



# The new science of goal setting

## an interview with Caroline Adams Miller, MAPP

Walter Ruckes

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Over the last year, with month-to-month and week-to-week uncertainty, it has not only become harder to set goals, but nearly impossible to do everything you can to achieve them. Common advice is to rely on SMART goals or OKRs, then track with KPIs until you have an ETA for completion. But if you examine the research, you will find that while KPIs may be good for managers to run a department or coaches to manage a team, they fail miserably when you're trying to unleash breakthrough performance.

Caroline Adams Miller, MAPP, is a best-selling author and goal-setting expert who is all about unleashing breakthrough performance in all areas of life. She recently shared her research and observations on a webinar called **Goals, grit and game-changing strategy** and sat down with Walter Ruckes, BIW's Vice President of Client Services, for a quick conversation about the current state of goal setting in business.

Let's start with a topic on everyone's mind –

**W. Ruckes:**

**What has the pandemic done to goal setting?**

**C. Miller:** We've seen a fundamental shift, a reset in the way we do business. The way we calibrate goals has also been reset. Goal setting is a science and there has been a scientific shift. Organizations will need to understand and master goal setting theory because the way goals have been set up until this point is not going to work moving forward.

**W. Ruckes:**

**Have you seen anyone successfully make the shift?**

**C. Miller:** Yes, those who have been willing to step back and re-evaluate their strategies are most likely to be successful. Traditionally businesses are very focused on performance goals. With the pandemic, the challenge is to shift to learning goals, an exploratory mindset that allows them to learn something new. For instance, a car dealer who responds to the pandemic by re-inventing the way he or she sells cars – to customers who never step foot inside of a showroom – will emerge successful. I've seen that happen – but the success stories aren't universal.

**W. Ruckes:**

**We have always seen a difference between goal setting and goal achievement. What advice do you have for leaders based on your research?**

**C. Miller:** All companies set goals but very few have studied goal setting theory. It's important to remember that everyone on your team responds to goals differently. Some may pursue their goals through learning. Some gravitate to teamwork. Others respond to competition. It's important to create an environment that allows individuals to pursue their goals in a way that's best for them.





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**W. Ruckes:**

**What can we learn more about in your recent webinar?**

**C. Miller:** Goal setting is really the superpower in most organizations. There are some great opportunities for those willing to explore new ways of thinking. We're seeing some much-needed advances in the science when it comes to gender differences and the psychology of goal setting. There's so much to learn and so many ways to improve the way we set, as well as achieve, goals.

I talk about the BRIDGE methodology, which is a model for how to apply a new way of goal setting to your organization. Starting with Brainstorming new ideas and concluding with setting a new standard for Excellence, this approach will challenge how you have always thought about goal setting. And just as important, we talk about the good grit it takes to achieve your goals in both the short- and long-term.

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