes the lack of goal-based relationships between strategic goals and operational goals of organizations. As we see today, the structure of organizations has become so complicated that they cannot survive without precise planning. This causes a great part of the system's power to be wasted. On the one hand, existence of a compiled plan is based on awareness of future opportunities and threats and how opportunities may be used and threats may be fought as well as a complete knowledge of the organization's strengths and weaknesses. Unawareness of the above (SWOT) and also lack of an extensive comprehensive outlook cause the plan that is finally developed to be not as effective as it should. On the other hand, having a proper plan is not enough; rather, correctly and precisely executing a proper plan is as important. Meanwhile, a general comprehensive strategy should be developed in order for the plan to be executed; a strategy that walks the organization through from a high level mission to works done by employees at the forefront in a logical continuum. Figure (1) illustrates the general procedure of the translation of a mission to the intended results. As can be seen, the mission provides us with a starting point for our activity.

As a result, the developed strategy should be based on mission (Why do we exist?), fundamental values (What principles do we adhere to?) and vision (Where do we want to get to?). Efforts have been made in the following pages to take a different look at the topic of training, employment, and the university-industry liaison with a glance at the balanced scorecard method so that in summary, a plan may be put forward that goal-based effective training is facilitated as the paper title shows. We hope, even if this strategy is not implemented, at least a new outlook is provided for students and pragmatic seekers of knowledge in Iran.

**Fig. 1:** Translating a mission into intended results

In this short article, authors strive to cast a new look at this issue given their work experience in the business and academic world and attempt to move toward developing a strategy in order to bring industry and university closer to one another, instead of searching for the reason why the two have fallen apart. Although they are fully aware that it is such a difficult task to carry out, however, since the longest journeys begin with the first step, there is no way but to take the first shaky steps to arrive at a pattern and executive plan based on reality. This distance is accompanied by such negative social, economic, and political consequences that even if we navigate this path with trial and error, it is undoubtedly worth tolerating numerous problems and difficulties and we should not be scared away by its possibly frustrating consequences.

Whenever there is talk of statistics and unemployment rate, researchers and academic scholars accuse government and industry and
condemn them of not having developed industries sufficiently or not having plans for employing the large crowd of university graduates. Why have we never listened to what industry and enterprise managers have to say? Why are we speechless when industry says that graduates lack a proper understanding of market and facts of society? Is this a useless question? Why do not we ask ourselves whether what we teach students is what industry and government require? Have we taken a look at lessons we offer so that we can see how much these sciences are in accordance with the present facts of society? Has the acceptance of students in different majors and years matched society’s need? What have we done to make our products (graduates) appealing to them (government and industry)? Do we really deliver what government and industry require? We sit down for hours and give speeches for industry managers and authorities and offer consultation to them about the importance of offer and demand and a knowledge of these two, feasibility study and need assessment, finding new markets for new products and penetration into new markets. But when it comes to us, we do not practice what we preach. Let’s be a little fair. Have we investigated where the market for our products is? Have we conducted a feasibility study as to what the market requires so that we produce it? Have we tried to harmonize offer with demand?

In view of what was stated above, we are left with no way but to come up with a new plan for liaising industry with university. Before we start, we need to replace the one-sided look at this issue with a two-sided view in order to be able to gain a comprehensive, extensive, and realistic understanding of the issue. In order to bridge the gap of distrust, we always start to build the bridge from one side to finally get to the other, without taking into consideration whether the other side is appropriate to get to. The approach that is attempted to be presented in this paper is a mutual movement, in a way that both groups, industry and government on one side and education and development as well as higher education on the other, take a new look at their path and move toward each other, traversing this path with such precision and accuracy that the least disagreement is resulted. This plan and pattern does not resemble curing a simple disease through a few times of taking pills or syrups, it is rather a strategy and process that should be constantly executed, examined, and updated, like a diet or an exercise program whose first effects take some 7 to 10 years to show. During this process, our path should be compared with pre-determined goals and our mission so that if there is a disagreement, it can be corrected before irreparable consequences follow. Moreover, goals should be reviewed every now and then to be matched to the unsteady volatile conditions of society. In summary, the following cycle should be executed upon implementing this strategy:

![Strategic management process (on the basis of Deming Cycle)](image)

**Fig. 2:** Strategic management process (on the basis of Deming Cycle)

you know, Iran has a 20-year vision document in which goals for 2025 are expressed. On the other hand, every town possesses a development document in which goals for advancement of that town are
mentioned. This is our starting point, to see how much realistic this document is? Is the development of this document an answer to the superordinate and in other words a means to silence them, or is it based on the potentials of the town and a look at the 20-year vision? The starting point for developing strategy for industry-university liaison is a review of town’s development document, in this manner that members of academia and executive managers, who have a background in executive plans and possess high scientific power, review the town’s development document at first, and then rewrite it according to facts and considering existing potentials and political-economic circumstances and the town’s potentials, in a way that it looks as realistic and feasible as possible. It is important that the development document be developed by a combination of these two teams, because it should transform from an ideal state to an executable plan.

In summary, town’s development plan should possess the following characteristics:

1- It should be studied:
   - It should be investigated and examined explicitly, precisely, and fundamentally.
2- It should be explicit:
   - Each goal should be expressed in a way that it is conceivable for everyone, while being comprehensive.
3- It should be calculated:
   - Evaluating each goal accurately, especially from quantitative and growth rate perspectives, can help to define its actual concepts.
4- It should pertain to a certain period:
   - The period required for achieving them should be assessed as precisely as possible.
5- It should rely on specified costs:
   - It should be determined using what resources and what budget goals may be achieved.
6- It should be realistic:
   - The more realistic the goals are defined, the more the possibility of their realization.
7- It should guarantee practical solutions:
   - Goals should introduce the most successful solutions. These solutions do not necessarily indicate that goals are easily accessible, but their practicality should be ensured.
8- It should be in accordance with Iran’s 20-year vision:
   - On any level, the direction of goals should be in harmony with high-level goals of the 20-year vision. This is necessary for the integration and uniformity of movement toward high-level goals of the vision document.
9- It should be comprised of required activities:
   - It should embrace operational activities of organization in all aspects and not cause conflict and disturbance.
10- It should be persistent:

Sequence of operations and continuity of activities pertaining to goals should be observed particularly in terms of time.

11- It should be in accordance with executive power:
   - Goals should match the facilities and executive power of units and not exceed their power.
12- It should be based on the town’s potentials:
   - Goals should be defined in proportion to the town’s potentials and power.
13- It should use executors’ opinion and consultation:
   - Goals of each organization of town should be selected and set in direct contact with authorities. This causes the goals to be more realistic and practical and the motivation for realizing them to be great.
14- It should be developed bearing SWOT in mind:
   - Drafting the development document should be in a way to boost strengths and cover up weaknesses.
15- So far as possible, it should not overlap with the neighboring towns’ development document.
16- So far as possible, it should complement the neighboring towns’ development document.

Upon explaining no. 15 and 16, it can be stated that that two towns A and B that are situated beside each other should not necessarily have similar development documents because they are in the same geographical location; rather, efforts should be made so that there is no overlap between documents so far as possible and they should be complementary.

17- It should be the resultant of positive goals:
   - Results of executing the town’s development plan should finally lead to a positive evaluation of the resultant of plans.
18- It should be supervisable, assessable, and controllable:
   - Goals should be measurable and assessable and certain criteria should be considered for measuring them.

In the next step, the faculty members of each university should investigate each item in the development document that is in line with their major and work on it accurately and make their findings available to governorship and university in form of research plans. The output of this research shows what tools, facilities, and experts we require in order to arrive at the town’s goals. In order for this step to be carried out successfully, increasing collaborations between governorships and universities are required, in this manner that governorships, as the highest ranking executive body of town, places value on these plans and tries to execute them. Even a supervision and evaluation unit should be established to follow up these plans. On the other hand, universities should consider plans that are in accordance with the town’s development plan and the 20-year vision as more significant, assigning more value to them. Given unpredictable
events, no plan will go on as expected, no matter how precisely it is prepared. Therefore, expected effects of the execution of plans and the fundamental assumptions behind these expectations should be constantly examined. Whenever these expectations and assumptions distance themselves from facts, the reasons should be sought and they should be used for balancing the plan. Given the importance of this issue, it should be reminded that this path and strategy is not a project with a starting and ending point; rather, it is a cycle that should be permanently updated by considering political and economic conditions and its executability and the way to handle it should be investigated with constant supervision.

This process is the first step. But in the next stage we should address the town’s potentials. Considering the title of this paper, we are predominantly involved with training experts in line with achieving the goals of the development document and the 20-year vision. Let us start this topic with an example. Suppose you have a bar of bullion at your disposal with no limitation in shaping it. What do you do with it? If you have artistic taste, maybe you make a sculpture from it. If you are hungry, you may shape it into a dish for preparing food. If you are outdoors, as on a mountain or in a forest, you will shape it into a knife to use it for protection. This difference in decision making and production is a result of difference in goals. If we do not intend to look at the story through Machiavelli’s perspective as to “The end justifies the means,” we can say that the end determines the means or in other words, “it is our end that justifies our need to a certain means.” On the other hand, as we know, proper use of human force, which is the most valuable and the greatest asset of any society, has been of interest to governments as an important issue. In other words, human is deemed as both the objective of development and its cause. Hence, realization of development goals hinges on the way this vital asset and resource is directed and managed to a considerable degree. In view of the above sentence, should we not take such action for high school students as potentials? Should we not direct them toward the realization of the goals of Iran and the town? What is meant in this step is that in view of the goals set in the development document, we should train experts to achieve them and in doing so, we should start from high schools. The requisite for the start of this stage is forming a group named “Consultants Center.” This group is not limited to high school or university; it is rather a center beyond university and high school that monitors students since the beginning of high school till after graduation. As you are well aware, there are currently consultants to guide youngsters, such as educational consultants in high schools, major selection consultants at the time of the university entrance exam, student consultants in the university, and after graduation, employment agencies for job consultation.

But do these groups have similar goals, or do they offer consultants to solve a problem people have at that period of time? Lack of a single goal and disagreement in consultants’ opinions at different times and lack of a single horizon eventually cause the youngsters as well as industry and organization managers to become confused, in this manner that the first group do not know what they want and where they are going and the other group does not either know what workforce with which skills it will recruit in the years to come. At this point, the country’s power (high school and university students) is wasted because of a lack of a unit goal. The authorities of country and industry cannot do proper planning, because they lack sufficient information about the status of workforce in future.

In view of what was stated above, the necessity of establishing such a center is obvious. The duty of this center is to provide different groups of consultants with unidirectional goals. By taking a look at the town’s development document and the 20-year vision, this center will find out what experts we need to achieve these goals. By establishing such a center and the membership of high school students in it, their educational status, behavior, tendency, and expertise can be recorded in an information bank and bearing in mind the skills we need to arrive at the goals of the development document, we can guide students in that direction to train people for whose employment we have no concern after their graduation.

At the end of high school and at the time of participating in the university entrance exam, as this information is handed over to the major selection consultant, he will also know that major selection should not be merely performed on the basis of the students’ ranking and interests; rather, their skill, expertise, behavior, and ability should also be allowed for. Once students graduate from high school and enter the university, this information bank is transferred with him. At the university, considering students’ expertise and interest, the entrepreneurship and research units should guide them and provide them with necessary training in form of extra-schedule programs with the help of consultants. They should also introduce students to related companies or industries for their internship and in order to raise their levels of skill and expertise. This is in fact a goal-based training.

After graduation and with students’ membership in the center for graduates, the students will still be supported by the Consultants’ Center. In case students get accepted to higher levels of education, this cycle will continue and in case they are willing to start their career, they can be employed or set up an enterprise more rapidly given the skills they have acquired and the expertise considered for them. This will also be required and welcomed by the
government and industry and realizes the town’s development document through another way.

Conclusion:

Considering the topics pointed out in this short article and also in view of the importance of realistic plans, it can be concluded that goal-based effective training is not an issue that can be organized merely by the efforts of the government, industry, or the ministry of education and development, nor is it possible to arrive at the desired aims by investing in any of the above-mentioned sections; rather, we should act in a way that the resultant of the stakeholder units’ power guides us toward a correct and logical direction. If we want the resultant of forces to be eventually evaluated as positive, we have no way but to set a single goal for all organizations and control their harmonic progress toward goals by supervising and evaluating their performance so that we would not encounter the problem of the weakening of one unit by the boost of another and we would finally be able to lead the human resources, as the most valuable asset, toward realization of the country’s long-term goals.

Since this plan encompasses entire society layers, we have to conduct a comprehensive study upon setting such goals, establishing goals that are in accordance with the potentials of the respective town. It is meanwhile necessary to make use of the collaborations of effective decision making bodies in a proper way.

References