



# 8 Ways to Boost Your Team's Commitment to Goals

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# 1. Be certain you have good team goals.

In a perfect world, your team magically shows up to work fully committed to the organization's Wildly Important Goals® (WIGs®)—ready and willing to win as a team. But since that's not typical behavior in the real world, try these eight team commitment-boosting strategies.

As Stephen R. Covey said, "If the ladder is not leaning against the right wall, every step we take just gets us to the wrong place faster." The same is true for goals.

So before worrying about commitment, consider the following to ensure your **Wildly Important Goals** are the right ones:

1. No team should focus on more than one Wildly Important Goal at the same time.
  - The key is not to overload any single leader, team, or individual performer.

2. The battles you choose must win the war.
  - The sole purpose of WIGs at lower levels in the organization is to help achieve the WIGs at the higher levels.
3. Senior leaders can veto, but not dictate.
  - 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.

4. All WIGs must have a finish line in the form of "From X to Y by When."
  - Every WIG at each level must contain a starting point, a future result, as well as the date by which that result must be achieved.

If the goal falls short of any of these standards, it's worth revisiting before moving forward.



## 2. Get your team's input throughout the goal process—in setting, planning, pursuing, and post-goal review.

How can you expect the team to feel fully invested, like it's their goal, if they haven't had any say in what they're working on?

Even if you had a preset goal dumped on you from above, you should still talk with your team about it—they may not feel like masters of their fate, but at least they'll feel heard. You should also solicit their ideas for the best way to reach the objective—what milestones and deadlines are realistic, how you should course-correct when things don't go as planned, and how the team can

improve. At the individual level, you should use 1-on-1s to explore the roles and tasks each direct report is particularly interested in or excited about.

Of course, you likely won't want input on everything: for example, about an individual who's underperforming. Sometimes you won't want to follow their advice (in which case, explain why you made the decision you did). But sometime you will, and it will help them feel like co-owners of the goal.



### 3. Have the team publicly commit to the WIG.

Like the proverbial tree falling in a forest, a commitment resonates more if there are people around to hear it.



When team members tell everyone about their WIGs, it signals that those goals are important to them. It allows everyone to know what everyone else is working on. It fosters a sense of cohesion and collective identity, helping the whole team see how they are interconnected.

To prompt public commitment on your team, you don't have to ask team members to stand on their desks and shout (though that might work). Instead, ask them to write team WIGs in a group document, on a whiteboard in your area, or even publicly in a company forum, if that's your style.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy made the pronouncement "land a man on the moon and return him safely to the earth before this decade is out." When the team moves from having a dozen we-really-hope goals to one no-matter-what goal, the effect on morale is palpable. If you can throw that switch, you will lay the foundation for extraordinary commitment. When Kennedy said "to the moon and back by the end of the decade," he threw that switch.

## 4. Develop a common language around team goals.

Have you ever run into communication issues when you work with another team or department? The way a sales team speaks and the way a creative team or marketing team communicates can be very different—and these differences can cause miscommunication and slow collaboration. People develop a collective language when they are part of a group. Some phrases are common in business, like “ABC” (Always Be Closing) for a sales team, while others may be unique to your team (say, your team produces a monthly metrics report, which the group dubs “The Ruler”).

Regardless, common speech helps bind people together. Try the following:

- **Have the team write down words and ideas that pop up when discussing team WIGs.** Like “ABC” if your sales team’s WIG revolves around improving your close rate. Do it in a public space—on a whiteboard or your online collaboration tool—and start using the terms when you discuss the team’s WIGs.
- **Enlist a team member to review team goals aloud in weekly WIG Sessions.** Have the person detail the team’s progress toward each goal and rotate who does it each WIG Session. This will allow team members a chance to shape a common language around the goals organically with input from the entire team, rather than being based solely on how you talk about goals.



## 5. Show your team the value their work has within and beyond your organization.

People want to see how their work contributes to the big picture.

Start by listing everyone who benefits from your team's work:

- Who are your clients and end users?
- Who does your team help within the organization (e.g., maybe your team makes things easier or more valuable for other teams)?
- How is your team affecting these lives?
- How is your industry shaping the future?

Once you're clear on whom your team impacts, arrange for one of these impacted colleagues or clients to share their experiences—if possible, in person. Even better, bring your team to the colleagues or clients to view the end result of their labor. The service reps who hear how they saved a client three hours or the sales team who learns how their product increased a customer's business by 20 percent should go back to their desks with a motivation lift.

Also, encourage your team to find ways to express the value of their work: Thank the team member who forwards an article or gives an example in a team meeting of how the team's work is meaningful.



## 6. Recognize and celebrate outstanding performances and progress.

Most people feel motivated by progress and receiving recognition for a job well done.



Some teams are all about ringing bells and giving high fives when things go well. Others are more low-key, and positive reinforcement, given privately, is plenty. Tailor your efforts to match your team culture. Here are a few ideas:

- **Acknowledge team progress publicly.** You could begin WIG Sessions with each member giving a shout-out to someone else. Or when you see team members congratulate or laud each other's progress, reinforce the behavior: "Thanks for giving that shout-out. It's important that we all recognize each other's good work."
- **Recognize and reinforce team collaboration.** Be careful not to restrict your recognition to traditional performance outcomes—it's not just about making a sale or finishing a deliverable. Team members working well together, coaching each other, pitching

in beyond their job descriptions to help each other—these are also performance indicators worth recognizing.

- **Plan a team event—together.** For a reward, would your team prefer dinner? a happy hour? a show? a ballgame? maybe a day or a night off to celebrate? Just talking about "once we're done" can give a team a lift. Also, involve your team in determining the celebration. The last thing you want is half your team thinking, Ugh, I just want to go home, when you're making them gather outside work to celebrate and calling it a reward.

## 7. For team members who remain uncommitted to a team goal, concentrate instead on their commitment to the team.

Even if you follow all the tips above, some direct reports may not be committed to the goal. If you simply tell your team what to do, they will learn little. What you ultimately want is for each member of your team to take personal ownership of the commitments they make. Instead of explicit reminders, you could try:

- **Assigning roles that require the uncommitted person to complete something for a team member.** This can help get them thinking, *I'm doing this for Evan, rather than, I'm doing this for some stupid goal.*
- **Suggesting to a committed team member that they coach/mentor the more dubious team member.** The committed portion of the team might tend to avoid the uncommitted, saying to themselves,

*They're going to hold us back on this one.* Unfortunately, this only exacerbates the problem. Instead, try finding a respected team member willing to help their teammate. The collaboration makes the team part of the solution.





## 8. Boost commitment over and over.

Commitment will wax and wane over the course of pursuing a WIG. Be on the lookout, especially during the middle stages after initial excitement has worn off but before the team can see the finish line.

Continue to look for opportunities to hear your team's views by getting your team's input throughout the goal process. Show them the value their work has within and beyond your organization, and recognize and celebrate outstanding performances and progress.

To really boost commitment, implementing these eight strategies only once won't be enough. You will ultimately need to create a cadence of accountability, where these strategies are constantly implemented and refined. Start by meeting weekly to discuss your Wildly Important Goals, and your team's commitment to the goals will stay high. When you meet regularly, you can report on commitments from previous weeks, learn from successes and failures, and clear the path to make new commitments to your goals as a team.

To learn more about establishing a cadence of accountability, executing on strategy, and achieving lasting changes in human behavior, contact us.

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