



Setting Ambitious Goals: An LGBTIQ+ Perspective on Unlocking Potential and Changing the World

By James Wright, with a bit of help from AI
2024



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Goal setting is more than just ticking boxes or climbing the career ladder—it's about stepping into your authentic self, breaking down barriers, and achieving what once felt out of reach.

For members of the LGBTIQ+ community, personal and professional goals can often take on unique dimensions. Whether overcoming societal pressures, finding our place in a world that might not always understand us, or pushing past internalised limitations, setting ambitious goals is an act of empowerment and pride.

In this whitepaper, we'll explore the power of goal setting through an LGBTIQ+ lens, emphasising the importance of aligning one's ambitions with one's authentic identity and values.

Whether you're looking to advance your career, make an impact in your community, or prioritize self-care, the goals you set are part of a larger journey of self-discovery and personal evolution.

We will also look at goal setting for organisations and how thinking big, however small, is a strategy for success.

Why Goal Setting Matters for LGBTIQ+ Individuals

For many in the LGBTIQ+ community, the journey to achieving our goals can be uniquely shaped by our experiences of resilience, courage, and authenticity. Whether it's navigating discrimination, breaking through glass ceilings, or finding ways to live our truth in a sometimes hostile environment, we often approach goals with a level of tenacity and determination that's born out of necessity.

Goal setting for LGBTIQ+ individuals is not just about professional advancement or personal success—it's about paving the way for greater freedom and representation. When we set and achieve ambitious goals, we're not just working for ourselves; we're building a legacy for future generations of queer people who deserve to see themselves reflected in positions of influence, power, and creativity.

Example:

Consider Laverne Cox, the first openly transgender person nominated for an Emmy Award. Her goal was not just to be successful in the entertainment industry, but to use her platform to create visibility for the trans community. By setting her sights high and pursuing her goals with unapologetic authenticity, Cox became a trailblazer, helping to reshape how the entertainment industry and society view transgender people.

Breaking Down Barriers with BHAGs (Big Hairy Audacious Goals)

The idea of a BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal) applies perfectly to the LGBTIQ+ community. A BHAG is a bold, long-term goal that challenges us to break through boundaries and achieve what might seem impossible. For many of us, simply living authentically can feel like a BHAG in a world that often pressures us to conform. But whether it's launching a new business, leading a social justice movement, or simply achieving self-acceptance, BHAGs can fuel incredible transformation.

Example:

Alok Vaid-Menon, a gender non-conforming writer, performer, and public speaker, has set the bold goal of challenging binary notions of gender and dismantling societal constructs around gender expression. Through their creative work, Alok has sparked global conversations about identity, pushing the boundaries of what is socially accepted. Their BHAG isn't just personal—it's a societal transformation that invites people to rethink the way we understand gender altogether.

Aligning Your Goals with Your Authentic Self

For LGBTIQ+ individuals, setting goals often involves navigating multiple layers of identity. It's important that the goals we set reflect who we are, not who others expect us to be. Whether you're coming out, advancing in your career, or building a community, the goals that align with your true self are the ones that will bring the most fulfillment and joy.

That's why it's essential to approach goal setting from a place of authenticity. Ask yourself: what do I truly want? What would make me feel proud, empowered, and fulfilled? Whether it's finding your voice in a corporate setting, advocating for greater inclusion in your workplace, or pursuing your creative passions, your goals should reflect the person you are, rather than the person others think you should be.

Example:

Dustin Lance Black, the screenwriter behind *Milk*, set the ambitious goal of not only succeeding in Hollywood but also using his platform to elevate the stories of queer people and advocate for marriage equality. His passion for telling LGBTIQ+ stories on a global stage led him to win an Academy Award while simultaneously advancing the fight for equal rights in the US.

Celebrating the Journey and Acknowledging Progress

While reaching your goals is important, it's equally vital to celebrate the small wins along the way. For many of us, the journey is just as meaningful as the destination. Acknowledging your progress, both in your personal and professional life, is a way of honoring how far you've come, especially if the path hasn't always been easy.

Celebrating your wins isn't just about you—it's about showing others in the LGBTQ+ community that it's possible to achieve success, to live authentically, and to make an impact. Whether it's taking pride in finally asking for that promotion, building your dream business, or making a difference in your local queer community, your achievements deserve to be celebrated.

Example:

Kimberly Drew, an LGBTQ+ curator and author, has been vocal about celebrating not just the big moments in her career, but also the smaller steps that have shaped her journey. Drew uses her platform to highlight the importance of acknowledging everyday victories, especially in spaces where LGBTQ+ representation is still evolving.

Now, we'll delve deeper into how to set purposeful and ambitious goals, decide what to aim for and measure, and, most importantly, track and celebrate your success.

Whether you're looking to thrive as an individual, lead a team, or grow a business, this guide will help you unlock your full potential and live your truth with pride.

Introduction to Goals and Metrics: The Foundation of Success

In any personal, team, or business endeavor, setting clear goals and establishing metrics to measure success is essential. Whether you're looking to achieve personal milestones, lead a team to new heights, or scale a business, goals and metrics serve as a roadmap, guiding your efforts and ensuring progress is both tangible and achievable. They offer clarity, alignment, and direction, allowing individuals and organizations to move with purpose. This section explores why goals matter, what metrics are, and how they come together to form the backbone of success.

Why Goals Matter

At its core, a goal is a destination—a clear point that signifies success. But goals are more than just destinations. They motivate action, provide focus, and offer a sense of purpose. When you have a goal, you're not just floating aimlessly; you have something to strive for. This is as true in a personal sense as it is for a team or business. Goals push individuals to grow, teams to collaborate, and businesses to innovate.

One of the most popular concepts in goal setting is the BHAG—Big Hairy Audacious Goal. Coined by Jim Collins and Jerry Porras in their book *Built to Last*, BHAGs are bold,

long-term goals that can seem daunting at first but serve as a powerful unifying force. They challenge individuals and teams to think beyond what seems immediately possible, tapping into ambition and driving sustained effort over time. A BHAG might be to double business revenue in five years or launch a new product line that revolutionizes an industry. These goals are transformational, pushing individuals and organizations outside their comfort zones and creating a sense of purpose that fuels long-term commitment.

However, setting ambitious goals isn't enough on its own. That's where metrics come in.

The Role of Metrics

Metrics are the indicators of progress. They're the numbers, data points, or milestones that allow you to objectively assess how well you're moving toward your goals. Without metrics, goals are nebulous and progress is hard to quantify. With metrics, you gain a tangible way to measure success and identify areas for improvement.

There are many types of metrics, depending on the context. In business, these might be Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) or Objectives and Key Results (OKRs), while individuals may track things like daily habits or personal milestones. Metrics can be short-term or long-term, depending on the nature of the goal. A short-term metric for a team might be achieving weekly sales targets, while a long-term metric for a business could be increasing market share over the next five years.

The Balance Between Ambition and Practicality

One of the key challenges in setting goals and metrics is finding the balance between ambition and practicality. While goals should push you beyond your comfort zone—just like the BHAG concept suggests—they also need to be grounded in reality. Unrealistic goals can lead to frustration and burnout, while goals that are too easy won't motivate or inspire growth.

This is where Verne Harnish's ideas in *Scaling Up* come into play. Harnish emphasizes the importance of aligning goals at all levels of an organization. His framework suggests that goals must be measurable, actionable, and understood by everyone involved. By setting clear targets that can be broken down into actionable steps, you create alignment and clarity. This is particularly important in larger teams or businesses where different departments or individuals may have their own priorities. Harnish also champions the importance of rhythm—regularly reviewing goals and metrics to ensure continuous progress and adaptability.

At an individual level, one of the most widely used frameworks is the SMART goal methodology. SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. This framework helps ensure that goals are not just lofty ideas but actionable objectives that can be tracked and assessed. A SMART goal for a business might be to increase social media engagement by 20% within six months, while a personal SMART goal could be to run a marathon in the next year by training three times a week. Each of these goals is clear, actionable, and has built-in metrics for success.

Creating a Framework for Success

Goals and metrics are like two sides of the same coin. While goals provide the "why"—the overarching purpose and vision—metrics provide the "how" by breaking down the journey into measurable steps.

Together, they form the foundation for success in any endeavor. But where do you start?

- **Clarity and Focus:** Before setting any goals, it's crucial to gain clarity on what success looks like for you or your team. Whether you're working on personal development, leading a project, or running a business, take time to reflect on your vision. What is the end result you're striving for? What change or growth are you hoping to see? The clearer your vision, the easier it will be to set meaningful goals.
- **Break Down the Journey:** Once you have clarity on your long-term vision, break it down into more manageable, actionable steps. This is where Harnish's alignment and rhythm come into play. For example, if your long-term goal is to expand your business internationally, break that down into smaller, specific goals—like conducting market research in your target countries, building strategic partnerships, and adapting your marketing for different cultures. Each of these smaller goals will have its own set of metrics, contributing to the larger objective.
- **Be Ready to Adapt:** No plan is set in stone. As you work toward your goals, you'll inevitably face challenges or uncover new opportunities that require you to pivot. This is why it's important to regularly review both your goals and metrics. In business, this might involve quarterly strategy sessions or weekly team meetings where progress is discussed, and any necessary adjustments are made. For personal goals, regular self-reflection can help you stay on track or adapt to changing circumstances.

The Power of Purpose

Goals give you purpose, and metrics give you the means to measure progress. When combined, they create a powerful framework for growth, success, and fulfillment. Whether you're setting personal targets, leading a team, or scaling a business, the clarity and focus that come from well-defined goals—and the actionable insights provided by measurable metrics—are indispensable. As you move through this journey, remember that goals are not static. They evolve, adapt, and change as you do. The important thing is to stay committed, track your progress, and celebrate every win along the way, no matter how small. These small victories fuel motivation and remind you that every step is part of the larger journey.

How to Decide What to Aim For and What to Measure: Crafting Purposeful and Measurable Goals

Once you've laid the foundation for why goals and metrics matter, the next step is to determine what exactly you should aim for and how you'll measure progress. This step is critical in ensuring that your goals are both meaningful and achievable. Whether you're an individual looking to level up in your personal development, a team leader aiming to drive performance, or a business founder scaling up, you need to be clear on what success looks like and how to track it effectively.

Deciding what to aim for requires striking a balance between ambition and realism, while choosing the right metrics ensures that you're equipped to measure meaningful progress. This section delves into strategies to help you craft well-defined goals, explores real-world examples of ambitious startups and global brands, and offers guidance on selecting the right metrics to track success.

Setting Purposeful Goals

Purposeful goals are those that align with your broader vision, values, and mission. Whether you're an individual or a business, these goals should resonate with a deeper sense of what you're trying to achieve. The first step is to articulate this purpose clearly—this is your "why."

For businesses, a compelling vision is the backbone of goal-setting. Take Tesla, for example. Tesla's goal isn't just to sell cars; their mission is "to accelerate the world's transition to sustainable energy." This mission informs every goal the company sets, from the number of vehicles produced to the expansion of renewable energy solutions. Their goal of producing affordable electric cars that compete with gas-powered vehicles on both price and performance is ambitious yet deeply aligned with their purpose.

For individuals, setting a purposeful goal might mean connecting your personal development to a broader sense of fulfillment. For example, if you're passionate about environmental sustainability, your goals might include transitioning to a career in the renewable energy sector or launching a personal project focused on eco-conscious living.

The Role of Ambition

Ambition is a key driver of goal setting, but not all ambitious goals are created equal. As mentioned earlier, the concept of BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal) challenges individuals and organizations to aim for something transformational—something that seems nearly impossible but provides a North Star to guide long-term efforts.

Google, for instance, famously had a BHAG when they first launched: "to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful." This goal was massive in scope, especially for a company that started in a garage. But it provided a bold, audacious vision that motivated the company to create innovations like Google Search, Gmail, Google Maps, and more. Today, Google remains one of the most valuable brands in the world, largely because of this BHAG.

Similarly, SpaceX, founded by Elon Musk, aimed to revolutionize space travel with the goal of making life multi-planetary—another BHAG. This audacious vision has pushed the company to achieve monumental feats, including reusable rockets and partnerships with NASA. SpaceX's goals extend far beyond launching rockets; they aim to establish a human settlement on Mars, a goal that once seemed like science fiction but is now part of their strategic long-term plan.

While BHAGs may seem overwhelming, they serve a purpose: to push individuals, teams, and businesses beyond what they thought possible. The key is to ensure that while your goals are audacious, they are still aligned with your capabilities and resources.

Balancing Ambition with SMART Goals

As ambitious as a BHAG may be, it's important to ground these long-term visions with shorter-term, achievable steps. This is where the SMART goal framework—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound—comes into play.

For example, a startup in the early stages might have a BHAG of becoming the leading provider of AI-driven healthcare solutions. But a SMART goal for the next year could be: "Develop and launch a beta version of our AI healthcare app by Q3, with 500 active users by the end of the year." This goal is specific (develop and launch a beta app), measurable (500 active users), achievable (based on the team's current resources), relevant (aligned with their long-term BHAG), and time-bound (by Q3 and year-end).

By setting SMART goals alongside BHAGs, you create a balance between audacity and practicality. It provides immediate wins that keep momentum going while also working toward long-term transformational change.

Deciding What to Measure: Choosing the Right Metrics

Once you have clarity on what you're aiming for, the next step is to decide how you'll measure success. This is where metrics—whether KPIs, OKRs, or other performance indicators—come into play. But not all metrics are created equal. Measuring what truly matters is essential to ensure that you're on track to achieve your goals.

1. Understand the Drivers of Success

In deciding what to measure, focus on the metrics that directly drive your goals. For a tech startup aiming to expand its user base, daily active users (DAUs) and customer acquisition cost (CAC) might be key metrics. For a sales team aiming to increase revenue, metrics like sales conversion rate and average deal size could be crucial.

Take Slack, for example. When Slack was a fledgling startup, one of its most important metrics was "daily active users." This metric was critical because Slack's business model depends on user engagement—if people aren't using the platform regularly, they won't pay for it. By tracking DAUs, Slack could quickly see whether its product was providing enough value to keep users engaged, and they could tweak the platform accordingly. This metric helped Slack scale to become a dominant player in workplace communication tools.

2. Different Metrics for Different Stages

The metrics that matter will vary depending on your stage of growth or the nature of your goal. In a startup's early stages, for instance, the focus might be on customer acquisition, product-market fit, or revenue growth. As the company matures, metrics like profit margins, operational efficiency, and employee retention may become more critical.

For a global brand like Coca-Cola, early metrics were likely tied to market expansion and product distribution. But today, Coca-Cola's metrics also focus heavily on sustainability and social impact. The company's current goal of achieving "net zero carbon emissions by 2050" reflects a shift in priorities, and the metrics that matter now include reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, energy usage, and water conservation.

3. Align Metrics Across Teams

One of the methodologies promoted by Verne Harnish in *Scaling Up* is the importance of alignment across teams. It's essential that everyone in the organization is working toward shared goals with consistent metrics. If one team is optimizing for product growth while another focuses on cost reduction, there's a risk of misalignment that can slow down progress.

Take Airbnb, for example. When Airbnb was rapidly scaling, its teams had to ensure alignment between growth and customer experience. Metrics like "number of bookings" and "user satisfaction scores" became essential to measure how well the platform was expanding without sacrificing quality. This alignment allowed Airbnb to grow from a small startup to a global hospitality giant.

Examples of Ambitious Startups and Global Brands

Throughout history, countless startups and global brands have embraced both audacious goals and the right metrics to achieve remarkable success.

Here are a few examples:

- Spotify: Spotify's BHAG was to revolutionize how people consume music globally. Early metrics included user growth and music streams. Today, Spotify measures success through the number of premium subscribers, engagement rates, and geographic market expansion.
- Amazon: Jeff Bezos famously set the long-term goal for Amazon to become "Earth's most customer-centric company." The company focused on metrics like customer satisfaction, delivery times, and eventually, Prime memberships to track their progress.
- Patagonia: Known for its environmental mission, Patagonia's BHAG is to "save our home planet." Their metrics include environmental impact, materials sourced from sustainable suppliers, and long-term goals around reducing their carbon footprint.

Deciding what to aim for and what to measure is a balance between bold ambition and practical tracking. Whether you're an individual, team, or organization, the key is to set purposeful goals that resonate with your mission, align with your resources, and drive meaningful progress. By choosing the right metrics, you can measure your success effectively and ensure that you're always moving in the right direction. Whether you're pursuing a BHAG like Google's or focusing on shorter-term SMART goals, the right combination of ambition and metrics will set you up for lasting success.

Tracking and Celebrating Success: The Key to Sustained Motivation and Growth

Once goals are set and metrics are in place, tracking progress becomes essential to maintaining focus and driving continuous improvement. But there's more to achieving success than simply meeting targets. Celebrating milestones, both big and small, is equally important in fostering motivation, engagement, and long-term success. Whether you're an individual on a personal growth journey, a team leader pushing for results, or a business founder scaling a company, recognizing efforts and outcomes plays a critical role in building a culture of achievement.

In this section, we'll explore how to track success effectively, the psychology behind celebrating wins, and how both acknowledgment and celebration can boost morale, increase engagement, and drive performance. We'll also look at why it's important for entrepreneurs and leaders to acknowledge their own achievements and provide real-world examples of how businesses use celebration to foster a thriving work culture.

The Importance of Tracking Success

Tracking progress is essential to understanding how well you're moving toward your goals. Without tracking, it's easy to lose sight of what's working, what needs adjustment, and whether you're on the right path. By regularly reviewing your metrics, you can make informed decisions, course-correct when necessary, and stay motivated by seeing the incremental progress you're making.

For teams and businesses, tracking success ensures that everyone is aligned and working towards the same objectives. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) offer structured frameworks for monitoring progress. When tracked consistently, these metrics provide valuable insights into performance and highlight areas for improvement. In *Scaling Up*, Verne Harnish emphasizes the importance of rhythm in tracking—creating a routine where goals and metrics are regularly reviewed, whether that's in weekly team meetings or quarterly strategy sessions. This cadence helps to keep goals top of mind and ensures that progress is continuously assessed.

Example: Atlassian

Take Atlassian, the Australian software company behind Jira and Trello, as an example. Atlassian uses OKRs to set ambitious goals and track progress across the company. Teams regularly review their OKRs, which allows them to adjust strategies based on data and real-time performance. By tracking success through OKRs, Atlassian has been able to scale effectively while staying aligned on key priorities, like customer satisfaction and product development.

But tracking success isn't just about hitting targets. It's also about recognizing the journey and celebrating the wins along the way.

Why Celebrating Success Matters

While hitting major milestones is certainly worth celebrating, it's equally important to acknowledge the smaller steps along the way. Celebrating small wins has a profound psychological impact, triggering a sense of accomplishment and reinforcing positive behavior. According to research in positive psychology, celebrating achievements—no matter how small—releases dopamine, the “feel-good” neurotransmitter, which boosts motivation and strengthens engagement.

In the workplace, acknowledging effort and success is a critical factor in driving employee performance. Employees who feel recognized and valued are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and productive. In fact, a 2022 study by Gallup found that employees who receive regular recognition are four times more likely to be engaged in their work and are less likely to leave their company. Recognition also fosters a sense of belonging, which is especially important in remote or hybrid work environments.

Example: Google's Peer Bonus Program

Google has long been known for its innovative approach to employee engagement and recognition. One of their most famous programs is the Peer Bonus Program, where employees can nominate their colleagues for bonuses based on outstanding contributions. This peer-driven recognition system not only celebrates success but also encourages a culture of collaboration and appreciation. Google's commitment to recognizing effort at all levels has played a key role in creating one of the most sought-after work environments in the world.

Acknowledgment Fuels Engagement and Performance

Acknowledgment goes beyond celebrating end results; it's about recognizing the effort, dedication, and persistence that individuals and teams invest in their work. For employees, knowing that their hard work is seen and valued can have a significant impact on their performance. Public recognition—whether in a team meeting, through company-wide announcements, or via personal appreciation—helps build trust, loyalty, and a sense of achievement.

Leaders and managers play a pivotal role in creating a culture of recognition. In *The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace*, Gary Chapman highlights how different employees may prefer different forms of recognition—whether it's verbal praise, a handwritten note, or rewards. The key is to understand what kind of recognition resonates with each individual and to make it a regular part of your leadership practice.

Beyond individual recognition, celebrating team achievements fosters collaboration and a shared sense of purpose. When teams are acknowledged for collective success, it reinforces a culture of accountability and mutual support, which is critical for long-term performance.

Example: Zappos

Zappos, known for its customer-centric culture, places a strong emphasis on employee recognition. The company regularly celebrates both individual and team successes, hosting recognition events where employees are publicly acknowledged for their efforts. Zappos also encourages employees to "pay it forward" by rewarding each other for living the company's core values. This approach has helped Zappos maintain high levels of employee engagement and foster a culture of appreciation and positivity.

The Power of Self-Acknowledgment for Entrepreneurs and Leaders

While it's crucial to recognize employees and teams, leaders and entrepreneurs must also acknowledge their own successes. Running a business or leading a team comes with immense pressure, and it's easy for leaders to overlook their own accomplishments in the rush to meet the next goal. However, self-acknowledgment is essential for sustaining motivation, maintaining mental health, and driving personal growth.

Entrepreneurs, in particular, can often fall into the trap of relentless forward momentum, always striving for the next achievement without taking time to reflect on how far they've come. This can lead to burnout, stress, and a feeling of perpetual inadequacy. To avoid this, it's important for entrepreneurs and leaders to regularly celebrate their own milestones—whether it's successfully launching a new product, hitting a revenue target, or overcoming a particularly tough challenge.

Taking time to reflect on and celebrate your own achievements builds resilience and keeps the fire burning. Acknowledging your progress can also help reinforce positive habits, making it easier to stay motivated and focused on long-term goals.

Example: Arianna Huffington

Arianna Huffington, founder of The Huffington Post and Thrive Global, is a strong advocate for self-care and self-acknowledgment. After experiencing burnout early in her career, she realized the importance of celebrating both small and big wins. Now, she prioritizes reflecting on her achievements, practicing gratitude, and encouraging other entrepreneurs to recognize their progress. Through Thrive Global, she promotes a culture of well-being that integrates success with mindfulness and acknowledgment.

Creating a Culture of Celebration

Celebrating success—both individual and collective—needs to be an integral part of the organizational culture. This means building celebration into your rhythms of work, whether through formal recognition programs, casual shout-outs during meetings, or even end-of-week wrap-ups where everyone shares their wins.

For startups and small businesses, where resources may be tight, celebration doesn't need to be extravagant. Even a simple "thank you" or a team lunch to recognize a milestone can go a long way in reinforcing a positive work culture. The key is consistency—making

celebration a regular practice so that employees feel valued not just for their results, but for the effort they invest along the way.

Example: HubSpot

HubSpot, a leading provider of inbound marketing software, has cultivated a strong culture of recognition and celebration. The company regularly celebrates milestones with its employees, hosting annual award ceremonies to honor high performers and recognize team contributions. But they don't stop there—HubSpot also encourages informal celebrations, such as impromptu recognition during team meetings, to ensure that appreciation is part of the day-to-day work culture.

The Long-Term Impact of Celebration

Tracking and celebrating success is more than just a pat on the back—it's a critical part of sustaining motivation, driving performance, and building a thriving culture. Whether you're leading a team or running your own business, the benefits of recognizing effort and achievement are immense. By consistently tracking progress and acknowledging both small and large wins, you create an environment where people feel valued, engaged, and motivated to perform at their best.

Remember, celebration is not just for others. Entrepreneurs and leaders, too, need to acknowledge their own progress and take time to reflect on their achievements. By doing so, they build resilience, maintain motivation, and stay energised toward their bigger goals.

Success is a journey, and every step—no matter how small—deserves to be celebrated.

BHAG Case Studies

Here are three examples of LGBTIQ+ owned businesses that have set famous Big Hairy Audacious Goals (BHAGs) or achieved remarkable goals, showing how ambition, authenticity, and resilience can drive incredible success.

1. GLAAD: Shaping Media Representation of LGBTIQ+ People

- Industry: Media Advocacy
- Location: USA
- Founder: Vito Russo and other LGBTIQ+ activists (1985)

BHAG:

GLAAD set a BHAG early in its existence to transform the way LGBTIQ+ individuals were represented in mainstream media. Their audacious goal was to ensure that every LGBTIQ+ person in America could see authentic, fair representation in movies, TV shows, and news stories, reducing harmful stereotypes and promoting acceptance.

Goal Achievement Story:

GLAAD's commitment to changing media narratives has led to incredible milestones over the years. One notable achievement was GLAAD's involvement in transforming the portrayal of LGBTIQ+ characters in Hollywood. Through consistent media monitoring, public pressure, and partnerships with major studios, GLAAD significantly contributed to the increase of diverse LGBTIQ+ representation on TV shows like *Will & Grace*, *Pose*, and *Modern Family*, as well as in movies like *Brokeback Mountain* and *The Kids Are All Right*.

In 2018, GLAAD set another BHAG, launching the 20/20 Challenge, aiming to see 20% of all series regular characters on primetime television identify as LGBTQ by 2020. This bold goal reflected their commitment to improving visibility and led to a tangible increase in representation across various media platforms.

2. Autostraddle: Building the Largest Independent LGBTIQ+ Media Platform for Queer Women

- Industry: Digital Media and Lifestyle
- Location: USA
- Founder: Riese Bernard (2009)

BHAG:

Autostraddle's audacious goal was to create the largest and most inclusive independent media platform by and for queer women, nonbinary people, and the broader LGBTIQ+ community. Their vision was to offer a digital space where the queer female experience was at the forefront, providing resources, community, and representation for people who often felt invisible in mainstream media.

Goal Achievement Story:

Autostraddle began as a blog in 2009 and rapidly grew into a multimedia platform with a massive readership. Over the years, Autostraddle built a community that reached millions of

people globally. They set and achieved a major goal of running A-Camp, an in-person event for queer women, which became a safe, inclusive, and empowering space for attendees to connect and grow. The success of A-Camp helped build a stronger, tight-knit community that extended beyond the online platform.

In 2021, Autostraddle successfully raised over \$160,000 through community support to keep their business independent, illustrating their commitment to remaining a queer-run and reader-supported platform despite the challenges of the digital media landscape. Their BHAG of representing queer women's experiences in an independent media space has made Autostraddle a cornerstone for queer women worldwide, influencing both media and queer culture.

3. Flavnt Streetwear: Creating Inclusive, Gender-Affirming Fashion

- Industry: Apparel/Fashion
- Location: USA
- Founders: Chris and Courtney Rhodes (2015)

BHAG:

Flavnt Streetwear, an LGBTIQ+ clothing brand founded by transgender siblings Chris and Courtney Rhodes, had a BHAG to create gender-affirming, accessible, and inclusive streetwear for the LGBTIQ+ community—particularly for transgender and gender non-conforming individuals. Their goal was to disrupt the fashion industry by offering inclusive designs and raising awareness about the importance of body positivity and visibility for all genders.

Goal Achievement Story:

One of Flavnt's most significant achievements was launching their "Bareskin Binder", a chest binder designed specifically for transmasculine individuals. Their goal was to make binders both affordable and comfortable while raising funds to support individuals going through gender confirmation surgeries. Flavnt set an early goal to use a portion of their profits to sponsor surgery costs for trans people, building an inclusive business model rooted in community support.

Since its inception, Flavnt has helped raise thousands of dollars for LGBTIQ+ individuals in need of surgery, while their clothing line continues to be a go-to for gender-affirming apparel. Their success has expanded their reach and visibility in the LGBTIQ+ fashion industry, and they've remained committed to amplifying the voices and experiences of queer and trans individuals through their platform.

These businesses exemplify the power of setting bold, audacious goals to create meaningful change within the LGBTIQ+ community. Whether it's transforming media representation (GLAAD), building inclusive digital spaces (Autostraddle), or creating gender-affirming fashion (Flavnt Streetwear), each of these organizations pursued ambitious goals that aligned with their missions to uplift and support the LGBTIQ+ community in significant ways.

While global brands and billion-dollar unicorns often steal the spotlight when it comes to ambitious goal setting, countless small businesses in the UK, Australia, and the USA have set bold, inspiring targets that fuel their growth and success.

These businesses may not operate globally, but their approach to goal setting is just as ambitious. They can provide excellent examples of how BHAGs and structured targets can work on a smaller scale.

Here are some real-life examples from small businesses in these regions that show how audacious goals and careful target-setting can drive success.

1. Huel (UK): Revolutionizing Food with Nutritional Shakes

- Industry: Food & Nutrition
- Location: UK
- BHAG: To make nutritionally complete food accessible and normal for people across the globe, reducing reliance on conventional farming practices that strain environmental resources.

Background:

Founded in 2015 by Julian Hearn, Huel began as a small UK startup selling nutritionally complete food in powder form. Hearn's BHAG was to disrupt the food industry by providing healthy, affordable, and sustainable meals that offered all the necessary nutrients, without the environmental impact of traditional agriculture.

Targets and Metrics:

Huel's initial targets included gaining 100,000 loyal customers in the UK within its first three years and expanding into international markets shortly thereafter. The company measured success through online sales, customer satisfaction, and growth in international shipping orders. They also set sustainability targets, aiming to minimize their carbon footprint and use 100% recyclable packaging.

Success:

Huel surpassed its initial targets, reaching a customer base of over 1 million by 2021 and expanding operations to 80 countries. They've made significant strides in making nutritionally complete food mainstream, sticking closely to their BHAG of revolutionizing the way people think about sustainable nutrition.

2. Blackbird Ventures (Australia): Empowering Australian Tech Startups

- Industry: Venture Capital
- Location: Australia
- BHAG: To create 100 Australian companies worth over \$100 million each.

Background:

Blackbird Ventures, founded in 2012, is a venture capital firm that focuses on supporting tech startups in Australia. The company's BHAG is to transform Australia into a global hub for tech innovation by creating a generation of local tech companies that can compete on the world stage.

Targets and Metrics:

From the outset, Blackbird Ventures set clear goals for funding promising Australian startups. They aimed to fund 100 tech companies within 10 years and help them scale to \$100 million valuations each. Their key performance indicators included the number of successful funding rounds, the growth of their portfolio companies, and the return on investment for their partners.

Success:

To date, Blackbird has backed several successful startups, including Canva (now valued at over \$40 billion) and SafetyCulture. While Canva became a unicorn, the majority of Blackbird's successes come from smaller startups that have achieved profitability and market dominance in niche sectors, illustrating how ambitious targets can elevate the broader business ecosystem.

3. Courageous Leaders (Australia): Creating Transformational Leadership

- Industry: Leadership Development
- Location: Australia
- BHAG: To create transformational leaders across 1000 organizations in Australia and New Zealand by 2025.

Background:

Courageous Leaders is a boutique leadership development firm based in Australia. Founded by Mandy Holloway, their mission is to help leaders develop courage, authenticity, and resilience in their leadership styles. Their BHAG focuses on having a transformative impact on leadership within organizations across Australia and New Zealand.

Targets and Metrics:

Courageous Leaders has set a clear goal to reach 1000 organizations by 2025, using leadership development programs, workshops, and coaching. They measure success through client satisfaction surveys, repeat engagements with businesses, and the measurable improvements in leadership effectiveness within their client organizations.

Success:

While still working toward their BHAG, Courageous Leaders has successfully expanded their client base across Australia and New Zealand, working with businesses across a range of

industries including finance, healthcare, and education. Their long-term partnerships with businesses have shown that their audacious target is both attainable and impactful, especially for small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

4. Fiasco Gelato (New Zealand / USA): Crafting Artisan Gelato for the Masses

- Industry: Food & Beverage
- Location: Originally from New Zealand, with operations expanding to the USA
- BHAG: To become the top artisanal gelato brand across the US and New Zealand, while staying environmentally and socially conscious.

Background:

Founded by an entrepreneurial team in New Zealand, Fiasco Gelato began as a small local business creating high-quality, artisanal gelato. Their BHAG was bold: they didn't want to just remain a beloved brand in New Zealand—they wanted to crack the competitive US market while maintaining their core values of sustainability and quality.

Targets and Metrics:

Fiasco Gelato initially set targets around revenue growth, market share in both the US and New Zealand, and environmental impact (with a focus on sustainable sourcing and reducing their carbon footprint). The business also set clear targets for social impact, aiming to donate a percentage of profits to local causes and charities.

Success:

The company steadily grew into a household name in New Zealand, becoming synonymous with artisan-quality desserts. In 2020, Fiasco Gelato entered the US market with distribution in several states, expanding their reach while maintaining their commitment to sustainability. They track their success by market share growth, customer satisfaction, and sustainability metrics, including reduced plastic packaging and carbon-neutral production processes.

5. Trade Ideas (USA): Disrupting Stock Trading with Technology

- Industry: Financial Technology (FinTech)
- Location: USA
- BHAG: To democratize stock market trading by providing cutting-edge, AI-driven stock analysis tools to retail investors.

Background:

Trade Ideas, a small US-based fintech company, had a vision to revolutionize how individual retail investors access the stock market. Their BHAG was to disrupt the financial sector by providing AI-powered tools that were previously only accessible to institutional investors.

Targets and Metrics:

From the start, Trade Ideas set a clear goal to grow their user base among retail investors, targeting 100,000 users within the first five years. They measured success through customer

adoption rates, the effectiveness of their AI-driven stock picks, and feedback from their user community.

Success:

Today, Trade Ideas has become a trusted name in the world of fintech, with thousands of retail investors using their platform. They continue to work toward their BHAG by offering continuous innovation in their product line and making stock trading more accessible for individuals, showing how a small business can disrupt a massive, entrenched industry.

RedBalloon is another excellent example of how a small business in Australia set ambitious targets and a bold vision, ultimately becoming a market leader in the experiential gift industry. I was privileged to be part of this RedBalloon team between 2007 and 2014 during a period of exceptional growth, focus, and enviable employee engagement.

RedBalloon (Australia): Leading the Experiential Gift Market

- Industry: E-commerce / Experience Gifts
- Location: Australia
- BHAG: To create 10 million memorable experiences by 2020 and become the leading provider of experiential gifts in Australia and New Zealand.

Background:

RedBalloon was founded by Naomi Simson, later to appear on Shark Tank Australia, in 2001 with the idea of offering unique, memorable experiences as gifts, rather than traditional material items. What started as a small e-commerce business quickly became a household name, thanks to its focus on curating exceptional experiences like hot air ballooning, gourmet dinners, and adventure sports.

Naomi Simson had a clear vision for RedBalloon from the start: to revolutionize the gift industry by offering experiences that created lasting memories. Her BHAG was bold—to provide 10 million memorable experiences by 2020, a massive target for a small e-commerce platform.

Targets and Metrics:

RedBalloon set ambitious targets early on, with clear metrics around customer growth, partner expansion (bringing on new experience providers), and brand awareness. They aimed to grow the number of experience bookings year-over-year while maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction and experience quality. Their core metrics included:

1. Customer satisfaction scores (Net Promoter Score, or NPS).
2. Number of experiences booked per year.
3. Expansion of experience offerings across Australia and New Zealand.

RedBalloon also focused on making their platform easy to use, setting internal targets for website functionality, and improving the user experience to ensure smooth booking processes.

Success:

By 2016, RedBalloon had already delivered over 3 million experiences and was well on its way to achieving its BHAG of 10 million experiences by 2020. Through a relentless focus on customer satisfaction, partner relationships, and brand-building, RedBalloon became the leading experiential gift platform in Australia and New Zealand.

Naomi Simson's leadership and vision were key to the company's success. RedBalloon is now part of the Big Red Group (BRG), which Naomi co-founded in 2017, further expanding the reach of the business into new areas of experience-based e-commerce.

Celebrating Success:

RedBalloon consistently celebrated its wins, both internally and externally. The company regularly celebrated key milestones, such as reaching 1 million and then 3 million experiences, and made sure to recognize the efforts of its team members and partners. This culture of celebration helped maintain high levels of employee engagement and created a strong sense of purpose within the organization.

Conclusion

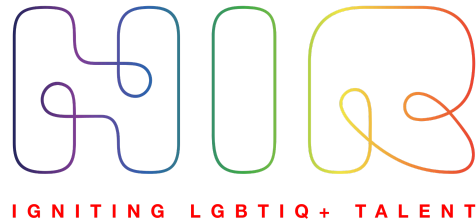
These examples illustrate that BHAGs and structured goal-setting are not reserved for large global companies. Small businesses, regardless of their size or industry, can achieve remarkable success by setting bold, ambitious goals that push them beyond their current limits. Whether it's transforming leadership practices, revolutionizing nutrition, or entering competitive international markets, these small businesses from the UK, Australia, and the USA show how clear targets and a big vision can lead to long-term growth and impact.

By focusing on purpose-driven, measurable, and ambitious goals, small businesses can achieve extraordinary results, often becoming game-changers in their own industries.

As you reflect on your own journey, both personally and professionally, I challenge you to think boldly—what is your Big Hairy Audacious Goal (BHAG)? Whether it's leading your business to new heights, advocating for social change, or striving for personal growth, your BHAG should be a goal so powerful it excites you, scares you, and motivates you all at once. Think beyond the limits imposed by society, others, or even yourself. What's the impact you want to make, and what legacy do you want to leave behind?

But a bold vision is only the beginning. To transform your BHAG from a dream into reality, you need to methodically track your progress. Break your audacious goal down into smaller, measurable activities—specific targets, key performance indicators (KPIs), or milestones. What daily actions will move you closer to your goal? What habits or strategies will keep you on track? Just like the businesses and leaders you admire, success requires a combination of courage, strategy, and consistency.

Now, it's your turn. Set your sights high. Write down your BHAG. Identify the measurable activities and metrics that will guide your path. And, most importantly, commit to tracking your progress and celebrating your wins—no matter how small. Your BHAG is your declaration of potential, a challenge to push the boundaries of what's possible. It's time to turn that vision into action. You've got this.



Shameless Plug for hirstrength.com:

Working with a coach on your BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal) and the metrics to achieve it is a robust investment in your future for several reasons:

1. Clarity and Focus

A coach helps you define your BHAG with clarity, ensuring it aligns with your values and long-term vision. Often, we set goals that are either too vague or too broad. A coach brings objectivity, helping you break down your audacious goal into clear, actionable steps, making the seemingly impossible more achievable.

2. Accountability

Having a coach creates a sense of accountability. It's easy to lose motivation or procrastinate when working toward something big. A coach keeps you on track, ensuring you're consistently moving forward and not getting lost in day-to-day distractions. Regular check-ins provide the structure you need to stay focused and committed.

3. Support Through Challenges

A coach helps you navigate the inevitable challenges and setbacks of pursuing ambitious goals. They offer perspective, guidance, and encouragement when the road gets tough. Rather than being overwhelmed, a coach helps you stay grounded and adaptable, reinforcing your confidence and resilience.

4. Measuring Success

Tracking progress is essential; a coach helps you choose the right metrics. They work with you to determine what you need to measure and how to track success meaningfully. A coach ensures that you're hitting milestones and helps you celebrate small wins, which fuels long-term motivation.

Ultimately, working with a coach on your BHAG and metrics transforms a daunting journey into a structured, purposeful process that maximises your potential for success.