The Scopelliti Line™: the New Paradigm of Goal Setting

By Pasquale Scopelliti (the grandson), All Rights Reserved, © 2009

Introduction

If you could, do you have a past you'd love to leave behind? Have you ever wished you could use something concrete, like a knife, to simply cut the cord from the past, so that your present and future could be a bit more like what you've always imagined life is supposed to be like? Do you have flights of fantasy, wishing for things you just know you'll never have, but somehow…somehow, you can almost feel the living potential inside, still there, not dead, but just beyond or even massively beyond your reach? What if you could draw a line, a single one, and from the moment you drew the line, like a 90-pound weakling, perhaps, but one the bullies will never push around on the beach any more; what if you could draw your own line in the sand today, and from here on out, everything would be different?

My purpose in this article, is to share my own line with you, and my promise is, if you agree with what you read here, you're about to draw the most important line of your life. How much do I believe in my line? Someday soon, I believe, my line will extend forward and improve performance in every field of endeavor. I believe it holds that much potential. But, here in this article introducing my line, we'll be focusing on its meaning for recruiters, and what's more, I assure you, the world does not matter, you do, you alone. My line would be just a fiction if it were drawn for masses of people, like armies walking through a river, Pagan on one side and baptized Christians on the other. No, there is no group version of this line, while groups will benefit hugely from this line. For that to work, though, each individual in the group has to determine if he agrees or disagrees for himself alone. So that's what we're going to do right now. We're going to focus very literally on you, specifically. In fact, let me start with a few questions about your performance.

First Question: How long ago was it, when you were performing at half the level you're hitting right now?

For example, if you billed $130,000 in 2008, are you on track to bill $260,000 this year, 2009? If so, then for the moment, you're doubling from one year to the next. Or, to just play with the numbers for another example, if you achieved $85,000 of billing in 2006 and you billed $170,000 in 2008, that's a doubling pace of two years.

Now, let's look at the dark side of the force. Everyone's recently heard about Bear Markets and Recession/Depression conditions in the economy. So, let's

imagine all you want to do right now is repeat what you did last year, in 2008. To tackle that, I have to ask…

Second Question: What components of your performance do you measure that would count as efforts—activities if you will—as opposed to results, rewards or outcomes?

Or if, under current conditions, we consider repeating your billing number from last year to be an accomplishment, maybe even a reward, what efforts, activities or frontend tasks will you have to do to have a shot at protecting your previous level of performance from eroding right now? If you know me, or have read my other articles, you know that my favorite measure of activity and effort is connected time on the phone in the market. If you'll allow me that focus for our example, let's imagine that you logged in say, 2.5 hours in the market on average per day, last year. This of course adds up to 12.5 hours per week, and loosely sums to 162.5 hours per quarter, or 650 hours on the phone in the market during 2008. If you can accept that those 650 hours were important in creating your performance last year we can ask our question this way…

Third Question: Under current conditions, what number of hours on the phone in the market will you require this year, just to keep pace with last year's performance?

So to restate, if you have positive momentum, the question to ask is how long will it be before you double your performance up from where you are? The backward orientation—how long has it been since you were at half your current level?—was offered to get a sense of momentum and an initial guess at what we can call your doubling pace. But, if all you hope for right now, due to tough times, is to hold onto or even not drop as much as you might otherwise, we still end up needing the same thing. What is that? GREAT GOALS. To double up, or in tough times to hold your own, you have to set intelligent, powerful goals. You require meaningful goals that come together to guide you to achieve your potential in good times or bad, and arguably, you need them even more in bad times than you do in good times. But, the truth is that there is no such thing as a good time for a bad, a weak, a poor, or a poorly set goal. You need good goals.

In this article, you'll find the simplest—or at least the strongest and most direct—expression I'm able to generate, of something I've been working at since at least 1989. I call it by my own name, ***The Scopelliti Line*™**. I've never called any of my creations by my own name before, and the truth is I'd not do it now if it weren't for my belief that this concept lives up to my grandfather's legacy. You'll find his picture below, at the end of the article. I am named after him, and my decision to use his name in this way means that I believe this work merits the powerful-but-soft smile you see on his face. I hope he's proud of my work as it is his blessing I strive for in

everything I do professionally. Another soul, not a member of my family but one who is a wonderful client and a faultless friend, a man who is both a great thinker and a true goad to my best work, must also be thanked. This article was stimulated quite directly by Gary Fruchtman, and would not, really *could* not have been written without his encouragement and challenge.

Getting back to the question of goals, let's turn our gaze to the bigger picture.

Why is it that goals are needed wherever performance is desired; is there an ultimate reason we can know?

The fundamental reason is that whenever and wherever you may hope to perform, there will always also be inescapable risk of failure. The fact that success can not be guaranteed is the definitive reason we require goals, at all. If success could be guaranteed, then no goals would be necessary. The moment you recognize risk—and risk means that failure is possible—you need powerful, resilient goals to help you navigate your performance through its challenges and learn the path to succeed in spite of the risk of failure. The greater the risk, the more critically important building the best possible set of goals becomes. That brings us to a definition we require: the "real world" can be defined as that place were outcomes are all that matter. In the real world, no one cares how you hit your goal, or really even about goals at all. In the real world, it is solely backend results that matter, nothing else. In the real world, punishment for failure is instantaneous and unforgiving.

If we could, we would build performance in the same way; but this method, which we may call "sink or swim" over results, is dysfunctional in teaching, managing or leading. The reason for that dysfunction is quite simple. In teaching performance, we begin with simply no power, at first, over results or the rewards we seek. We simply can't do anything about the backend outcomes of a new performer's efforts. When you're a new performer, there's really nothing you can do about it when you miss your targets, so focusing on the backend is nothing more than a sure-fire path to frustration and pain. What is required, therefore, is a true separation between the frontend activities or efforts, and the backend rewards you seek. Actions and their outcomes, causes and their effects, these must be separated. Interestingly, in building performance, where we begin with no ability to directly affect outcomes, we enjoy near perfect ability to affect and put in place the necessary actions and effort. In a word, the thought that simply wanting better results will get us those results is something like pure performance naiveté. If only we could just want it bad enough and then have it! But, the real world simply does not support this fantasy-based approach to work.

This is where **The Scopelliti Line™** comes in. My line, which is the most well-perfected definition of a goal I'm able to express, empowers us to focus first on setting the best possible goals for the actions that create success, not

the outcomes that define success.   But, in the end, we merge with the real world, and by perfecting our frontend lines, we'll growingly empower ourselves to perfect backend lines, too. In the end, we'll be as strong and ready to swim with the sharks in the real world, as we can possibly be.

Turning now to the method of our work in this article, I'll do my best to make it both as clear and as simple as possible, but there's a leap you'll need to make with me, if you wish to follow my thinking. I'll be speaking in very general, even to some degree universal terms. My argument is very logical and you have to be ready to go a bit abstract with me, perhaps not too different than the proofs you worked on in your High School Geometry class. If you don't enjoy abstract thinking, or a general approach to matters, then you'll likely struggle a bit at first. I'd like to encourage you to work at it though, and I have three steps to recommend...

First, picture any athletic engagement, and see all the pros out there on the court or field, warming up before the big game. The same thing happens if you go to hear a symphony or a rock concert. At a symphony, the orchestra does more than just tune up at the beginning, they really, literally are warming up their instruments. And, while the warm-up band is heating up the audience at a rock concert, the headliners are warming up behind stage, doing all the things they do so they can come out and hit it from the first moment on the stage. Even still, you can always tell the difference between the first songs and what happens as performers and audience begin to work together, can't you? The same applies to an article itself as well as to the act of reading or studying, especially when the purpose is to really push your thinking. So, be ready to warm up a bit, and have some faith that as the argument progresses, it will pick up pace and meaning. One other warm up you might consider is to read out loud in any part that you struggle over. It's kind of amazing how much it helps.

Second, once you're working through the article, for each and every statement I make, remember I can only be either right or wrong. If I'm wrong, catch me out! I'd profoundly love to hear how I'm wrong, and I assure you, I promise, if you persuade me, I'll change both what I think and how I present it, and I'll improve. I promise also, I'll be deeply grateful. Do test me at my word, you'll find I'm a honest man. So, remember, focus on whether or not you agree or disagree. The more detailed you can be, agreeing or disagreeing for real reasons, and over each step in the chain of thinking below, the better you'll do.

Third, all general statements, if true, have very specific outcomes or applications. So, the way to read my thinking is to find the general statement, see if you agree or disagree, and then, apply it to yourself. Basically, by writing at a general level, I leave the burden of specific application on your shoulders. If you don't bring your own, very specific, real-world experience and knowledge to the work here, together with me, it

may be good for your mind, but won't do anything for your heart or soul, and surely won't impact the way you work or learn. For our conversation to have any impact, then, you'll have to figure out how it applies very specifically to yourself. You may find it interesting that the very general method I employ will feel very, very personal by the time you're done, but there's no magic trick involved, its just the result of all the real world power you bring to the table, as an honest and hard-working reader.

If you're ready, then, let's get to work...

The Scopelliti Line™ of Learning
A New Definition of the term "Goal," Drawn Through These Seven Points:

1. Goals set as
   - Unarguably **necessary**,
   - Truly sufficient minimums, which must be...
     (Please ponder both sub-points above and their ramifications before moving on.)

2. Hit or missed by the precise moment of **deadline**, and that ...

3. When hit equal
   - Sustainable, repeatable success,
   - Ultimately perfected as a
   - Solid floor of performance with unbreakable **rhythm**. Such goals must be...

4. Expressed as
   - Sovereign personal pledges,
   - Made to self and/or others, and given in the context of
   - Absolute,
   - Non-resisting and
   - Unquestioning **accountability** relationships. These pledges...
     (Once an unarguably necessary goal is set, what's left to question or resist?)

5. Comprise true promises on your honor and reflecting your **character**, and where your...

6. **Commitment** is to either succeed or fail honorably, and finally where...
     (Sadly, no matter what we say to the contrary, failure is always an option. What we should say is that surrender never is. Therefore honorable failure must also always be both an option and even a right.)

7. **Honorable** failure means,

i. Most importantly, **<u>no surrender</u>** and all-out battle up to, through and past the moment of deadline,
ii. Full acceptance of the condition of failure with NO denial or excuses, only results,
iii. Full analysis of the failure,
iv. Immediate re-setting of a new goal with a new deadline,
v. <u>Immediate execution</u> of analyzed lessons.

Reduced down, here are the seven terms that sum up and therefore name our seven points:

1. **Necessity**
2. **Deadline**
3. **Rhythm**
4. **Accountability**
5. **Character**
6. **Commitment**
7. **Honor**

When consulting clients hire me, the first thing we do is start to build this line. In application—as opposed to concept—the term "building" is accurate, even though lines are of course drawn. The reason is that in real-world application, **_The Scopelliti Line_**™ is not created by pencil on paper. And, it requires a great deal more than to merely connect the component points. It is actually a set of iron-clad definitions and commitments to self and/or others, requiring complete mental comprehension, emotional settling, spiritual adherence and self-correcting execution in action.

As my own line, it is both business and personal, meaning it is a great deal more than just business. It is what I actually believe, personally. As such, it really is my position, my politics, my message, my code; it is my personal and professional party line. But, I mustn't imply that there is anything about my line that is merely politics; oh no! To think of it that way is to miss my point… to miss my points… to miss the tie connecting my points. Rather, **_The Scopelliti Line_**™ is better understood as my line in the sand. This is my fundamental belief. It is also my way of determining who is on the same page with me. Are you with me or not? Are you on my side or are you on the other side? This is where I stand. This is my case.

There's another way to think about my line, though. While it may not be for everyone, my deepest, most passionate belief is that everyone benefits from the line, if they're willing to think about it carefully. The way I see it, the greatest benefit is here on this side of my line. But, the next benefit is just on the other side, where you're closest to the line, but not over it. Think of that as agreeing basically, and specifically with between 4 and 6 of my points while disagreeing with between 1 and 3 of them. I perceive reducing benefit, the farther you get from the line. When you disagree with between 4 and 6 of

my points, agreeing with only between 1 and 3, we shift from partial agreement to partial disagreement. And, some will surely have to disagree with all 7 of my points and with the entire approach or basic concept. Of course, those who truly disagree would map the benefits in the opposite direction. But, for my part, I propose that even if you find you can only partially agree, not totally, the closer you come the better and I encourage you to find the place that is right for you, no matter. One of the great powers of my line and its component points is that making a decision about the whole—do your agree with it or not?—and making a decision about whether or not you agree or disagree with each of the components individually; making these decisions will help you find out where you stand, and will strengthen your goal setting and most importantly your performance, powerfully.

To find your rightful place on that map, all you need to do is be certain you actually understand each point, and yes, there are a good number of sub-points to work through as well, and then determine simply if you agree or disagree. Be assured, I will welcome all responses, and consider all weaknesses and errors I've suffered, in hopes of improving my line thereby.

Faith and Learning, the Keys to Understanding *The Scopelliti Line*™

The 7 points listed above are powerful in their own right. But, context truly does matter. I won't attempt to trace the history of where my line comes from. I will, though, attempt now to offer the context you need so you can put the line into the right perspective, really quite a bit like focusing a lens on a camera. You want to be at the right angle and distance, with the right light shining so you can see your object in the clearest and most distinct way possible. In order to do that, please…

Imagine a heated conversation. Everyone present has his own different background and very different points of view. They all have ideas and opinions, and, great conversationalists all, they kind of chomp at the bits to get their point across. They're friends, but that doesn't mean they agree; in fact, it's quite the opposite. They disagree and violently. One them, the middling height (okay, a bit on the short side at all of 5' 8.5", and don't forget that last ½ inch, mind you) Italian guy, is just about to win the floor. He may not win the day, we'll have to see. But, he's about to move into his closing case. Everyone's already told their specific stories, and all the case history has already been laid out, just like when sports fiends have been going back over the winning teams from decades past, and the greatest players, and everyone has his candidate for best team, or best player. But, our talkative Italian guy who looks like he's about to actually stand up to speak, he's now about to go into the general conclusions part and try to bring

his point home, actually hoping to persuade at least someone, if not the entire group since he's just motivated that way.

Oh, who are the teams and players under argument? Well, its kind of a philosophical sporting field, but is actually focused intensely on performance success and failure in recruiting, of all things, while it would really apply equally to any type of sales efforts and maybe even leadership of performance in general. The contenders are actually human functions, aspects of how humans think, feel, decide and how all these things work out in the push and shove of real performance. As we enter the conversation, the main players which are candidates for the title **MIFDP, Most Important Function Driving Performance** are: **1.) Motivation, 2.) Passion, 3.) Faith,** so far. But, a new player is about to be introduced, as our Italian guy has been kind of holding out, saving his best player for last... let's listen in now...

Let's be clear, motivation matters. Inspiration, passion and heat count. No, not as much as true faith. It is common knowledge that in business, sports, science, the arts, and any other area worth competing over, the passionate win. But come on, common knowledge basically means something no one actually thinks about. We have to attack that knowledge and see what it means. Often there are simply blatant contradictions that we have to decide over. For example, if passion wins, what do we do about the fact that emotions cloud reason? This too is common knowledge, but it really is problematically opposed to the general thought that the passionate win. Contradiction: We're supposed to be passionate, but we shouldn't be emotional when trying to reason. That's a problem, right? Yet, if we separate the two out, we still have general knowledge, common opinion.

But what about faith...? Wrongly, faith is kind of held as a "religious" word. It isn't wrong that religion lays claim, what would religion be without faith? It would be nothing. But, what is wrong is that people hear the word "faith" and boom, their minds see a stained glass window and a cross, or whatever breed of religious building they relate to. Here's another problem, we don't connect the two words "faith and "faithful". The very topic of "faithfulness" is often limited exclusively to the subject of marital fidelity. What we miss in all this is the reality of faith in ourselves, faith in what we do, faith in the group or community of which we're a part. We miss the power of faith where it has nothing to do with religion, and worse, we miss that faithfulness is mark of character, honor and word every bit is much as it is the mandate of belonging to a creed or church.

Motivation...passion...faith; I say, the greatest of these is faith. But why? Why focus on these three at all? One critical connection is that motivation itself...that is, what ever it is that gets you to do something...is actually a subset or possibly a variation of faith, and so also is passion, the fire with which you do the things you do. Stick that out. What makes you passionate about something, if you are? Surely, you can't argue that faith can be skipped,

can you? If you're all fired up, heated up, passionate, you have to have, if not unshakable faith, if not certain faith, then faith of some form or another, don't you? Isn't real passion actually one of the faces of believing in something, really believing? You feel passionate, heated up, and are ready for action, motivated, more powerfully by what you believe in than by anything else. Motivation and passion are results of, related to but dependent upon…faith. Yes?

The truth is, we need a fourth candidate to add to the mix, and my candidate is learning. Here's why: While motivation and inspiration matter, they don't matter as much as learning. But, what about faith, what's the relationship between faith and learning? Well, I think learning is as much a subset of faith as is motivation and shockingly, even more a subset of faith than is passion. If we're still together then, this interestingly enables us to put faith away for now, since all three of our other elements, motivation, passion and learning, are all subsets of, subordinate to faith. Faith being the universally present and necessary component we can allow ourselves, just for the moment mind, to assume its presence for our conversation. Rest assured, it will poke back in shortly, but we'll let it go check on the food in the kitchen while we keep chatting. Ah, but flittery, jittery, changeable, easily distractible passionate emotion, it wants to know what's cooking too, and since it basically disappears without faith, we'll allow it to go with its powerful parent into the kitchen, too, leaving us just learning and motivation to grill with questions and the third degree.

So, assuming that faith is the source, but not the matter in question, if we have to pick between learning and motivation, which one is more important; which one is more powerful, which one is the better, the favorite child of its powerful parent in the kitchen? My answer? No question and with no doubt about it, pick learning every time. Here's just one example of why. Motivation is often fueled by success. In such cases, if you take the success away the motivation will begin to fall, and usually, to fall pretty fast. But, we still haven't said anything about goals. So, let's go there, now.

Okay, before we do that, we'd better back up and catch our own breath together. There was actually a huge amount of information in my, I mean in the Italian guy's argument. And he stated it all at the most general level. It included premises and conclusions, comparisons and a sequence of mental actions, one following the other apace. That really is a lot. If I may, do allow me to recommend you go over his argument more than once before you move on. The way to do that, though, is to break the argument down into smaller pieces, and I'll offer some help with that part of the work, right now. Here's a list of the key elements you find above. I'll talk about what to do with this list in a moment, and then we'll leave our arguing friends behind and settle in for the steady job of the coming work as we roll forward:

- **<u>Motivation</u>**, along with **Inspiration**, **Passion** and **Heat**, Inner Heat.

- **Faith**.
- The *subordination of Motivation to Faith*, and the fact that Faith and Motivation are strongly tied to each other.
- **Learning**, but learning as a subject of thought unto itself, maybe we might call this "learning in general".
- The proposition that between the two categories, Learning and Motivation, Learning is, and by far, the vastly more important thing to focus on; *Learning is vastly more important than Motivation*.
- **Success**, but again, success as a general subject, not merely a specific moment of victory.
- The proposition that, in some cases, *Motivation can be both fueled by Success, and dependent upon it*; this is one example of how Motivation can be seriously vulnerable, and therefore not to be trusted.
- **Goals**, and yes, again, Goals as a general topic for consideration, not merely this or that specific goal.

If this is all already perfectly clear, by all means, just keep moving and read on. But, if your mind has not quite taken all those separate pieces in, let alone begun to merge them together into any sort of coherent flow, then slow, steady, careful work is certain to be well rewarded. Each area listed above is deeply worthy of your best thinking. What do you know about these matters; what have you read; what's your opinion on these topics? If you had to teach someone else how to be motivated, would you know how to do it? If you had to help someone else build up their faith in themselves or in an area of work, what would you do? Are you able to think comfortably and even rapidly about these topics, moving from one to the next with ease? If not, I truly do promise that slow, careful thinking, actually the best word is "meditation" upon each area is more than just merited.

Also, think about your own motivation, faith, learning, success and goals. Bring yourself to the table, or more literally, to the page here. Lastly, do you have motivation stories of your own? Do you have stories of your own faith, learning, success and goals? If so, be it slow or fast, picture your stories, maybe even as fast-action sequences like the proverbial "seeing your life before your eyes" that we hear about when people are in life-risking situations.

While we've been working on applying all this to you, our friends have been fighting furiously. Our man has completely given up on the good looking gal ever agreeing with him…what was he thinking? Most of the argument seems to have focused on how demotivating failure is, and how important it is to pump yourself up if you're going to succeed. With obviously growing frustration, our man decided to take a different tack, focusing instead on, well, let's listen in again now…

The greatest mistake in management, and one of the business world's most pernicious myths, not to say flat out lies—I think most who preach this error actually believe it, so obviously, lying can mostly be taken off the table—is that goals are for motivation. What that means is that you are most definitely supposed to set goals, since we've all been taught that setting goals essentially equals hitting goals. Never mind the fact that the vast preponderance of possible data proves beyond that merest shadow of a doubt that goals tend so show the reverse ratio.

Ah, but here's a problem. When you go to a motivational seminar, write some goals down, and hit some of them, what do you talk about? Do you talk about the goals you missed or the ones you hit? And, take it a step further. What about all the goals that the people wrote, the goals which are not only not hit, but never have the slightest impact on performance in any way? And one additional step. When you hear that one of your friends has written a business plan, do you expect it to come true, or do you expect the contrary? Also, do you not associate the terms "collecting dust on the shelf" with the term "business plan"? I sure do. In my experience, believing what is written in a business plan is a lot like converting to the religion of Mother Goose.

I know, I know; there is anecdotal evidence and cultural belief to the point, for many, of absolute faith in both goal setting and business planning. There are many, many victories to be pointed to, where the goal was set and then hit, and the plan written and then achieved. More, even when not hit, the process of setting goals and writing plans can be justified in literally thousands of ways. I do have to recognize that there really are business environments where planning is simply critical. I'd never tell a banker or a venture capitalist that business plans are unworthy. In those settings, they're simply critical working documents and the process is beyond questioning. Not that many of my criticisms wouldn't still apply, but obviously, I'm not saying that there should be no more business plans.

The problem with all the truths I mentioned about written goals getting hit, or plans actually working out, is that they don't ever—at least not in my experience—attain what we might call a "state of data". They're cultural beliefs and values, and they convert into practices that are typically utterly immune to any data-based attack. They're simply not up for question, and thus, the real numbers; wait, let's talk about those "real numbers" for a moment. To build a data-based judgment about all this, here's what we'd need. We'd need to count failures, as well as successes and then, even if we couldn't "prove" our position in the end, we'd at least be able to say we looked at the data before we drew our ultimate conclusions. No, that alone wouldn't protect us from our inner biases and hidden assumptions. Ferreting those out is indeed hard work and an art, not just a science. My point, however, when it comes to the question of goals, is that people—again in my experience—do not look to the failures as well as the successes and therefore do not have an adequate base of data from which to build conclusions.

I propose, consequently, that the actual trend is strongly, strongly against goals—and I emphasize, goals as they're normally set and engaged—as any form of predictor of performance.

How bad is this trend, when followed to the full extent of its impact? The perhaps stunning answer is that for most souls, setting a goal means that they are very, very likely to NOT achieve what they envisioned. Actually, the data are even stronger. We might go so far as to state that if you don't want to do something, then set it as a goal, we can be almost certain you won't hit it. Where's the real problem? The problem is in both the definition and purpose of setting the goal in the first place. Before we consider that, check yourself. Go back in your memory and select any group of goals you've ever set. Now, factor in all the failures, so you're NOT just making yourself look good to yourself, please. If you hit more than 50% of them and also if you were able to prevent yourself from stacking the data by picking only those goals you hit or predominantly hit—that is, if you actually factored real failures into your group—then in my experience, you're the exceptional soul. Perhaps the exercise is near to impossible to do after the fact, though. It is the power of selective memory that makes it so unlikely any of us can, at random, pick a fair selection. Most souls really do remember their successes more than their failures, perhaps with the exception of the most spectacular failures. Jumping ahead, allow me to share that my experience, the data I look at points to the 80 – 20 rule, where goals tend to have no more than a 20% probability of success. But again, why might the picture be this bleak?

Whoa, hold on there. Is the picture that bleak, or is our man over-stating the case? What do you think?

For my own part, I think that the case is complex, and in fact, I think we'll probably do best to leave our arguing friends to their own directions from here on. They'll be fine, but our man is coming to realize he's in a long term, strategic theatre of battle, not a short term tactical maneuver. He'll likely not win the war today, but he's sure going to give it his all, anyway. He just rolls that way.

One of his points that we should clarify is the question of how so many people, maybe including you, remember hitting goals far more than they remember missing any. I think we need to recognize that missed goals have a powerful way of turning invisible. We forget them. We de-focus on them. There are always reasons, often really, really good reasons why they were missed. And honestly, when you look back over your life, the goals that matter the most are the ones you hit, not the ones you missed. Tightening up our approach, there is a breakdown to work out, a couple of additional definitions. Here are the terms:

1. **Stated Goals**
2. **Actual Goals**

Stated Goals are nothing more than just that, what you say to other people, what you tell them. Actual Goals show two, typically invisible patterns. The first is that when you go past your Actual Goal, when you over-perform it, you'll reward yourself by slowing down. Performance patterns drop down to the level of Actual Goals when those goals are surpassed. Since few people watch the patterns carefully enough to see this, that's part of why this is not simply common knowledge already. That said, most managers are surely familiar with the pattern, whether they've ever formally labeled it or not.

Actual goals also reveal the opposing dynamic, when you drop beneath them. This is actually the defining difference between merely Stated Goals and Actual or True Goals. People can live and perform for entire careers without ever adapting their actions upward to meet merely Stated Goals. But, regarding their Actual Goals, the moment you drop beneath them, you start to get uncomfortable. The further beneath them you fall, the more uncomfortable you'll be. This natural discomfort instigates corrective action. When you fall beneath an Actual Goal, you correct upward.

I repeat, this is truly the definitive element. By the way, there's no law that prevents Stated and Actual Goals from being equal to each other. No, few people live that way, but that's one of the main objectives of drawing **The Scopelliti Line™.** On this side of the line, we have this absolute formula:

Once over **The Scopelliti Line™,** Stated Goals Absolutely Must = Actual Goals

In decades of looking at the data, I have never found a single instance where this condition, Stated Goals equaling Actual Goals, existed on its own, naturally before we worked to make it so. In all the goal and performance data I've ever observed, there was a difference, a marked and measurable difference between the two. It is this universal separation between Stated and Actual Goals that spurred the creation of **The Scopelliti Line™.**

Take another look at these things for yourself. When you set a goal without the perfected intention and disciplined method to ensure you hit it, and typically more to make yourself or your manager feel good, you really have a low, low chance of hitting it. The working definition of the term "goal" that we see in practice is little more than finding something you want, or worse, that you can be confident your boss wants to hear. That's your goal. What is ultimately wrong with this definition? For that, we have to go dig more deeply into the question of learning.

We Learn From Failure

How do we learn? Again, the data as I read them shout with perfect and total clarity. First allow me to over-state my case. I'll give the qualifiers immediately, next. Here's the strong, or actually the too-strongly stated case:

We do not learn from our successes. Rather, success is actually the result or consequence of learning, and not its cause or source. Learning, the learning that empowers and creates performance, results from the combination of faith with failure. If the failure destroys your faith in what you're doing, no learning will occur. But, if on the other side of the failure you still have faith, then learning is the result. Let's add one additional element, Correction. Human performers really do make corrections, we veer toward what we both want and believe in. The 'want' part, the motivation, typically dissipates and this condition has the somewhat well-known and so-easily understood name "goal erosion". That's why, in correcting toward performance, motivation itself remains so suspect. But, after a painful failure, while yet faith is strong, our natural ability to correct is the true source of our learning. When we do hit goals, set by any means, it is always as a result of such corrections.

Here's the qualifier to my too-strongly stated position above. Both sides are too rigid. First, there truly are things we can learn from success. We can learn that something works, and prove that the previously hoped for good is completely doable. For sports history buffs, think of Roger Bannister and the four-minute mile. That something can be done is actually a pretty big deal. There are other things to be learned from success, and the rewards of success are worthy of every effort at learning from every source, certainly and perhaps obviously, from analyzing our successes or those of others directly. This does not alter my actual position, but I'll come back to that. Second, learning, while being the ultimate cause of sustained success, is anything but the only cause of success. From luck and good timing, to great bosses, wonderful associates be they clients or peers, to great training, powerful tools, valuable information and a huge list of other assets, learning from failures is surely NOT the sole cause of success. I do, however, stand strong that there is no sustainable success without the ability to learn from failures, but you knew that by now, already. That's my real conclusion, and I'll restate it again directly, right now.

My real conclusion is that, sustainably, we learn from failure, not success. And, as repeatedly put forth so far, motivation is not highly involved in this learning; faith is, not motivation. I guess we need some definitions here, too, however. But, let's keep it simple. Faith is what you actually believe, no matter how you feel. Motivation is nothing other than what gets you to do something. If we were really pure about motivation, we'd see how directly tied to faith it is, and we could clean out of all the emotional claptrap that so-invariably (it would appear, at any rate) goes with it. But, most people approach motivation as if it were a fairy tale. This standard approach is simply utterly riddled, not to say polluted, by all the nice, warm feelings we build up before we try to do something. Then, when the real world bites and we fail, our motivation goes running for the door, following all our nice warm feelings which are now cooled and yucky. One of the worst cycles here is when our goals are built upon the assumption of motivation that just isn't

there. In such a cycle, the lack of motivation is clearly the cause of the failure. Rooting this out is one of the great challenges of performance transformation. If success is to be possible, the transformation will absolutely require that we both find true motivation as well as learn what to do when the looked for motivation has left.

On the positive side, the emotionally positive side of motivation, we surely must tap into recollections of past victories and successes; we must have mighty visions of our most passionate hopes and aspirations, ambitions and visions—or as Napoleon Hill called them, our "Burning Passionate Desires"— and our powers and abilities must generate confidence, clarity, purpose, mission, commitment, dedication, resolve and the list goes on. But, this positive side of motivation, if we fixate on it alone, one-sided as if we were but positive creatures, ends up being absolutely anemic. We must, we must, we must face the dark side too. Negative emotions that arise from the past, such as regret, remorse, shame and guilt – they're powerful motivators. Go to any AA meeting and you can see for yourself precisely why we have to have the negative emotions. Fear, threat of loss, terror, these are emotions about the future, and again, they're powerful motivators. And the present? Irritation, anger, frustration, anxiety, pure rage and righteous indignation, ***"I'm as mad as hell, and I'm not going to take it anymore!"***, yes, again amazingly powerful motivators.

When we add the negative emotions into the picture, we've come far closer to what reality looks like. But, there are still pitfalls to avoid, indeed. One such destructive morass is what may be termed a type of addictive cycle, leading to a crash. If you rely upon threat for your motivation – a powerful motivator indeed – but then, as one threat wears off you need another, you can see how the cycle spirals until the inevitable crash. When you have used up your store of threats, or worse, become immune to the impending consequences you feared, motivation breaks and performance is obliterated.

What is needed is a rich fuel, flowing along with reality, from passionate dreams, immediate desires and ethical obligation on the positive side, to the full panoply of negative emotions, again as reality imposes them. Be clear, since motivation entails both positive and negative emotions, the key is to be able to bob and weave with both outer and inner reality in adjusting the mix so that we are fueled forward, as powerfully as possible.

But let me sum it all back down to the question of faith itself. To be motivated is to be compelled into action. This drive to action, however, is far safer when grounded in belief in both what one is doing and in one's ability to do it. If success is required for that faith, we're all in big trouble. Failures are guaranteed to occur. Since motivation rises and falls, and that can't be changed, our decision to work, in spite of loss of motivation has to be built on something other than the rising and falling emotions of the moment.

Let's turn back again now, to the question of goals.

If goals should not be set for mere, or worse, temporary motivation (or at least not primarily), and if they're actually for learning, how do they work? Well, here's where the myth has its worst impact. They have to be sufficient minimums, such that if you hit them you'll succeed. No, not necessarily conquer the planet, but actually succeed like any good citizen, living a good life, doing good work, being both responsible and actually, believe it or not, also satisfied with your work and happy knowing you've done enough. What about your dreams? Well, they're surely as important as motivation, and tied in here, and hugely. But, they don't factor strongly into tactical, day-to-day, necessary learning for success. Here, we have to lower our sights. We have to set a minimum level of performance, one we can believe in, such that if you don't hit it, you've failed. One last thing about dreams, though, they surely do give context to our day-to-day grind. The grind is supposed to sum up to something worthwhile, and that something is a dream. Be clear though, the grind really is a grind, and looking to your goals to get you over that hurdle really doesn't work.

You see, success, the real thing, requires the courage to face daily failures and learn from them. If you catch a really successful person, not up on the stage giving their speeches, but in the middle of the daily battle, you'll find they tend to focus more on what's going wrong than they do on what's going right. Why? Because the stuff going right is going right. The stuff going wrong has to be corrected. If you know how, great, but it really is urgent; you have to make that correction now. But, what if you don't know how to correct it? Aha, then we have a problem, and successful performers solve problems, and they do it all the time. They're often not too much fun as a result, and their families, who get used to all the money and luxury, often really don't enjoy hearing about work. Work is boring, if you're not the person succeeding. There are all these problems and no one else ever cares about how brilliant you were when you were solving them. Besides, they're solved and now there's a new problem, so get back to work.

In a nutshell, that courage, the courage to face the daily failures that are a both inescapably present as well as vitally necessary elements of success and performance, the absolute mandate of that courage is precisely what led me to draw my line. What is needed is simply a new definition of what a goal is. My definition begins by establishing that our purpose in setting our goals must be focused on sustainable success itself, at its most critical level, and the learning that sustainable success requires. We do not employ goals as mere tools for motivation or fantasy. We respect the power of motivation, but that is simply not what we look to our goals for, by my definition.

Consequently, **_our line is nothing more or less than that absolute number where, if you hit it by or before the very minute of your deadline you succeed. Additionally, once set, your goals stand as_**

promises on your honor, reflective of all you are. On the other hand, if you miss a goal by so little as a single unit, even if you complete that unit so little as one minute after your deadline, you failed; AND you promise to never protect yourself, but rather to feel all the pain that attends. Additionally, you must never lose faith in yourself or your endeavor, but rather you must grow your faith ever-stronger after each and every failure, until you attain the sustainable level of success we seek.

When we arrive at the place where we really can sustain the level of success we seek, a wonderful conversion occurs. What was faith before, converts now to knowledge. And, what's more, that knowledge demonstrates two glorious natures. It is both scientific AND artistic knowledge. Make no mistake, the practice of success is both a science and an art. Between the two, however, and everything I've here stated apparently to the contrary no matter, I'd pick the art. I love numbers and data, passionately. But many great performers have not, need not and will never convert their practice into any type of numerical picture. I say, bless them, they surely don't have to do so. As artists of success, they know the art in their souls. I worship at the alter of such knowledge, mastered by a serious professional in any field, from cab drivers to janitors to any "schooled profession" you might consider. Ah, but for those of us who struggle beneath the levels of either sustainability or greatness, and who have not won our master's stripes as artists of success, the numbers and the data hold what aught to be a sacred spot in our lives and work. But for that, there are many other articles I've written on that topic, and we must wrap up our work for today, now.

The Soul's Benefit from *The Scopelliti Line*™

Over these decades working on the subject, I've come to find one of the greatest gaps in the souls of most performers, until we correct it. One of the greatest errors of thinking we make, and this flows into our emotions and our very identity as well, is to confuse ourselves with our performance. We make no distinction between **PerformER** and **PerformANCE**. A plea that's been made countless times, before the gap was plugged went something like this,

"I can't go home every night a failure; this job is too tough for that already. I have to be a success when I go home at night."

Do you see how the confusion rests there, in the very words of the statement? We can make the same point by stating that there is simply a vast, vast difference between **BEING a Failure** and **HAVING Failed**.

But, in order to see this, you must first see that performance is something that you do, NOT something that you are. The performer can find powerful identity in being the soul who completes performances, over and over again, perhaps thousands and thousands of times. This is your identity at work, of

course. You are the person who did execute all of those performances, absolutely. But, no single performance could ever, no matter how great any success you achieve and also no matter how serious any failure you suffer might have been; no solitary performance could ever capture who you are into itself.

***The Scopelliti Line*™**, then, teaches you that yes, you will certainly have to go home at night having failed, those times that you did not succeed. But, that does not make you into being a failure, yourself. These decades, my own comfort has been that:

> ***There is no dishonor in failure. There is only dishonor in failing to learn from my failures.***

In separating myself away from my failures, so that I may analyze them and learn, I find my way to those successes I've achieved. But, whether I'm succeeding brilliantly or failing abysmally in any moment, that moment is not my life, and that performance is not me.

I had to utterly retrain my heart to feel the pain in my failures, yes, but to remove all the shame from them. In my natural state, I'm both the most failure phobic person you ever met, and the one most deeply ashamed, most horribly paralyzed by my failures. Actually, I think I'm kind of impaired or you might say handicapped in my soul over the issue. My soul, in its natural state, cowers and shudders in fear of failure. The benefit my soul takes from my line is that I find, therein, the courage to face my failures and no longer crumple and fall.

Having shared that, allow me to bring this back to something very basic. For me, truth, real truth, is all about human performance. I need to know the truth if I'm to perform my obligations and fulfill my potentials. My heart needs truth and needs to be trained to respond to truth appropriately. My head needs truth if I'm to understand the world. But my soul needs truth more than any other part of me. It is truth that feeds my soul and frees me. The truth will absolutely set you free. And that is the real benefit from my line. When you accept it, you find your way to the truth. I know. That's why I put my name on it.

Conclusion

When goals are set by my definition, you may find you that pulsing enthusiasm about your goals is reduced at first. Set properly, your goals should hold both real fear, respecting the challenge, and also, interestingly, a strange type of unshakable confidence, knowing you're going to win. The explosive heat of a powerful speaker in his fabulously produced seminar is precisely not the kind of emotion we work for. Once set, you can and truly must express your goals to others as real promises. Being a soul with

integrity, you'd never break your word, so the goals you set are ones you'll complete. Of course, there's no dishonor in ever failing, you just analyze the daylights out of it, set a new goal and execute your learning instantly. In this manner, its all good.

Haven't others worked on this kind of stuff? Sure, but I know of no one who has called it a line. Do you set your goals for motivation or for learning. If for motivation alone, you're on the other side of *The Scopelliti Line™*. Do you set your goals as maximums, based on hope, as wishes, fantasies, even dreams; or do you set your goals as sufficient minimums where there's both no excuse for missing them and where hitting them assures that you're performing well, or even just well enough to get through and still hold your head high and maintain and sustain, and learn? If your goals are just hopes, not promises you keep, then you're on the other side of the line. If you set your goals so you could tell anyone and stand behind them, as iron-clad promises, then you're on this side, over here with me.

A final consideration to share concerns goals that come close to the kind I recommend, but don't arrive at a state of absolute minimums, called S.M.A.R.T. Goals. Commonly known, this acronym stands for Goals that are <u>S</u> *pecific,* <u>M</u> *easurable,* <u>A</u> *ttainable,* <u>R</u> *ealistic,* <u>T</u> *imely*, set by a managers and employee. When it works, it's a fine approach. But, where it fails, this is due to the fact that it leaves a gap open. The problem is that it requires that you have a good person, well-trained, positively motivated and that honesty, trust and learning all must have been built to a high degree, already. But, when you have a person who lacks any of those qualities, or the situation just isn't well-structured for success, then a vicious cycle occurs.

The true cause of the problem is that this method does not employ goals that are sustainable-but-absolute minimums. When inevitable failures start rolling, therefore, these failures do not—really cannot—get labeled as such. Denial and evasion are consequently impossible to prevent. By failing to provide an unbreakable foundation of robust, inescapable definitions, and also failing to embrace failure as a condition properly defined in advance, not surrendering to the reality that failure must be the accepted and only term for the resulting state when goals are missed; by failing in these critical areas, the learning required for success eludes us, just when we need it most.

You'll do much better employing *The Scopelliti Line™* in its full power and force, along with this five-letter acronym: **S.C.O.P.E. Goals: Goals** that empower **<u>S</u>uccess** *through* **<u>C</u>orrection <u>O</u>f <u>P</u>erformance <u>E</u>rrors**.

Rest assured, anyone can—and everyone should—determine for himself precisely what definition of a goal to use. I call this one my own, and would be hugely honored to share it with you if you find you agree with me, since I figured it out and have fought for it all my professional life. But in the end

the only definition that really matters is your own. So, I ask, what's your line?

Finally, allow me to share my grandfather's portrait. Pasquale Scopelliti (the grandfather) never learned to read or write, and he really didn't speak much English. He was a silent man, not a talker. I know he marveled over me as a child, as I was already quite his verbal opposite at the very earliest age. For all that, I can't let go of the feeling that he's still here and that he'd love nothing more than for me to read this article out loud to him. When I gaze into the picture below, I know he would approve of this line that, like myself, shares his name.