

Getting your clients to choose goals and take action

In his coaching series for CAM practitioners dedicated to “the difference that makes the difference”, NLP coach **Mark Shields**, director of the Life Practice Group, explains how to get clients motivated to get with your programme.

An idea is just an idea until you write it down. A goal is just a dream until you write it down and take action.

The goal is what you want; the action is how you are going to achieve it.

As a practitioner I have found it both motivational and inspirational for my clients to bring goal setting to the forefront of our agenda. I spend a large chunk of the first session discussing the client’s goals with them.

If you do this, your client will see you are taking action with them from your first moments together, which will motivate them as well as giving you credibility.

Begin every session with a discussion and review of their goals and celebrate the successes achieved together: that is highly motivational.

Top tips when goal setting with clients:

1. Ensure goals are CSMART

Client Commitment
Specific
Measurable
Realistic
Timescales

CSMART makes sure the client’s goal has structure and realism. It is counter-productive to set unrealistic, unachievable goals, as when the client fails to meet them they become demotivated and lose commitment and their sense of “buy in”.

Be positive, but keep it real.

2. Ensure you work with a maximum of 5 goals

A common mistake practitioners make is to set lots of goals with their clients. Prioritise: pick the most important five goals and start with these. This will ensure you keep it simple and focused. Too many goals will dilute the importance of each one of them and end up confusing the client.

3. Recognise high-impact goals

Sometimes when a client has an obvious, important priority, the first step will be to

establish a handful (normally 3) of high-impact goals and actions to address that specific problem or situation.

High-impact goals deliver high-impact actions, which deliver priority results fast.

4. Short, medium and long-term goals

If you are going to do the job properly the client should have a set of short (6 months), medium (18 months) and long-term (2 years) goals.

70 % of effort and action should go into short-term goals, 20% into medium and 10% into longer term goals.

It’s fairly typical for a client to set 3 short-term goals, 1 medium and 1 long-term. The principles always stay the same, ensuring a maximum of 5 goals at any one time.

5. Client Actions

Once you have agreed the goals (the “what” in the client’s strategy), you now have to agree the how, which takes the form of client actions to achieve their goals.

It is sensible to also apply the CSMART model here to ensure actions are realistic, achievable and to make sure that review periods are set up to gauge progress together. It is very motivational and inspirational for the client to see themselves making progress, but they won’t, unless you make a point of having a regular review.

6. Ensure you own a Practitioner Action

When completing the goal-setting and action-planning process it is easy to sit back and allow the client to own all the actions.

Many practitioners feel this is right, however in my experience I have always achieved excellent results by taking away a minimum of 1 action myself. I’ve found this inspires and motivates my client even more, as they feel we really are working together towards achieving their goals.

7. Acknowledge and celebrate progress

The client now has a strategy, a set of goals and actions to ensure they achieve the results they want.

How they feel as they move through this process is fundamental to them sticking with the programme and getting what they want out of life. As the practitioner you need to continue to inspire and motivate them throughout this entire process.

When setting goals and actions you have to be flexible and be prepared to change goals and actions if it is clear you were either far too ambitious, or not ambitious enough in setting the initial goals.

The important lesson to remember is that if the client is achieving results – even if they are somewhat off the pace – this needs celebrating and rewarding.

This is change the client wouldn’t have achieved on their own and you need to build on this success and use this to motivate and inspire the client into working even harder to achieve their goals.

Progress leads to momentum

Use ANY improvement as leverage to prove to the client they can achieve results; once they start to see regular results they will build momentum.

It’s a fact: the more results and progress the client feels they are achieving the more momentum they will build.

Momentum has a direct impact on motivation and it is common in these situations to see the client once they are in the momentous flow of achieving, they get more motivated, take more action, and achieve even better results.



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