



Why You Should Keep Score

Turn your goals into a game to keep employees engaged and focused

BY LESLIE CUNNINGHAM

“I’M NOT SURE WHAT WE SHOULD CHOOSE for our primary game in our business this year,” a hot tub business owner said to me. “There are lots of different things we could do. It’s hard to pick one area to focus on. And could you please remind me why we are calling this a game instead of an annual goal?”

I was video conferencing with the management team of a hot tub business, and we were identifying their primary focus for their business during the upcoming year.

I explained that most businesses use the term ‘goals’ when it comes to communicating outcomes to their employees. Unfortunately, many employees get burned out when talking about goals. Not only that, but the term can bring to mind a variety of experiences around setting goals — some positive and some negative. However, if we talk about creating a ‘game,’ that brings to mind an entirely different experience.

I asked them to recall different games or hobbies they enjoyed playing, and to talk about what made it fun for them. Their eyes lit up as they shared.

That’s exactly why we call this a game. We want to make it fun,

exciting, energizing, challenging and engaging for your employees — the same elements that we all love about playing a game.

After several meetings, the management team chose to create a game around achieving a breakthrough in their annual revenue number. I asked them to consider a number that was a stretch for them, but one that they could also imagine themselves accomplishing. After they identified a number, I asked if they felt the number would be inspiring for retail, but for the service department, admin and their chemical division as well.

They told me it really did feel like a game — one that every department and individual can participate in. “As a company, we tend to rely heavily on retail making their spa sales to meet our annual revenue goals,” they said.

“Every department is going to have to participate if we are going to win at this game!” Several weeks later during our video conference call with the employee leadership team, I asked the managers to share the game with their employee leaders.

After the management team had shared, it was clear all the employee leaders were fired up and energized. “I really feel inspired by this game because I want to be part of a winning team,” one admin said. “Nobody wants to be part of team that is losing. It feels good when the entire business is succeeding in a big way, and it would make me even more proud to work here!”

Each employee leader nodded their heads in agreement and in turn committed to playing the game.

The next step was to create a scoreboard for their game. With four different locations, it would be critical that the weekly “score” (year-to-date annual revenue number) was communicated consistently so each location and department would know on a weekly basis if they were winning or losing.

One of the owners who oversaw the books had to shift his mind-set around numbers. In the past, he believed most employees didn’t care about the numbers — and that no one would read them. After some initial reticence and coaching, he began sending out weekly numbers.

He was shocked and excited when one of the retail staff told him, “I look forward to having these numbers every week. I’ve always wanted to have these numbers, and now we get them consistently. I can take the numbers and figure out exactly how much money we need to make to achieve our monthly goal, so we’re not waiting till the end of the month or the end of the

year, then having to pull off a huge, impossible number because we didn't pay attention to our weekly totals."

The service department also took their weekly numbers and calculated how much each technician would have to sell to achieve their monthly goal. Every department was clearly engaged.

The excitement and anticipation grew even more as they entered the final quarter of the year. Three weeks before the end of the year, I video conferenced with the managers and asked them to share on a scale of 1 to 10 whether they believed their team would succeed. A couple expressed doubt as to whether their team would be able to pull it off.

I took this as an opportunity to coach the management team, telling them that the only thing we can say with any degree of certainty about the time between now and the end of the year is that anything is possible. It doesn't matter how your team performed last year, or how it's performed for the past five years. When we focus on the three remaining weeks, the only thing we can say is that they're unwritten. We don't know what will happen, and anything is possible.

They nodded in agreement.

The management team went on to lead their team in a powerful and impactful way throughout the final weeks in the year.

The annual revenue numbers game became common talk throughout the company as individuals and departments came together to make it happen. Salespeople were looking for more ways to make a sale instead of depending on walk-in traffic, delivery became even more resourceful with getting spas delivered. Everyone was asking, "How much more do we have to get to win at our game?"

The final numbers were tallied, and they had succeeded in exceeding expectations and achieving their numbers. When you create a game that powerfully engages every employee and department, and consistently communicate the scoreboard to employees, you unleash the power of engagement and team alignment. This makes the impossible possible.



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