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### Objective-setting at my previous work experience

I will talk about my experience interning at MathWorks as a software engineer this summer. Simply put, the objectives set forward for me were not very clear, even from the start, so that even now I'm still wondering how much of it was intentional room for growth. At the time, I was in much confusion. I'll begin from the very beginning.

I was hired as part of the general technical development program at MathWorks called EDG. At some point in the interview process, I was asked by a technical hiring manager if I wanted to work on web development, such as MATLAB Online. I said I would be okay with this, but I would prefer if I could work on a different field: web development is where I had the most background work, but I was trying to move into other, more technical fields in CS. This was my first mistake: not clearly communicating my strong preference to move away from web development. With my reluctant agreement to do web development, I was placed into a team that works on the MATLAB front-end.

When I first spoke to my direct manager (team lead), he suggested some amazing ideas about revolutionizing the way programming environments and editors are envisioned. I was amazed, but I also don't think I got much specific detail through that. In the first few weeks of my internship, my goals were all very vague: to get oriented with the editor codebase and find a project.

At the EDG program at MathWorks, there are a number of people that support an intern: the team lead, a technical mentor in the team, an EDG manager (who helps with career questions), and an EDG "buddy" (who helps with general company information and networking). While this is a lot of support, it does cause some level of confusion and violates the "unicity of command" principle by Fayol; I was flitting between reporting to my mentor and to my team lead at the beginning, and trying to set goals with a combination of my team lead and EDG manager, and receiving feedback from all

four. In addition, all four have different goals for the intern: the team lead to facilitate your work within the greater goals of the team; the technical mentor to help the ramp-up process for technical skills; the EDG manager to promote vocational growth and make sure the EDG “final project” is going as planned; and the EDG buddy to ensure that the intern is able to get his way around the company and his general needs met.

In hindsight, I think I was overwhelmed by these goals, and it took me a very long time to get off the ground. I was never set very specific long-term goals by any of these people or myself. We did set short-term goals and discuss progress on them on alternating days, and I did have biweekly meetings with my team lead and EDG mentor. But the only long-term goals were tasks like “finish onboarding tasks and get familiar with the codebase,” or a high-level vision of the project in my team lead’s words. While the latter was very motivational, we rarely got down to specifics; or when we did get to specifics, I would always not entirely understand.

Without the goals being specific, the other aspects of the S.M.A.R.T. principles of objectives fall apart even more completely. Throughout the whole internship, I felt as though I was only moving forward through little steps with little foresight. This also caused my onboarding process to be very long (about two months), which left me alarmingly little time for the final project. While I did manage to pull it off and my team lead appeared to be satisfied with the end result, I felt directionless throughout.

With this hindsight, I will definitely focus more attention on specific objective-setting at my next workplace after graduation. Much of it was my fault for not putting forth the initiative to do so.