



Goal Setter or Problem Solver: What's Your Style?

In his book *Stop Setting Goals*, business consultant Bob Buford explains that people are either goal setters or problem solvers. Successful teams, whether in business or sports, understand and value both styles. What style are you? Read the following scenario and answer the question to find out.

You make the call

It's game seven of the NBA finals and you are the head coach. Your team has battled back from a 12-point deficit and is now down by just two points. There are 10 seconds remaining in the game. Your team will inbound the ball at half court. You have time for one shot. Do you:

- A. Go for a three-point shot to win
- B. Go for two points to tie and send the game into overtime

If you answered A:

You are goal getter. You're thinking, "No guts, no glory—let's end this thing right now." You hate losing but the reward of a dramatic victory is worth the risk. In life you thrive off pressure and will even create it to motivate yourself and those around you to perform at their best. You accept a high risk for high rewards and are irritated by those who always play it safe. You trust that your desire, competitiveness and energy will carry the day. When you lose or fail you say to yourself, "At least I had the guts to go for it." In the long run you may lose more than you will win, but your victories will be big and oh-so-sweet.

Your approach to life and business is:

- ready
- fire
- aim

If you answered B:

You are a problem solver. You are tempted to go for three but the cost of failure is too high. Your team battled back from a 12-point deficit so you trust that with more time and hard work you can win in overtime. In life and business you play the odds and count on your patience, determination and perseverance to carry the day. You like to ask the hard "how to" questions and are irritated by those who avoid them. You will have many victories in life, but few in dramatic fashion.

Your approach to life and business is:

- ready
- aim
- check the coordinates and aim again
- fire

Characteristics of each style

Smart managers recognize that they need both styles on their team because each brings a valuable perspective and unique view of a problem.

Here are some characteristics of each style:

Goal setters

- visionaries—see the big picture very well
- can inspire others
- see themselves as positive; others can see them as unrealistic
- like to take risks and go for the gold
- like the freedom to reach goals their way
- are easily bored; need new goals to keep energized
- are impatient with details and “how to” questions
- have Post It notes with inspiring words and posters in office

Problem solvers

- view life as a series of tasks to be accomplished
- see detail that others often miss
- see self as a realist—others see them as negative
- take risks only after extensive research
- worry about the cost of failure
- find difficult problems energizing
- focus on the problem at hand
- keep a “to do” list and need to be reminded to come up for air

If you are a goal setter, you will always need the help of a problem solver to reach your goals. Accordingly, problem solvers need goal setters to help them see the big picture and to set the course.

Success or failure in life or business often depends on how well we work with others. Recognizing your strengths, as well as your weaknesses will make your contribution all the more valuable.

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