

Improving Your Results Through Goals



By Ross England

How much time and energy do you spend improving your fishing success? I know you spend money on equipment, the hot new baits, gas, and even time away from work, but...are you satisfied with the results? Professional football and basketball players, even the more successful high school athletes all work in the off-season to maintain and improve their skills. If you are happy with your fishing results, good for you, you are in a minority. Mr. Thomas probably doesn't need to learn how to flip better, Mr. Jolin probably doesn't need to learn how to fish a worm better, Mr. Dobyns probably doesn't need to learn how to rip better, and Mr. McAbee (either one) probably doesn't need to learn how to use a crankbait better...but you are not them are you?...if you are, thanks for reading! If you wish you could catch more and bigger fish, the following are my tips for turning your wish into reality.

As a former trainer now turned professional guide, I see room for improvement every day. The "off season" is a great time to take an objective look at your results from the previous year and think about how you would like to grow as an angler in the future. Not every angler aspires to be a successful tournament competitor; many of you simply want to have a better day on the water more frequently. You need to have a goal or two. Saying: "I want to be a better fisherman" won't cut it. You have to be objective and realistic about your goals, set goals that are attainable. Your goals should be stated, preferably written down, and ones that will give you satisfaction once achieved.

Catching a bigger personal-best bass, learning how to use a bait-caster with less backlashing, gaining confidence in a new presentation, finishing in the money in a tournament, these are examples of positive goals. Once achieved, these goals become the foundation for greater confidence and future growth. Every good goal is an achievement to work towards and should have a time frame that requires commitment and follow-thru until it is met.

Let's use the example of a goal to improve your personal-best bass. You might be surprised at how many people haven't caught a 5 pound bass; I hear it all the time. The rules of a goal need to be specific and achievable, let's state the goal as: catching a 5 pound bass this year. The goal is objective-a 5 pounder, and it is locked into a time frame-this year. Write it down, along with the date and place it where you see it frequently. Now, you go can start planning how you are going to meet this goal: catching a 5 pounder this year.

To achieve your stated goal, there are a bunch of questions that have to be answered. Are you fishing a body of water known to give up 5 pounders, are you fishing it at the right time, are you fishing it the right way, and is your equipment ready to handle a 5 pounder? Take each question individually and answer it honestly. If you don't know the answer to some of your questions, go to someone who will. For a goal like this one, any accomplished angler would be willing to give you honest feedback.

Here is where the honesty part comes to play. We all know that big baits will catch big fish, so be honest with yourself. Are you willing to put the effort and expense into learning how to fish a big bait? If

the answer is yes, get some professional help (in more ways than one) to speed up your learning curve and who knows, you might achieve your goal while getting that help. If you know that you aren't interested or physically cannot manage big baits and then this is not an option, so move on, there are plenty of other ways to catch a 5 pound bass! Remember that a by-product of achieving your goal is that you will learn a skill which goes into your tool box, which means, you are taking steps to improve your future outings.

The awesome part of having a specific goal to work towards is that the end goal will always brings you back on track when you begin to wander. For example, if, after setting your 5 pound goal, you find that you are on your usual water, fishing it the usual way you have to ask yourself: "If this hasn't worked before for a 5 pounder, why should it work today?" We all get off-track but the goal forces us to look at what we are doing and make changes. Whether it is the spot you are fishing, the timing, or the presentation...something has to change to achieve a different result.

When you're off the water, analyze presentations in relation to seasons. Try to learn what the better fish in a population are doing during each season. Check the details of your equipment so that when you get the right bite, you can capitalize on it. A gentleman I used to work with had a saying, "The devil is in the details". Good drags, good line, clean rod guides, and sharp hooks are all a part of the deal.

Hopefully, you are starting to see how creating a goal forces you through a variety of thought processes and then actions. Having a goal makes it easy to pull yourself back on course and refocus

your efforts, especially when you start to stray. I have often asked myself: "Is what I am doing right now, working towards my goal?". Sometimes the answer is yes, sometimes the answer is no. When it is no, reviewing the stated goal automatically refocuses me on the job at hand.

Finally, this last part of goal setting is very important. How are you going to celebrate your achievement? Make no mistake, if your goal is realistic and you focus your efforts, you will succeed. Celebrate it when it happens! Make a big deal out of it. Reward yourself in a manner that makes you feel good about your achievement. Reflect on the journey, be happy about the result, and start thinking about your next goal for improvement. Goals are a part of every successful person's life, try it this off-season and find out what you can accomplish next year.

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For more information or to book a trip with Ross check out his site: www.clearlakeguideservice.com

A client with his first swim bait fish, the goal of his trip to Clear Lake.