

The Importance of Goal Setting: Why Every Pharmacist Should Make Goal Setting a Habit

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When speaking with pharmacists and students at pharmacy meetings, we often ask these two questions:

1. Did they discover or learn anything new or interesting at the meeting, and;
2. What do they hope to do with the knowledge and experiences they have encountered.

At this year's Western Pharmacy Exchange meeting, many pharmacists voiced their desire to implement more clinical services, or see if the innovations showcased at the meeting could work in their practice. Students attended the meeting to find opportunities to network and explore other areas of pharmacy practice. When we go back to our busy lives and schedules, do we get a chance to follow through on these ideas that could advance us personally or professionally?

As pharmacists, we often counsel our patients on medications and lifestyle changes. We encourage them to set goals to improve their diet, increase their exercise, manage their chronic disease state, and improve medication compliance. We utilize the teach-back method and employ motivational interviewing techniques. We realize that it is important for our patients to set clear goals and have a plan to achieve success.

But how many of us actually practice what we preach? We have pledged to apply our knowledge, experience, and skills to the best of our ability to assure optimal outcomes for our patients.⁽¹⁾ As the pharmacy profession evolves, and as we train future generations of pharmacists, we have increased opportunities to expand our role and impact as a pharmacist. Goal setting is an important and valuable tool to support us in our personal and professional growth.

The first step toward this growth is to establish S.M.A.R.T. goals. S.M.A.R.T. goals are *Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound*.⁽²⁾ Be specific about what you want to accomplish and what steps you are going to take to accomplish your goal. Establish a measurable outcome to define success. Ensure that your goal is achievable. Set relevant goals that support your big picture. Keep yourself accountable and on track by setting a realistic time frame.

Setting short- and long-term S.M.A.R.T. goals lays the groundwork for creating and implementing a plan of action. Think about where you want to go and work backward. What skills and experiences are necessary to achieve your goals? How can your short-term goals build toward accomplishing a longer-term goal? What is a realistic time frame to encourage success and promote accountability?

Goals should be periodically evaluated and modified as well. Honest self-reflection and identification of strengths and weaknesses is a must. If a certain trait, characteristic, or practice is impeding success, it should be identified and addressed. As goals are accomplished, and we move closer to our end goal, we may need to modify the steps we take to get there. Goal setting is a valuable tool, and one that can and should be applied at every stage in our personal and professional development to promote success.

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