

The University of New South Wales

**ELEC4122**

### **on Strategic Goals**

*Success in war is always characterised by a clear strategic goal;  
an ambiguous goal means failure. — source unknown*

One of the critical roles — some would argue THE role — of any leader is to communicate the desired destiny of the group, to both the group and others. All groups need an overall or long-term goal, the so-called *strategic goal*. (In a military context this may be termed the ‘grand strategy,’ to distinguish it from those lesser strategies chosen as ways to achieve it.) It gives the group its purpose; Each group needs a statement that explains what its goal is. The quality of this statement can be assessed against the following criteria.

1. It should be *clear & concise*.

The goal needs to be understood by everyone; there is no value in a statement that needs a manual to explain its meaning. Ideally it should be *memorable & inspirational*, too, but most of us cannot write like Shakespeare.

2. It should be *worth doing*.

For obvious reasons, the goal needs to be something that the group as a whole wants to achieve. This does not mean every member needs it as a top priority.

3. It should be *feasible*.

There is no point having a goal that a group has no chance of achieving, be the reason an intrinsic lack of skill, an incompatible pre-existing culture, or external constraints.

4. It should be *measurable*.

People need to know whether or not they are making progress. This is important feedback on the effectiveness of chosen strategies and for maintaining morale.

5. It should communicate *something to all stakeholders*, both internal and external.

The goal needs to guide everyone inside the group, so they know both how they are contributing and that they are contributing. The goal should also help people outside the group understand what the group represents and intends. Of course, this does NOT mean that the strategies need to be made public; secrecy may be necessary for their success. Nor need the full scope of the goal be disclosed

Note that some books try to distinguish between goals and missions. I don’t know why. Consider computer games: “Your mission is ...; Mission accomplished!”

Sometimes a strategic goal is accompanied by a ‘values statement.’ This is part of the goal, for it sets bounds on how the group may go about attaining to the goal — like the rules accompanying a game, or the design constraints familiar to engineers.