Do You Have a Vision Beyond Your Goals?

By Hayley Michaels



This is the time of the year when there's lots of talking, reflection and activity around goals. But, before you yawn and think, "Not another article on goal-setting" … stick around for a moment.

Goal-setting is essential to achieving what you want from life. Before you plunge into setting goals, though, there is another equally important process you need to work on first …

Your vision.

Many people confuse the words "vision" and "goals" and use the terms interchangeably. But, they're different … and both are necessary, if you intend to achieve your highest level of success.

What Is Vision?

Do you have a picture in your mind's eye of the life you want to live, the writing career you want to have, or something meaningful you want to achieve? Perhaps you allow your mind to wander, and your imagination paints an incredible picture.

When you think about that image, does it make your heart skip a beat or tickle your spirit with excitement?

Living a meaningful life or achieving something significant starts with having vision — the ability to think and plan your future, and to paint a clear and hopeful picture with imagination and wisdom.

To put it another way, think of your vision as a holiday destination you long to go to. Maybe you picture a luxury resort, and you see yourself there enjoying everything it has to offer.

And, to get there, you have to plan your journey — the route you'll take, the transportation you'll use, and the landmarks you'll visit along the way. These are your goals.

What Is the Difference Between Vision and Goals?

Your vision is defined by the following characteristics:

- Vision starts out as a thought, idea or dream you have. When you apply your imagination to it, it starts to grow and inspire you.
- Your vision is the long-term, big picture you have for your life, or a part of it, and it tends to focus on the future.
- When you spend time identifying and refining your vision, it gives you the clarity you need to set your goals.
- Your vision is the destination you want to reach. It is the incentive that pulls you forward.
- For vision to truly inspire and motivate you, it needs to align with your values and purpose.
- It asks the question, "Why?" In other words, "Why do I want to achieve this? Why do I want to live this way? Why is this important to me?"

And, these are the characteristics that define goals:

- Your goals arise from your vision.
- They are specific and measurable. Having both short-term and long-term goals will aid in your success.
- While your vision is your destination, your goals are the route you'll take and the milestones along the way.
- Goals ask the questions, "What? When? and How much?" For example: "What resources do I need? What do I need to do? When can I do this? How much time, money and support do I need?"
- To be truly effective, your goals need to be tied to the purpose and value of your vision; otherwise, they become hollow and stressful.

Michelangelo once said:

> *"I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free."*

This is a beautiful example of the difference and relationship between your vision and goals. The angel in the marble is your vision, and the carving is the action and steps you need to take to achieve success.

Use Your Vision as a Catalyst

Defining your vision sets your wheels in motion, giving you the inspiration and motivation to make the necessary plans and to do the work to get there.

Your goals move your vision from being a dream to reality.

Because your vision is your guiding light, it keeps you focused on the destination and life you're aiming for. It's also a reminder, especially when the going gets tough, of why you're doing what you're doing, why you're working toward each of your goals, and what lies ahead when you get there.

The clearer your vision is, the more precise your goal-setting can be. Again, this is how they work together. A clear picture of what you want to achieve will give you a more holistic view of what you need to do to get there.

When your vision aligns with your values and purpose, it becomes easier to stay inspired and motivated. And, just as a purpose-driven vision inspires you and gets you moving, purpose-centered goals make it easier to keep moving in the direction of your dreams.

How Do You Find Your Vision?

You may have a clear vision already. Or, you may want to refine it, change it, discover it, or re-discover it. Wherever you find yourself, this is a worthwhile exercise.

Even if you have a clear vision, spending time reflecting on it will improve your goal-setting.

If you're not sure what your vision is, don't worry. It's tucked away somewhere in your heart and mind. You just need to coax it out.

Here's what to do:

- Set aside time for thoughtful reflection.

- Grab a pen and paper to record your thoughts and ideas.
- Start by asking yourself these questions:

1. What do I really want from life?
2. What is the life I really want to live?
3. Who do I really want to be?
4. Why do I want to achieve these things?
5. Why are these things important to me?
6. What meaning will it hold for my life?

Answering these questions helps you discover your purpose and values.

- Let your imagination go. In this time and space nothing is impossible, and there's no judgment.
- Write down your thoughts, revelations, and the answers to your questions.
- As you spend time doing this, you'll develop a clear picture of your vision.

You may not complete this in one session. If it takes several sessions, that's okay. Each time, keep jotting down your thoughts and ideas, until your vision becomes clear — you'll know it when you see it!

- Write your vision down. The action of writing it down and the way you do it is important. To be effective follow these guidelines:

The purpose of this exercise is to develop clarity.

As you write down your vision, you'll process the information more deeply and connect with it.

Record your vision in detail.

> The more details you have, the clearer the picture in your mind and the stronger your emotional and mental connection with it becomes.
>
> **Write in the present tense.**

> This helps your mind believe your vision is a reality. If it isn't yet a reality, your mind will get to work solving the problems and overcoming the obstacles necessary to make it a reality.
>
> **Use language you connect to.**

> This way it's easy to understand and process.
>
> **Place your vision where you can see it.**

> Whether you choose to write your vision in detail, create a vision board, or use a mind map, put it where you will see it often. It becomes a regular reminder of your purpose … and that can inspire you to persevere, even when you face challenges.

Your ideal *writer's life* probably looks different than mine. But there's no right or wrong vision. It's yours and unique to you.

What's important is that your vision is clear, so you can set actionable goals that will turn it into a reality.

What is your vision for your *writer's life* in 2018? Do you have useful tips for finding your vision? Please share in the comments section below.

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