



Create the distant future

Extending your goals outward in time—as far as you can possibly imagine—is one way to create a comprehensive global vision. There's no need to stop at setting goals for 10, 20, 50, or 100 years. Your goals can extend 500, 1,000, or even 10,000 years into the future.

If thinking so far ahead seems like an impossible or useless mental stretch, then keep a few things in mind:

- In the entire span of human history, a century is a very short period of time. Recall the history courses you took in school. There you probably reviewed entire decades in a matter of minutes. You can now preview the distant future in the same way that you reviewed the distant past.
- Many leaders have adopted the habit of looking decades or even centuries into the future. The people of ancient Egypt who designed the pyramids envisioned building projects that took several generations to complete. The people who drafted the Constitution of the United States created a document to guide the government for hundreds of years. When President Dwight D. Eisenhower announced his vision of an interstate highway system to blanket the country, he knew that this goal would take decades to complete. The fruit of this vision was perhaps the most successful public works project in human history.
- Goals for the distant future can represent highlights, not detailed agendas. When you set goals for the next decade or next century, you will mostly create the major events—the turning points in human affairs. These transformational events might take place over a period of many years.
- When you think 500 years or more into the future, it's easier to go beyond your short-term self-interests. In 500 years you will be gone from the earth. So will your children, your grandchildren, and their grandchildren. With a long-range perspective, you can be more objective and consider the fate of humanity as a whole.
- After thinking about long stretches of time, you might find it easier to think about shorter stretches. Once you've practiced thinking 100, 500, and even 10,000 years into the future, the notion of planning five years, 10 years, and even 20 years into the future can seem like child's play.

With the above points in mind, do the following:

1. Writing on a separate sheet of paper, describe the world you want to see in the year 2500. Remember that this is not an exercise in predicting the world of 2500. Rather, it's a statement about what you want humanity to have achieved by that time.
2. After you've played with creating the world of 2500, go even farther out in the future. Conceive the world you'd like to see in the year 3000 or 5000.
3. Now stretch your planning muscles even more and write goals for the year 10,000. Remember that 10,000 years ago, people were not yet farming, let alone writing. And in 8,000 years from now, people will likely be doing things that we can hardly imagine.

This concept of long-range goal setting might seem strange to you right now. If so, that's fine. Just experiment with the idea and see if it has any potential usefulness for you.

To spur your creativity, consider the following list of goals from one group of people who mentally stood in the year 10,000 and described what they saw.

We can decode natural communication systems. Now humans can communicate with rocks, plants, and all species of animals.

Eating is optional; we eat only for pleasure. It's a world of virtual cuisine.

Physical pain is erased with thought.

Bodies are optional, and we can live in the spiritual dimension at any time. There are "bodies-optional" beaches.

War has been absent from Earth for centuries. Now conflict is resolved by teams of skilled negotiators who can be dispatched to any place on the planet in a matter of seconds—before any dispute can involve weapons.

Cities are limited in size to 100,000 people at most. This, combined with nonpolluting, clean, and safe mass transit, makes traffic congestion and vehicle accidents a thing of the distant past.

Natural disasters are predicted with absolute accuracy, far enough in advance to make mass evacuations possible. No longer is anyone killed because of tornadoes, floods, or earthquakes.