# Goals & Objectives

When developing a digital marketing strategy, the assumed first step is to define a big-picture goal and break it down into measurable objectives. This aims to provide direction and track progress.

In my view, though, it's a complete waste of time. Thinking up a vague goal – while easy to do – isn't very useful, and there are multiple problems with trying to set measurable objectives.

## Why traditional objective-setting doesn't work

A common objective for investment managers is to grow **assets under management (AUM)** by generating inflows into the firm's products and preventing outflows of money already invested (alongside any increase in value of the underlying investments). But the data required to link those flows to marketing activity either doesn't exist or is siloed away from the marketing team, and so the kind of reporting leadership would hypothetically love to see — such as marketing-attributed sales, or a clear **return on investment (ROI)** figure — just isn't calculable.

So instead, teams might be tempted to fall back on setting SMART objectives tied to more accessible marketing **key performance indicators (KPIs)** — leads generated, website traffic, email open rates, and so on. But I suspect very few teams actually use them, and any attempts to do so inevitably run out of steam.

This is mainly due to flaws with the objectives themselves – which are chosen arbitrarily, can't account for simple nuances (e.g., quantity vs. quality), aren't actionable, and don't really influence anything – but also because the KPI data used to measure them is often stored across multiple systems, requiring significant investment and resources to bring them together, which a lot of teams don't have.

Even when KPI dashboards do get built, there's often an implicit belief that someone in the business cares about seeing them – but that person usually doesn't exist. Sure, questions from colleagues come up from time to time (for example, asking how a recent campaign performed or what drove traffic to a particular piece of content) but these are typically specific and situational and can be handled via a quick analysis or self-serve report.

In short: the process of setting and monitoring marketing goals and objectives sounds strategic, but in practice wastes significant time and energy that could be better spent elsewhere.

## A better approach: Focus on *how* you work

Instead of agonising over goals and objectives, I recommend focusing on how you actually work day-to-day. Cal Newport's book *"Slow Productivity*" offers a compelling framework for this:

1. Do fewer things
2. Work at a natural pace
3. Obsess over quality

Yes, this might sound idealistic – especially in a large organisation – but it's a powerful mindset shift, and can lead to deeper satisfaction, better work, and long-term success without the constant busyness and distractions that burn people out.

The approach outlined in this guide aims to support this way of working. The initial setup of the digital marketing infrastructure (which is mostly focused on how the marketing database of contacts is managed) follows a sequence of steps – each building on the last – helping to keep the team focused, avoid distraction, and make sure that each task is given full attention.

Once setup is complete and the foundations are in place, much of the day-to-day activity will be automated – all within a coherent framework – freeing the digital marketing team to concentrate on the strategic work: refining messaging, developing content, completing ad-hoc projects, and experimenting.

More generally, the team will be able to make more considered decisions in line with the “Slow Productivity” principles of focused effort and quality over quantity (not unlike Warren Buffett, who famously spends most of his time thinking, not doing).