New Year's Resolutions, Career Outlook, and Personality: An Investigation of Library Employees' Goal Setting Behaviors

Amelia Anderson & Leo Lo

Abstract

Many organizations use goal setting as a professional tool to get employees to achieve gains within the workplace. Many librarians in the United States participate in setting New Year's resolutions as part of their personal goal-setting behavior. As studies indicate correlations between personal goal-setting behaviors, performance and attitude in professional roles, the researchers posit that learning how library employees set and achieve New Year's resolutions could provide insight into how organizations can improve employee goal setting. An online survey was conducted in 2016 with 512 respondents. Results showed that respondents who self-reported as ambitious tend to be more successful in achieving their goals. Furthermore, ambitious respondents utilized goal-setting best practices more than less ambitious respondents. Respondents with a less clear sense of purpose in life tended to put in less effort or gave up more often than those with a clearer sense of purpose.

Introduction

With the onset of a new year, people across the United States turn to a longstanding tradition - setting New Year's resolutions. Most current data estimates that between 40% and 50% of people are so-called "resolvers," or those who set New Year's resolutions.[1] New Year's resolutions, which are typically year-long goals, are personal, self-directed, and designed to improve an aspect of a person's life. The most common resolutions among adults are in health and wellness, and include quitting unhealthy behaviors such as smoking and drinking, and embarking on a healthy lifestyle with goals such as weight loss and healthier eating habits.[2] Working adults might also set personal resolutions related to their home life, their career, or anything in between.

Personal goals and professional goals are often approached in different ways. In an article about clinical educators in the medical field, the authors defined personal and professional goals differently, even if the personal goals were career oriented. "Personal career goals represent items that are important to an individual from their personal and unique perspective, whereas work responsibilities/tasks are required of a clinician educator based on the role they play in their department and medical school."[3] Professional goals are more often directed by organizational initiatives and typically have more supervisory or managerial oversight. Another distinction between personal and professional goals tend to be the specificity of the goals. Personal goals are often what might be described as idealistic, whereas professional goals are more likely to be more task specific.

Studies indicate correlations between personal goal-setting behaviors and performance and attitude in professional roles.[4] As with any other segment of the population, many librarians participate in setting New Year's resolutions as part of their personal goal-setting behavior.

Academic, public, special, and school librarians alike set resolutions at the beginning of the year in all facets of life, and work to achieve them in varying degrees.

Though personal and professional goals may be approached differently, learning about how library employees set and achieve their personal goals, such as New Year's resolutions, could provide insight into how organizations can improve employee goal setting. Administrators can use these findings to learn from high achieving library employees, and better understand how to develop alignment between employees' personal and professional goals.

This study tracked the goal-setting behavior as librarians worked to set and accomplish New Year's resolutions over the course of one year, and addressed the following research questions:

1. Do library employees set New Year's resolutions? If so,

a. What techniques do library employees use to help achieve their goals?

b. How successful are library employees in achieving their goals during a New Year period?

c. How does personality and life outlook affect goal-setting behavior during the New Year period?

Literature Review

Librarians' goal-setting behavior, particularly that around New Year's resolutions, is an area yet to be covered in great detail in the available literature. However, much can be learned from peripheral works. This study benefits from a brief review of personal vision, the relationship between personal goal setting and both professional and academic achievement, goal setting within professional organizations and by leaders, and finally New Year's resolutions as a form of goal-setting behavior.

Personal Vision

Studies have shown achieving goals can release a dose of dopamine in people's brains, and "each time your brain gets a whiff of this rewarding neurotransmitter, it will want you to repeat the associated behavior"[5] In the simplest sense, accomplishing a goal makes people feel good. Goals are more likely to be accomplished when a person has a clear sense of why he or she wants to achieve the goal. Sometimes, this comes in the form of having what might be called a personal vision or mission. As one study describes the relationship between vision and goal-setting theory, personal vision can be thought of as "the interconnected conglomeration of peak goals and distal goals (i.e., higher order goals)"[6]

Personal vision is important because when a goal is closely tied to a person's value systems and personal interests, more progress will likely be made towards completion versus when a goal is derived from a sense of either internal or external pressure.[7] Furthermore, "personal values not only tend to be embedded in higher order goals, but also may guide the goal-setter's cognition and action as one pursues one's goals".[8]

Personal vision's effect on goal setting can be found in various domains, and enacted by individuals in all roles. One study of professional leaders reviewed the literature and found that

those who could be described as "charismatic" were consistently identified as having a vision, or what they described as appealing ideological goals.[9]

In a study to determine how a challenging and vivid, or image-rich, personal vision would affect goal setting for students, attributes of a personal vision predicted whether a student would remain committed to his or her semester-long goals. The more challenging and vivid a personal vision was, the more likely a student was to remain committed to goal completion, along with exerting an intended effort to complete their goals and an unwillingness to lower their goals.[10] As suggested by a more recent study's authors:

> because a vivid personal vision provides a clear picture of a future and reflects well-established values, people who conceptualize a vivid personal vision will be more committed to their proximal goals and will be more likely to set specific proximal task goals.[11]

A personal sense of vision, or knowledge of self, has also been linked to professional performance in teachers. For teachers, the "knowledge of the self is a crucial element in the way (they) construe and construct the nature of their work."[12] Additionally, experiences from teachers' personal lives are reflected in and link directly to their professional roles; involvement in professional activities provide teachers with personal satisfaction, and "events and experiences in the personal lives of teachers are intimately linked to the performance of their professional roles."[13]

Personal Goal Setting and Professional Attitudes and Achievement

The effect of personal vision on goal setting continues while examining the relationship between personal goal setting and professional achievement. One study found that students who set weekend goals were in better moods approaching the work week, Monday through Friday, when they worked toward achieving a goal over the weekend. This is in contrast to the norm when, typically, moods go steadily down from Friday to Sunday as students prepare for the following school week. As the authors describe, the students who worked on weekend goals "were just as happy and without negative affect on Sunday as they had been on Friday."[14] The feeling of being stressed out at the onset of another school or work week applies to professionals as well as students, with both the combined knowledge that a weekend is coming to a close along with the anticipation of an overwhelming workweek. Librarians are no different in being potentially limited professionally by work stressors; in fact, in a study of academic librarians, researchers found that "most academic librarians feel overwhelmed quite frequently."[15]

Personal qualities such as self regulation and motivation can also be used as a lens through which to view goal-setting attributes of individuals and the impact these carry on performance. Studies have been done on self-regulated learners, particularly in student academic achievement.[16] As described by Zimmerman et al., "self-regulated learners are not only distinguished by their proactive orientation and performance but also by their self motivative capabilities."[17]

Goal Setting in Professional Organizations

Many organizations use goal setting as a professional tool to get employees to achieve gains within the workplace. These goals are often incorporated into a formal employee review process, such as a yearly benchmark for retention and promotion. Processes vary, with some organizations setting consistent goals for all employees at the same level, other organizations setting unique goals per individual staff member, and still other organizations allowing for

employees to play a larger role in creating their own goals. Regardless of process, effective leaders will often align employee goals with the organization's mission or objectives, which in turn has been shown to increase the employee's productivity and performance at work.[18]

Aligning professional goals with not only the organizational mission, but also personal beliefs and values can also help to improve performance in the workplace. One management professor says that "if I account for the interests of the whole person, not just the work person, I'm going to get more value from them," and that it behooves organizations to understand and work with employee's personal goals as possible.[19] Similarly, as a school librarian describes in an editorial:

> [my goals] reflect the philosophy of the Mission Statement as well as taking me towards what I believe is the best I can be as a teacher-librarian. They are professional yet personal, so they are mine rather than those of an administrator or committee so I am much more likely to work towards their success or reflect on their failure.[20]

Though no comprehensive study of librarianship as a whole has been done, a survey of academic librarians reveals that they "highly value living consistently with their values and beliefs" as well as "challenging their minds with intellectual and creative pursuits"; linking professional development opportunities to these personal visions and values could be an effective method in which to support employees.[21]

Employees who find meaning in their goals at work are more likely to work toward achieving them, and organizational leaders who can provide context for employee goals within a larger context are more likely to see workplace progress. As described by Locke and Latham, "feelings of success in the workplace occur to the extent that people see that they are able to grow and meet job challenges by pursuing and attaining goals that are important and meaningful"[22]

New Year's Resolutions as Goals

New Year's resolutions are often tied to a person's personal interests and values, which suggests that a person might be more likely to work to achieve these goals. However, though a common tradition to make these resolutions, as with other goals they are historically very difficult to keep and complete. Barriers to achieving these resolutions range from creating overly general resolutions that are difficult to assess, to lack of self will, to external or environmental factors.[23]

Resolvers typically meet with limited success. One study that tracked two years of resolvers found that just over half of adults with a resolution maintained it for the first month, 40% maintained their resolution for six months, and 19% for two years. Twenty-three percent of resolvers were unable to maintain their resolutions even for the first week of the New Year.[24] This is not to say that resolutions themselves are the problem; instead, working toward goal completion in general is typically a challenge for those who set them, and these completion rates are still greater than those who do not set resolutions at all.

Despite the low achievement numbers, adults in the United States continue to make and work toward New Year's resolutions. One reason for this is that working toward a resolution simply makes some people feel good, as making progress toward a New Year's resolution can positively affect a person's overall demeanor. As described in a study by Koestner et al., "1-month progress on New Year's resolutions was marginally associated with increased positive affect and decreased negative affect."[25]

Though achievement rates seem slim, one study shows that New Year's resolutions do have a higher completion rate by those who adopt them in contrast to those who simply desire to make a change: "the success rate of resolutions is approximately ten times higher than the success rate of adults desiring to change their behavior but not making a resolution."[26]

Methods
Participants

To reach a range of individuals employed at various levels, and at all library types, an invitation to the survey was distributed to the targeted professional library email LISTSERVS (see Appendix B). The invitation included an explanation of the survey, a statement of the goal of the project, and a hyperlink to the survey. The survey (see Appendix A), which was administered online through Qualtrics, was active between February 1 and February 26, 2016. Of the 577 total respondents, 512 completed the survey. Participation in the survey was voluntary and no financial incentives were provided. At the end of the survey, respondents were asked if they would be interested in participating in follow up studies. Only respondents who answered yes were asked to provide their email addresses. To protect respondents' confidentiality, all identifying information was stripped from responses before analysis, leaving no way to tie responses to a particular email address.

Survey Design

The survey questionnaire began with a screening question requiring respondents to indicate their age. Respondents who were under 21 years old were directed to a thank-you message and the end of the survey. The research design of this study was nonexperimental. It sought to examine the relationships of library employees' attitudes towards setting goals for the new year and their behavior contributing toward the outcome of their goals, as well as their outlook on life and demographic characteristics (such as age, gender, position in their organization, and the level of their education).

Results
Demographic Data

The survey identified respondents' current positions at their libraries, and the types of library at which they are employed. Of the 279 responses, 52% (n = 146) indicated that they were in "Professional Librarian" positions, followed by "Middle Management" (18%; n = 55), Para-Professional Staff (10%; n = 28), "Senior Administration" (8%, n = 22), and "Professional Staff" (8%, n = 21). A small percentage, 3% (n = 7) indicated "Other," which includes part time workers, and student employees.

Most of the respondents worked in academic libraries (58%, n = 162). The second largest group worked in public libraries (31%, n = 86), followed by those in school libraries (5%, n = 13), and special libraries (1%, n = 4). Fourteen respondents (5.02%) selected "Other".

Do Library Employees set New Year's Resolutions?

A total of 280 individuals responded to the opening question, asking respondents to indicate if they had made any New Year's resolutions for the previous year, 2015. Forty-eight percent of respondents answered "No" (n = 134). Respondents who selected "Yes" (n = 146)

were asked a follow up question of whether they accomplished all of their 2015 New Year's resolutions, to which 26% (n = 38) answered "Yes", 38% (n = 55) selected "No, but I tried quite hard," 32% (n = 46) selected "No, but I kind of tried," and 5% (n = 7) said, "No, I gave up quite quickly." These distributions are shown in figure 1 and figure 2.

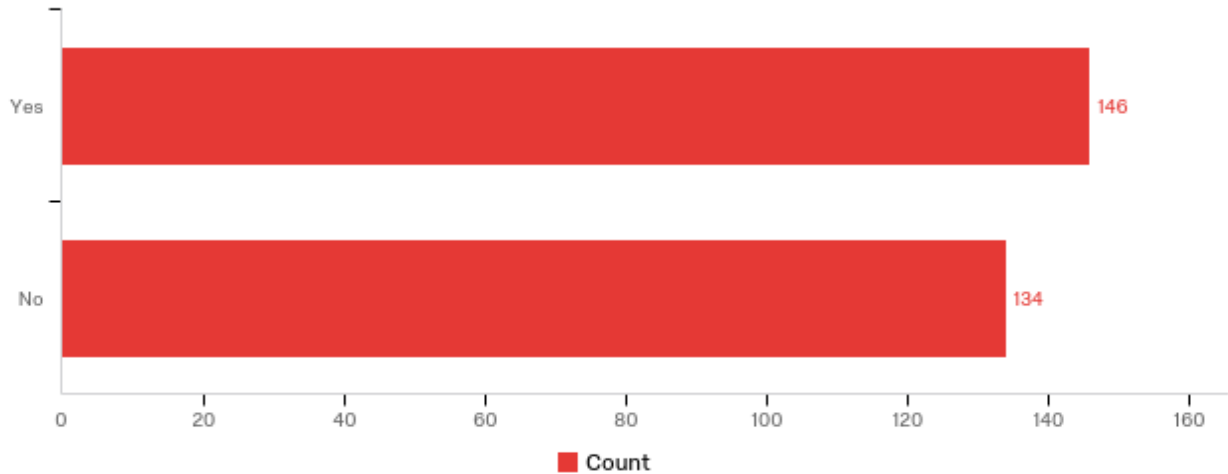Q3 - Did you set any new year's resolutions for 2015?
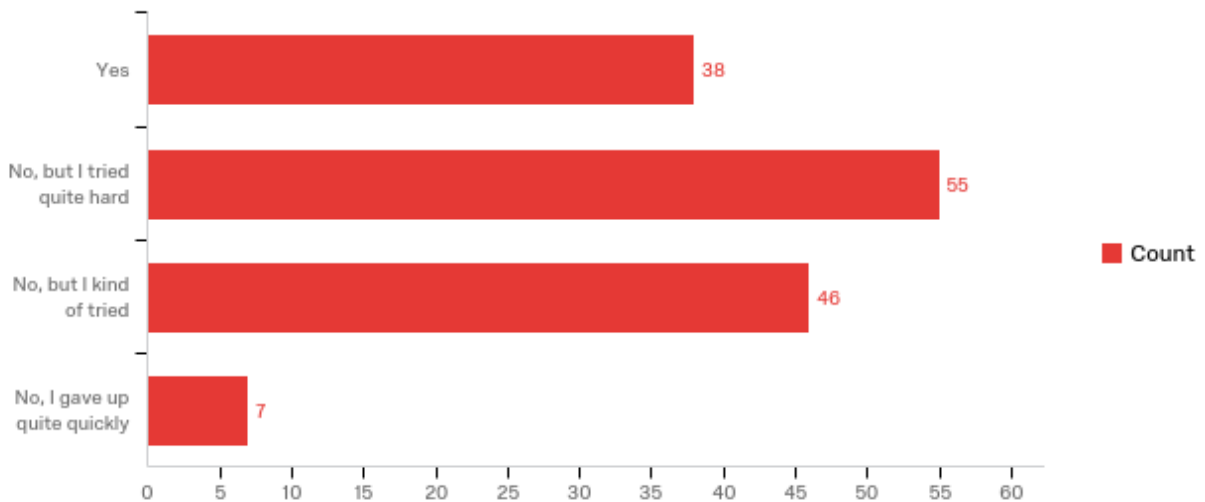

Figure 1

Q4 - Did you accomplish all of your 2015 new year's resolutions?

Figure 2

When asked if they had made any New Year's resolutions for the current year at the time of the survey, 2016, higher number of respondents answered "Yes" (66%, n = 184) than for the previous year (52%, n = 148). Ninety-six respondents (34%) did not make any New Year's resolutions for 2016. The distribution is shown in figure 3.
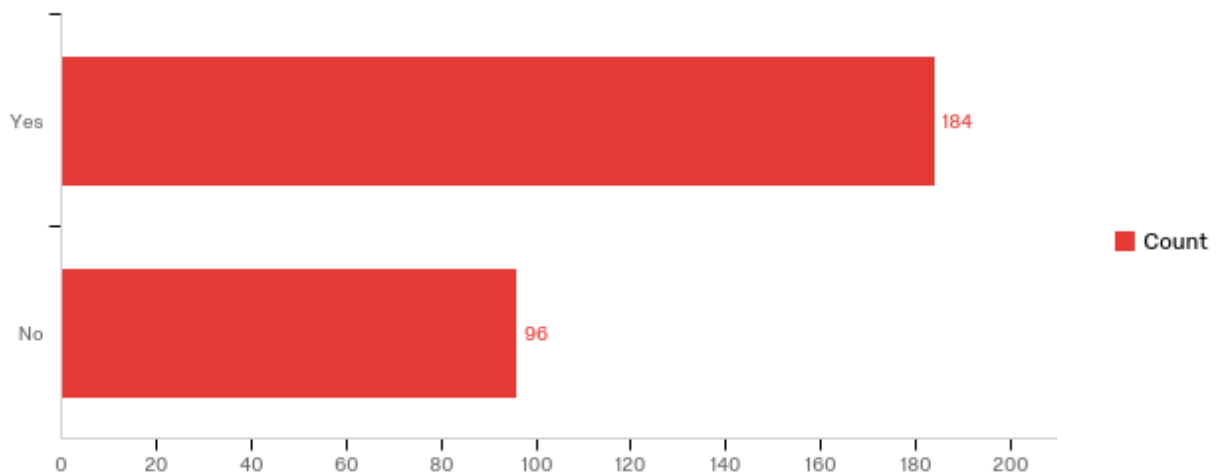
Q13 - Did you set any new year's resolutions for 2016?

Figure 3

The researchers were interested in finding out if the respondent's top goal was "a part of a bigger, and/or more difficult, and/or a longer term goal". While 11% of the respondents said "No" (n =21), more than 88% (n = 163) of the respondents' top goal for 2016 was varying degrees part of something bigger, and/or more difficult, and/or longer term (figure 4).

Q19 - Is your top goal a part of a bigger, and/or more difficult, and/or a longer...
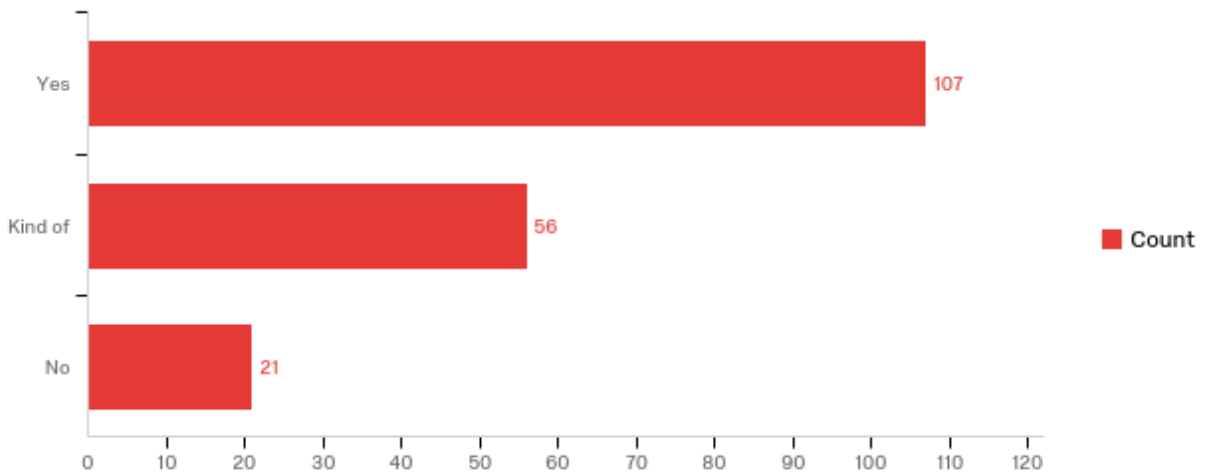
Figure 4

Goal-Setting Techniques

To learn about goal-setting techniques, respondents answered whether they had the habit of writing down their goals (figure 5), as well as how often they succeeded in achieving these written-down goals (figure 6).

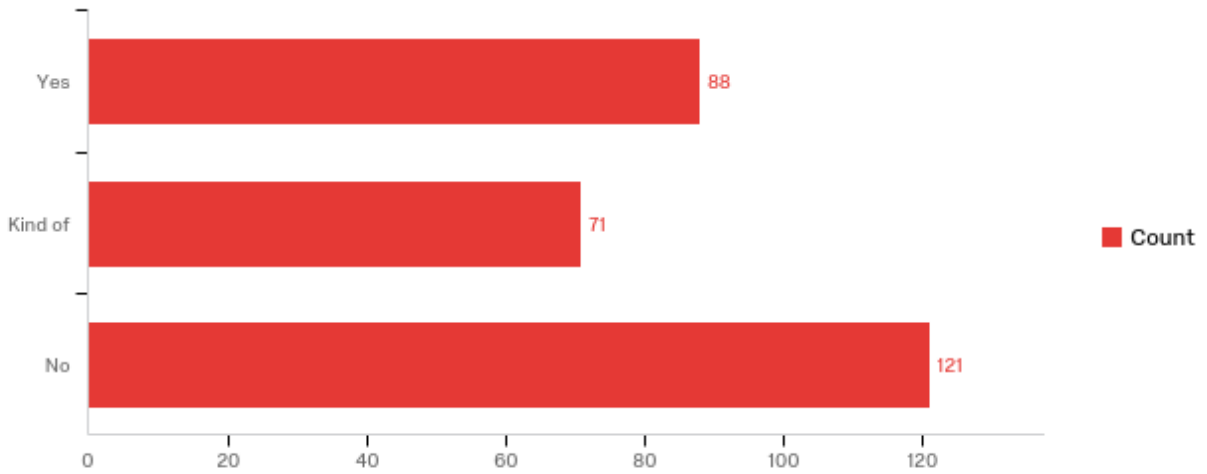## Q22 - Do you have a habit of writing down your goals?

Figure 5

Q23 - What percentage of your written goals do you usually achieve?
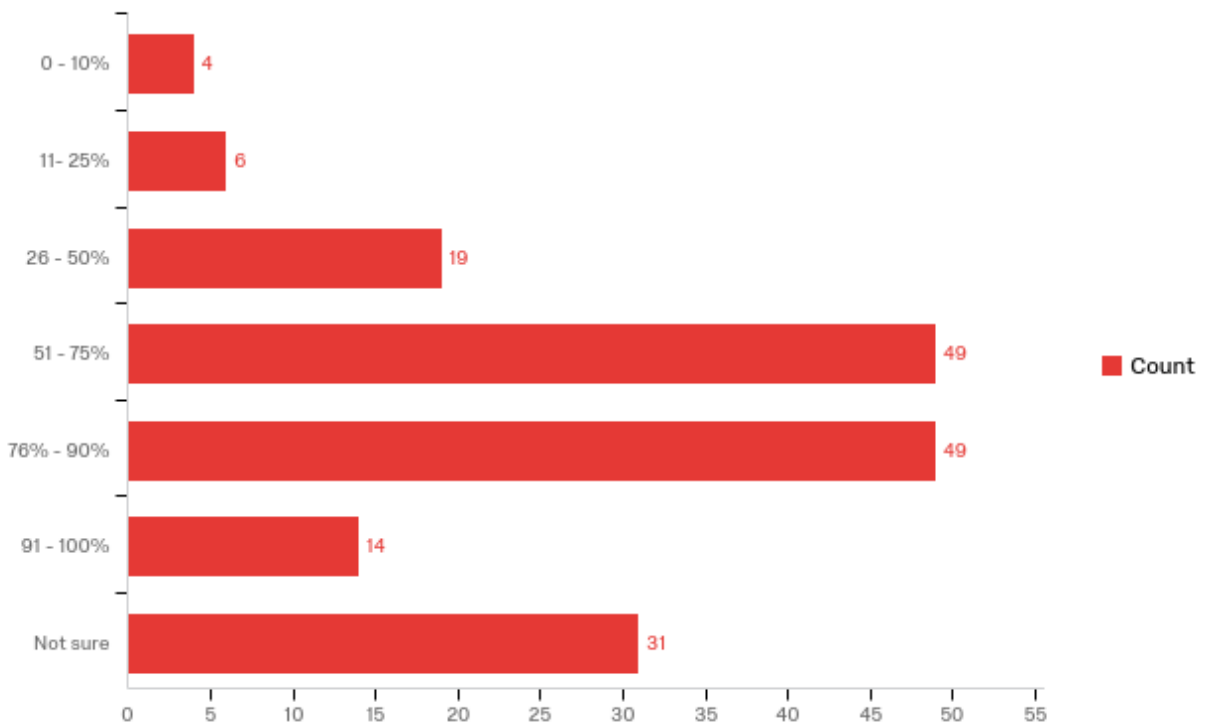

Figure 6

Respondents also answered whether they employed several popular goal-setting techniques in helping them to achieve their goals. Even though more than half of all the respondents had some habit of writing down goals, only about one-third of the respondents (38%, n = 69) wrote down their top goals for 2016. However, about two-thirds of them (68%, n = 125) shared their top goal with another person. Most of the respondents (98%, n = 180) had some kind of a plan to achieve their top goals (figure 7).
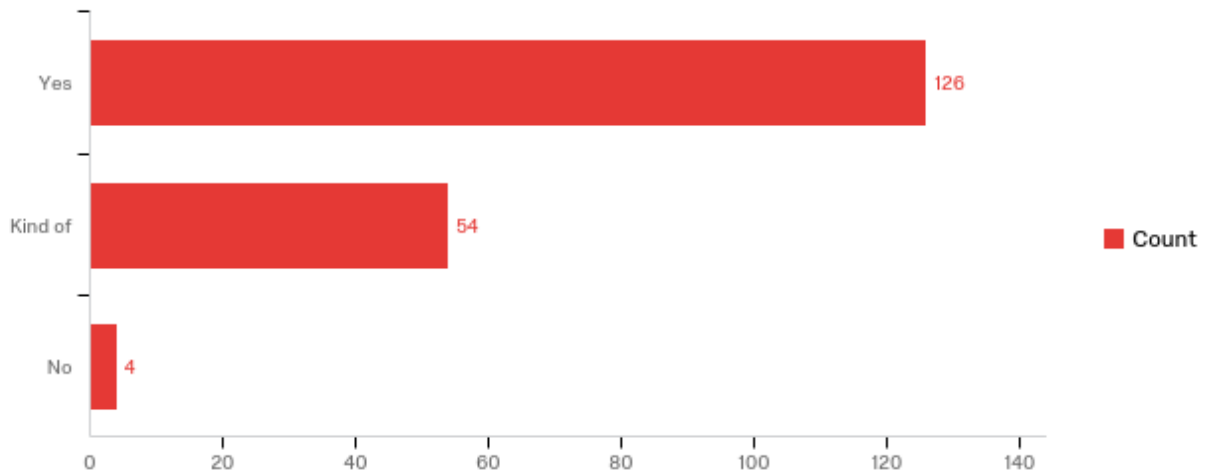
Q20 - Do you have a plan to achieve your top goal?

Figure 7

Most of the respondents had a positive outlook on achieving their goals, with 39% thinking that they were "Very Likely" to achieve their top goals, and 45% (n = 83) thinking that it was "Somewhat Likely" that they would achieve their top goals (figure 8).

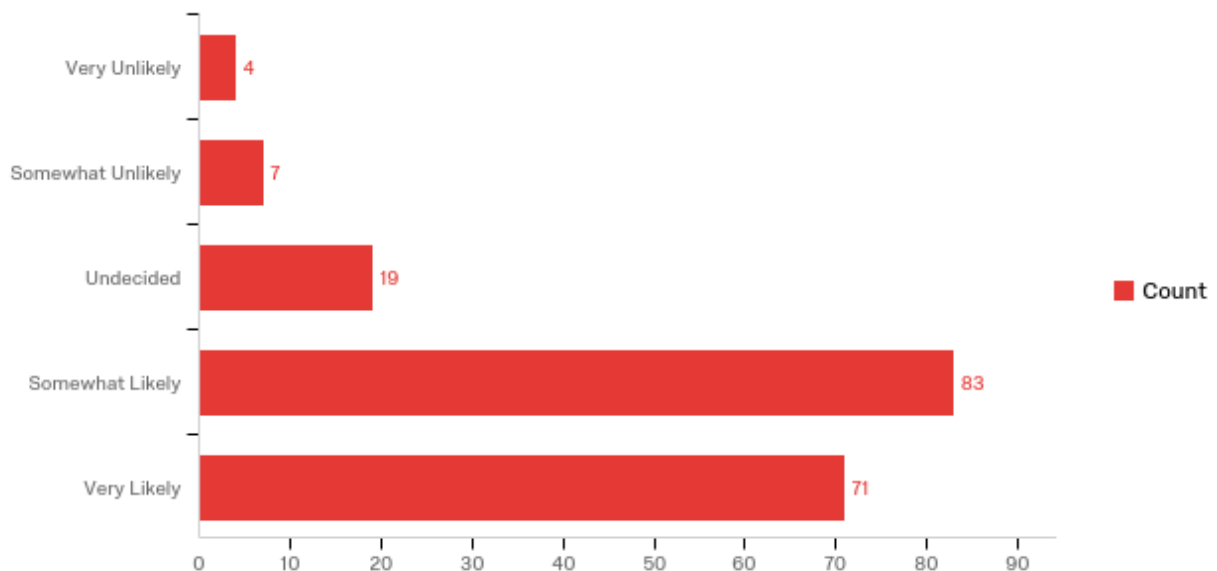Q24 - How likely do you think you will achieve your top goal for 2016?

Figure 8

Even though most of the respondents thought that they were somewhat likely or very likely achieve their goals, it was not because they felt their goals were easy. In fact, more than 77% (n = 143) of the respondents rated their goals as either somewhat or very difficult. Similar to the numbers of those who felt their goals were difficult were those who felt their goals were important; more than 75% (n = 139) of the respondents felt that their top goals were either extremely or very important to them. About the same percentage of the respondents (76%, n = 140) prioritized their top goals as either "essential" or "high priority".

Why Did Some Respondents Not Set any New Year's Resolutions?

For the respondents who did not make any New Year's resolutions for 2016, the researchers asked them for their reasons. The survey provided five reasons as choices, but more than half of the respondents (51%, n = 49) selected the sixth choice, "Other," and provided their answers in the open text box. A quarter of the respondents (n = 24) said that the thought did not occur to them, while 9% (n = 9) were afraid that they would not be able to achieve the goal, 8% (n = 8) did not think they would have time for new goals, and 6% (n = 6) did not think that setting goals was important. Interestingly, none of the respondents selected "I did not know how to set goals" as a reason for not setting a New Year's resolutions for 2016.

For the respondents who selected "other" and provided their reasons, several themes emerged. The most common reason was that they did not place any significance on the New Year date as a starting point for goals or resolutions. "I set goals year around. Goals set only on Jan 1 are goals that can easily be lost," one respondent answered. Another respondent answered, "I set goals whenever the need arises and don't wait for the beginning of the calendar year to do so." Some found it more likely to be successful by not setting resolutions at the New Year: "I can set goals for myself anytime during the year. More likely to succeed if it's something I want to do, rather than feel like 'I have to' do because a 'new year' told me to."

Some respondents focused on their work or professional goals, and those tended to be set at the beginning of the fiscal year instead of the calendar year. One respondent explained, "Work goals are set at the beginning of the fiscal year, so my goals were set in July." Another respondent picked other more strategic dates: "I set goals all the time. I am a huge advocate of goal setting. I just think that the New Year is a totally random date, and I would prefer to set my goals at a more strategic time, such as at the start of a new academic year or right after my annual review."

Some respondents saw the New Year's resolutions as a year-long project, and would rather set shorter term goals. "I think it's better to set many small goals that can be accomplished in a few months than one big goal for the year. more realistic." Another respondent answered, "I find a year to be too long of a time frame for working on concrete goals."

Some respondents did not like the term New Year's resolutions. "I pick other occasions on which to set goals, and generally do not refer to them as New Year's resolutions. I do set goals personally and professionally, but not as "resolutions", one respondent explained.

Finally, some respondents simply had a negative attitude towards setting New Year's resolutions. One respondent claimed, "I don't believe in the 'New Year resolution'; it is a set-up for failure and guilt." Another said, "New Year's resolutions are dumb. You should be goal setting year-round." And another reasoned, "I think it is a waste of time. Society perpetuates this notion that we MUST set goals in order to be happy and accepted."

The researchers were interested in finding out whether a respondent's outlook on life and career have any influence on their goal-setting attitude and behavior. Respondents were asked to characterize their sense of purpose in life. Of 280 respondents, about half were somewhat clear (50%, n = 141) and 30% selected "very clear" (n = 83). Small numbers of respondents had neither clear nor unclear, somewhat unclear, or very unclear sense of purpose in life. The distribution is shown in figure 9.

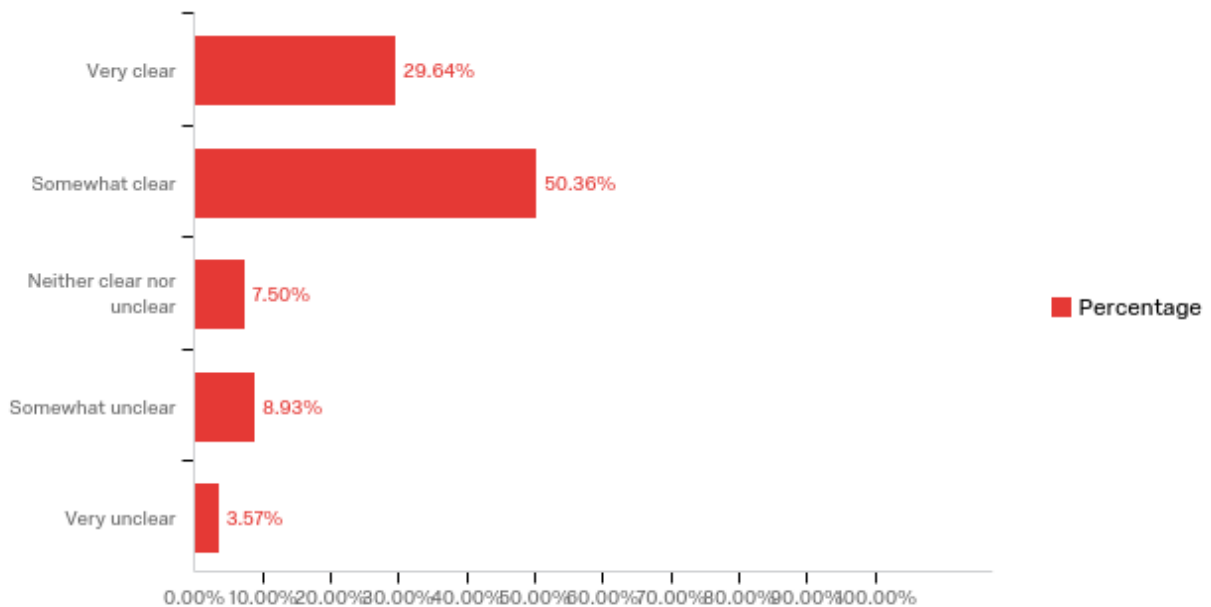Q5 - How would you characterize your sense of purpose in life?

Figure 9

Respondents were asked to characterize their outlook in life. Once again, the majority were positive; 29% (n = 80) selected "very optimistic," and 51% (n = 144) selected "somewhat optimistic." See figure 10.

The researchers were interested in the competitiveness of the respondents. Only 13% (n=35) claimed to be "very competitive." The most respondents selected "somewhat competitive" (45%, n = 127), followed by "neither competitive nor noncompetitive" (24%, n = 35). See figure 11.

Respondents were asked about their career outlook. Most respondents said that they were "somewhat ambitious" (58%, n = 161). About equal number of respondents selected "very ambitious" (18%, n = 51) and "neither ambitious nor unambitious" (19%, n = 53). See figure 12.
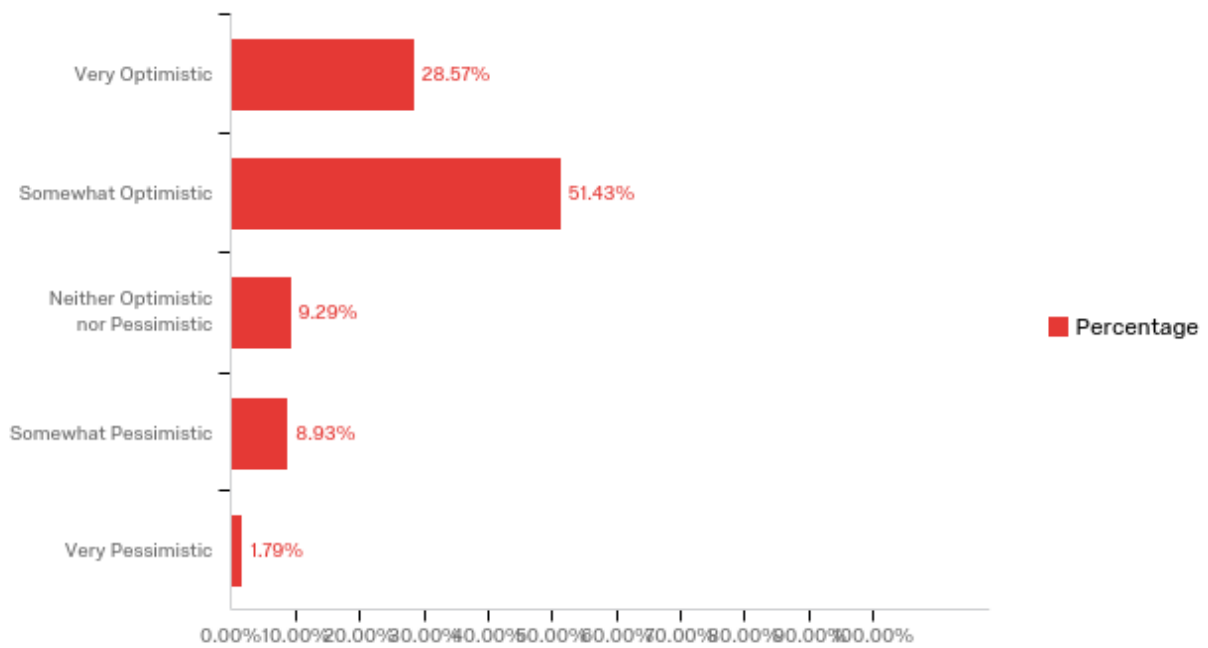
Q28 - How would you characterize your outlook in life?

Figure 10

Q29 - Which of the following statement best describe you?
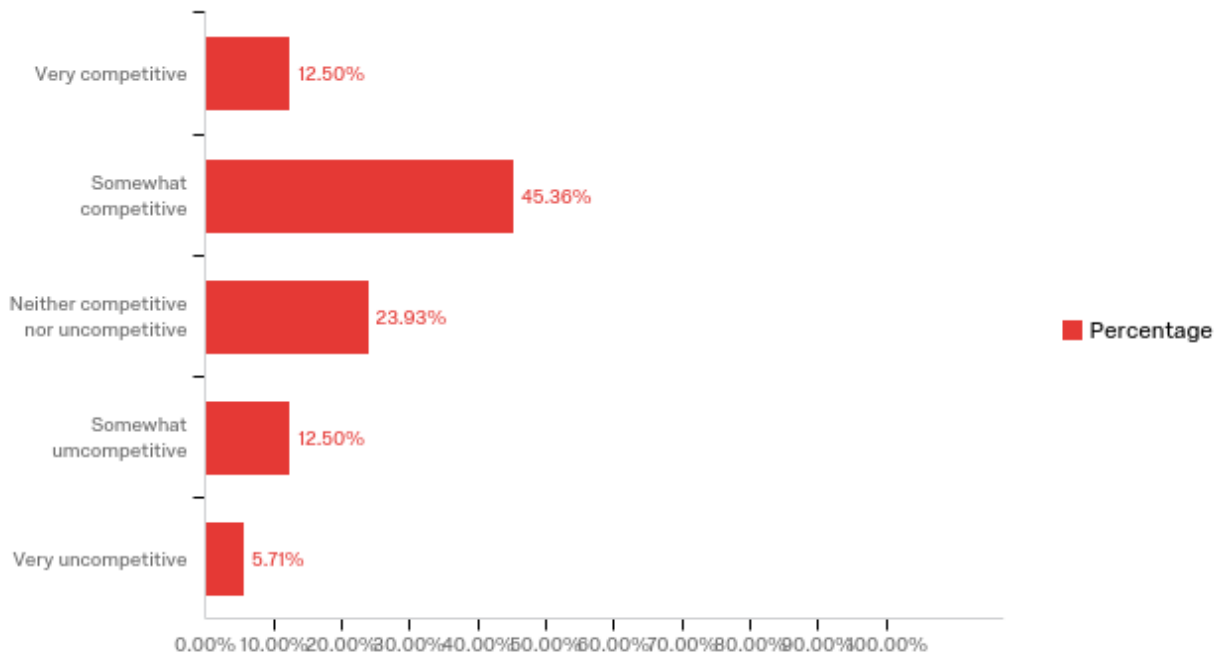

Figure 11

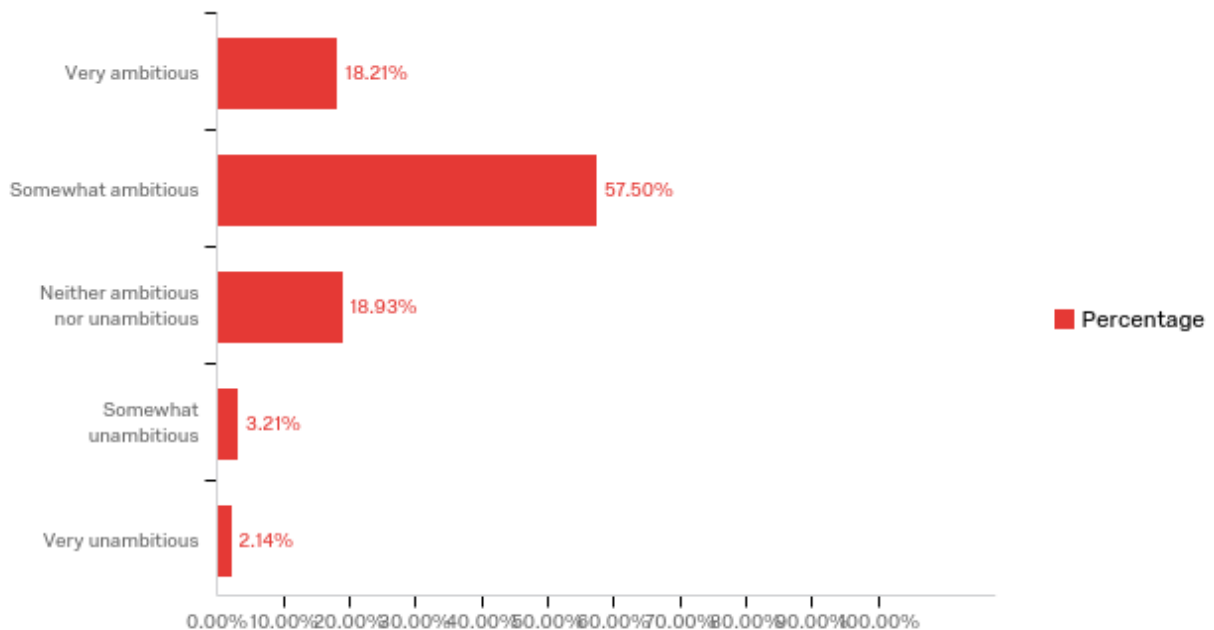Q30 - Which of the following best describe your career outlook?

Figure 12

Data Analysis

The data reveal that the respondents' career outlook has significant associations with their goal-setting behavior, achievement, and techniques. Chi-square statistical analysis shows that there are statistically significant relationships between their career outlook and whether they accomplished all of their 2015 goals ($X2$ (12, N = 228) = 0.03, P = .05); and whether they set any 2016 goals ($X2$ (4, N = 511) = 0.04, P = .05). Of the respondents who set goals for 2016 (n = 281), 77% (n = 217) of them reported that they were somewhat or very ambitious. Comparatively, a lower percentage (68%, n = 156) of those who did not set goals for 2016 (n = 230) claimed to be somewhat or very ambitious. And overall, more ambitious library employees have higher rates of success in accomplishing their goals, as Chi-square statistical analysis shows that there is a statistically significant relationship ($X2$ (24, N = 298) = 0.03, P = .05) between the respondents' ambitiousness and their overall rate of successfully accomplishing their goals.

Ambitious respondents also displayed a tendency to set 2016 goals to be part of bigger and/or more difficult goals, and/or longer term goals. Chi-square statistical analysis shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between their career outlook and whether their 2016 goals were part of something bigger, more difficult and/or longer term ($X2$ (8, N = 281) = 0.01, P = .05). Many more of the somewhat and very ambitious respondents (see the distribution in figure 13) answered a definitive "yes" to the question than those who reported to be less ambitious (see figure 14).

Q19 - Is your top goal a part of a bigger, and/or more difficult, and/or a longer...
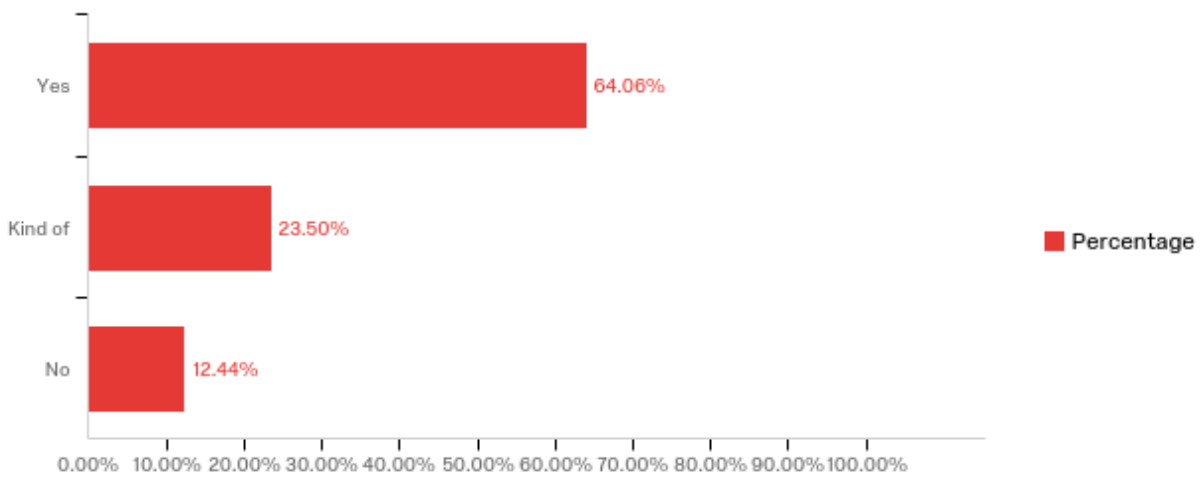

Figure 13

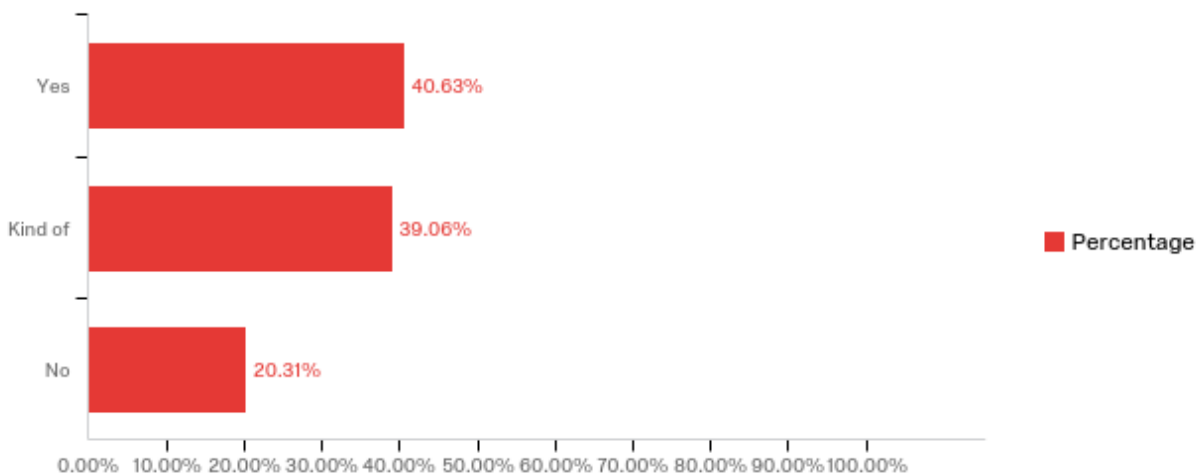Q19 - Is your top goal a part of a bigger, and/or more difficult, and/or a longer...

Figure 14

When asked whether they had a plan to achieve their top 2016 goal, a much higher percentage of the ambitious respondents answered a definitive "yes" than the less ambitious ones. Over two third of ambitious respondents had a plan; while only 53% of the neutral and unambitious groups did. Chi-square statistical analysis confirms that there is a statistically significant relationship ($X2$ (8, N = 281) = 0.01, P = .05) between their ambitiousness and whether they had a plan to achieve their top 2016 goals.

The ambitious respondents were also much more likely to make small or big changes in their daily routine in order to achieve their top 2016 goals, as Chi-square statistical analysis reveals a statistically significant relationship ($X2$ (8, N = 281) = 0.05, P = .05) between their

ambitiousness and whether they made changes in their daily routine. One hundred percent of all very ambitious respondents (n = 45) made small changes (78%, n = 35) or big changes (22%, n = 10) in their daily routines. Comparatively, over one-fifth (22%) of the neutral and unambitious groups (n = 64) did not make any changes in their daily routines to in order to accomplish their top 2016 goals.

Self-reported ambitious respondents also utilized common goal-setting best practices, such as sharing with another and writing goals down, more than the less ambitious respondents. Chi-square statistical analysis confirms that there is a statistically significant relationship ($X2$ (4, N = 281) = 0.02, P = .05) of the ambitiousness of the respondents between whether they shared their top 2016 goals with anyone. Chi-square statistical analysis confirms that there is a statistically significant relationship ($X2$ (8, N = 511) = 0.01, P = .05) between the ambitiousness of the respondents and whether they had the habit of writing down their goals.

Our findings indicate that ambitious library employees tend to have a clearer sense of purpose. Chi-square statistical analysis confirms that there is a statistically significant relationship ($X2$ (16, N = 511) = 0.00, P = .05) between the two variables. In addition, ambitious library employees tend to rate themselves as more competitive. Chi-square statistical analysis confirms that there is a statistically significant relationship ($X2$ (16, N = 511) = 0.03, P = .05) between the respondents' ambitiousness and competitiveness.

Chi-square statistical analysis confirms that there is a statistically significant relationship ($X2$ (12, N = 228) = 0.01, P = .05) between the respondents' sense of purpose in life and the effort they put in whether they accomplished their 2015 goals. Respondents who were somewhat unclear or very unclear with their sense of purpose in life tended to put in less effort or gave up more than those who have a clearer sense of purpose. Sixty-eight percent of those who reported to have somewhat clear sense of purpose either put in little effort, or gave up their 2015 resolutions. Eighty percent of those who had unclear sense of purpose put in little effort. On the other hand, only 23% of those with very clear sense of purpose either put in little effort or gave up quickly in 2015. Furthermore, the clearer their sense of purpose, the more likely the respondent would have the habit of writing down their goals.

Respondents who did not consider themselves competitive were less likely to have a plan to achieve their goals. Chi-square statistical analysis shows that there is a statistically significant relationship ($X2$ (8, N = 282) = 0.00, P = .05) between competitiveness and respondents have a plan. While 71% (n = 24) of those who were very competitive and 67% (n = 86) of those who were somewhat competitive had plans to achieve their goals, only 55% (n=22) of those who considered themselves somewhat uncompetitive and 25% (n=4) of those who were uncompetitive had a definite plan.

Of the respondents who considered achieving the top goal extremely important, 74% of them reported that that goal was part of a bigger/more difficult/or longer term goal. And of the respondents who considered their top goal for 2016 only moderately or slightly important, 82% of them did not considered that goal part of a bigger/more difficult/or longer term goal. Chi-square statistical analysis shows that there is a statistically significant relationship ($X2$ (8, N = 282) = 0.00, P = .05) between "how important is achieving your top goal for 2016" and "is it part of a bigger goal/longer term goal/more difficult goal?" This finding illustrates the importance of aligning smaller goals with bigger goal, or a vision.

The less important a goal was to the respondent, the less likely they were to change their daily routine. Chi-square statistical analysis shows that there is a statistically significant

relationship ($X2$ (8, N = 282) = 0.01, P = .05) between "how important is achieving your top goal for 2016" and whether the respondents made changes to their daily routines. Of the 81 respondents who considered the top goal extremely important, 25% of them made big changes in their daily routine, and 67.9% of them made small changes. Only 7% did not make any changes. Comparatively, of those who considered the top goal only moderately important (n=63), 27% did not make any changes to their daily routine. The more important a goal was to the respondent, the more likely they felt they would succeed, as there is a statistically significant relationship ($X2$ (16, N = 282) = 0.01, P = .05) between "how important is achieving your top goal for 2016" and "how likely they felt they could would achieve their top goal."

Discussion

Twenty-six percent (n = 38) of the respondents who set New Year's resolutions for 2015 did report that they successfully accomplished their top resolutions. One possible explanation could be that the sample population was biased towards people who displayed traits of being accomplished in their professional lives. The sample consisted of mainly highly educated professionals, with many having already completed multiple degrees. In addition, library employees who chose to take part in the study likely already had a vested interest in the topic; people who did not have any interest on the topic probably did not respond to the invitation.

Even within this sample population of professionals, there were differences in their career outlooks, which in turn reveals many associations with their goal-setting attitude and behavior. The data analysis shows that ambitious respondents were more likely to set goals and achieve them. It conforms to conventional wisdom that ambitious people would be more likely to set goals and develop plans to achieve those goals in order to fulfil their ambitions. If that is the case, it could be argued that ambitious people would make better employees because they would likely set and achieve their professional goals, and therefore help their organizations to become more successful. If this argument is true, then it would be beneficial for organizations to identify and recruit ambitious people, develop ambitious employees, and help them create better goals.

However, as these are not necessarily causal relationships, could it also be the other way around? Does setting goals and working toward goals make you become more ambitious? By setting and achieving goals, the respondents receive a flood of dopamine, feel good, want to achieve more goals, and develop a strong desire and determination to succeed, which is the definition of being ambitious.[27] If so, then employees that are aided by their organizations to set and achieve their goals are likely to increase their satisfaction when they accomplish these goals, and by repeating the behavior, they might become more ambitious. In order for organizations to gain from this development, employees must work toward measurable, achievable goals.

Purpose drives and motivates people. Respondents with a clear sense of purpose in life were less likely to give up on their goals than those with less clear sense of purpose. In many ways, having a clear sense of purpose is similar to having a clear vision. The key word here is "clear," meaning that the respondents should be able to articulate and therefore have a clear understanding of their goals, purpose and motivation. As the data confirm, the clearer the respondents' sense of purpose, the more likely they would have the habit of writing down their goals. Therefore, to train library employees to be more goal-oriented, it is necessary to also train them to develop and be able to articulate their overall purpose in life, which could be the motivation for them be more resilient in working to achieve their goals.

Many respondents who did not set New Year's resolutions because they did not place any importance of the arbitrary date of January 1st would rather set goals as the needs arise. Similarly, many organizations have employees set their performance objectives at certain fixed time of the year, which might not be productive to the people who do not work this way. A possible solution would be for organizations to have more flexibility in terms of the timing of setting performance objectives. Perhaps letting employees set goals when their own need arises would result in better success.

Recommendations for Future Research

This survey asked library employees to self-report about their activities from just a two-year period. Interesting data could be obtained by continuing to follow up with survey participants over the course multiple years to obtain longitudinal data about their goal setting behavior and achievement both personally and professionally. Further work should also be done to determine how different types of goals associate with respondents' goal setting strategies and success rate; and at different stages of their lives.

Conclusion

Library employees' personal and professional outlooks have strong assocations with their goal-setting tendency, habits, and success. To take advantage of this insight, we recommend that library administration develop strategies to better understand library staff's personal values, vision, and goals in order to help them align with the organization's larger goals. As ambitiousness is a strong indicator of whether people set and achieve their goals, it would make sense to cultivate ambitiousness in the existing workforce, and provide opportunities to set and achieve goals for those who are not driven to do that on their own. In addition, administration might provide more options in professional goal-setting, such as allowing employees to set goals at the most beneficial time to them, and not just once a year at a fixed time frame. Library employees who participated in this study indicated that they are goal-oriented, and much can be done to both encourage and support their goal-setting behaviors in the library workplace.

Amelia Anderson (amanders@odu.edu) is an assistant professor in the Darden College of Education and Professional Studies at Old Dominion University

Leo Lo (llo@odu.edu) is Associate University Librarian at Old Dominion University

References

[1] American Medical Association, *New Year's resolution survey* (American Medical Association, 1995), Epcot Poll, *Resolutions not kept long by most Americans* (Lake Buena Vista, FL: Walt Disney World, 1985).

[2] G. Alan Marlatt and Burt E. Kaplan, "Self-initiated attempts to change behavior: A study of New Year's resolutions," *Psychological Reports* 30, no. 1 (1972): 123-131; John C. Norcross,

Albert C. Ratzin, and Dorothy Payne, "Ringing in the New Year: The change processes and reported outcomes of resolutions," *Addictive Behaviors* 14, no. 2 (1989): 205-212.

3 Sadowski, Elizabeth, and Sarina Schrager. "Achieving career satisfaction: personal goal setting and prioritizing for the clinician educator." *Journal of graduate medical education* 8, no. 4 (2016): 494-497.

4 Richard Koestner, Natasha Lekes, Theodore A. Powers, and Emanuel Chicoine, "Attaining personal goals: Self-concordance plus implementation intentions equals success," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 83, no. 1 (2002); Barry J. Zimmerman, Albert Bandura, and Manuel Martinez-Pons, "Self-motivation for academic attainment: The role of self-efficacy beliefs and personal goal setting," *American Educational Research Journal* 29, no. 3 (Autumn 1992).

5 Ralph Ryback, "The science of accomplishing your goals," last modified October 3, 2016, accessed April 11, 2018, from https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-truisms-wellness/201610/the-science-accomplishing-your-goals.

6 Aline D. Masuda, Thomas D. Kane, Carol F. Shoptaugh, and Katherine A. Minor, "The role of a vivid and challenging personal vision in goal hierarchies," *The Journal of Psychology* 144, no. 3 (2010): 222.

7 Richard Koestner, Natasha Lekes, Theodore A. Powers, and Emanuel Chicoine, "Attaining personal goals: Self-concordance plus implementation intentions equals success," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 83, no. 1 (2002): 231.

8 Aline D. Masuda, Thomas D. Kane, Carol F. Shoptaugh, and Katherine A. Minor, "The role of a vivid and challenging personal vision in goal hierarchies," *The Journal of Psychology* 144, no. 3 (2010): 223.

9 Jay A. Conger and Rabindra N. Kanungo, "Toward a behavioral theory of charismatic leadership in organizational settings," *Academy of Management Review* 12, no. 4 (1987): 637-647.

10 Albert Bandura, *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control* (Macmillan, 1997).

11 Aline D. Masuda, Thomas D. Kane, Carol F. Shoptaugh, and Katherine A. Minor, "The role of a vivid and challenging personal vision in goal hierarchies," *The Journal of Psychology* 144, no. 3 (2010): 226-227.

12 Christopher Day et al., "The personal and professional selves of teachers: Stable and unstable identities," *British Educational Research Journal* 32, no. 4 (2006): 603.

13 Sandra Acker, *Realities of Teachers' Work: Never a Dull Moment* (A&C Black, 1999); Stephen J. Ball and Ivor F. Goodson, "Understanding teachers: Concepts and contexts," *Teachers' Lives and Careers* (London: Falmer Press, 1985), 1-26; Day et al., "The personal and professional selves of teachers: Stable and unstable identities," 601-616; Andy Hargreaves and Ivor Goodson, "Teachers' professional lives: Aspirations and actualities," *Teachers' Professional Lives* (London: Falmer Press, 1996), 27; Geert Kelchtermans and

Roland Vandenberghe, "Teachers' professional development: A biographical perspective," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 26, no. 1 (1994): 45-62.

[14] Richard Koestner, Natasha Lekes, Theodore A. Powers, and Emanuel Chicoine, "Attaining personal goals: Self-concordance plus implementation intentions equals success," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 83, no. 1 (2002): 237.

[15] Leo S. Lo and Bethany Herman, "An Investigation of Factors Impacting the Wellness of Academic Library Employees," *College & Research Libraries* 78, no. 6 (2017): 803.

[16] Barry J. Zimmerman, Albert Bandura, and Manuel Martinez-Pons, "Self-motivation for academic attainment: The role of self-efficacy beliefs and personal goal setting," *American Educational Research Journal* 29, no. 3 (Autumn 1992): 663-676.

[17] Barry J. Zimmerman, Albert Bandura, and Manuel Martinez-Pons, "Self-motivation for academic attainment: The role of self-efficacy beliefs and personal goal setting," *American Educational Research Journal* 29, no. 3 (Autumn 1992): 664.

[18] Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2013).

[19] Amy Gallo, "Making Sure Your Employees Succeed," *Harvard Business Review*, last modified February 7, 2011, accessed April 27, 2018, https://hbr.org/2011/02/making-sure-your-employees-suc.

[20] Barbara Braxton, "Setting S.M.A.R.T. goals for the school library (strategy)," *Teacher Librarian* 30, no. 4 (2003): 45.

[21] Leo S. Lo and Bethany Herman, "An Investigation of Factors Impacting the Wellness of Academic Library Employees," *College & Research Libraries* 78, no. 6 (2017): 789.

[22] Edwin A. Locke and Gary P. Latham, "New directions in goal-setting theory," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 15, no. 5 (2006): 265.

[23] Marlatt and Kaplan, "Self-initiated attempts to change behavior: A study of New Year's resolutions," 123-131; John C. Norcross and Dominic J. Vangarelli, "The resolution solution: Longitudinal examination of New Year's change attempts," *Journal of Substance Abuse* 1, no. 2 (1988): 127-134.

[24] Norcross, John C., and Dominic J. Vangarelli. "The resolution solution: Longitudinal examination of New Year's change attempts." *Journal of Substance Abuse* 1, no. 2 (1988): 132.

[25] John C. Norcross, Marci S. Mrykalo, and Matthew D. Blagys, "Auld lang Syne: Success predictors, change processes, and self-reported outcomes of New Year's resolvers and nonresolvers," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 58, no. 4 (2002): 404.

[26] Richard Koestner, Natasha Lekes, Theodore A. Powers, and Emanuel Chicoine, "Attaining personal goals: Self-concordance plus implementation intentions equals success," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 83, no. 1 (2002): 231-244.

[27] Ralph Ryback, "The science of accomplishing your goals," last modified October 3, 2016, accessed April 11, 2018, from https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-truisms-wellness/201610/the-science-accomplishing-your-goals.