

Reaching Your Goals

Getting started may be easier than you think

BY GREG COOLEY, SR/WA

I have found that in the sports training I do to stay healthy, I tend to stay on the couch more often when I don't have a fitness goal or race to motivate me. The same holds true for professional development.

We all need to goals to keep us headed in the right direction. So where do you stand in your professional development realm? Have you been on the couch? Whether a new or longtime member of IRWA, perhaps you have not thought about declaring your candidacy for a designation or certification. On the other hand, maybe you have established your end goal, but haven't yet formalized it by submitting the candidacy forms or plotting your course requirements to get there.

Getting started may be easier than you think. Following are some ideas that may assist you in prioritizing what training is needed first and in charting your professional development journey.

TAKE AN INVENTORY

I suggest creating an informal self-inventory to help establish where you are and identify where you want to go. Be honest. Think about your career strengths and the skills you are working to develop. Define which areas need further development. Think about your interpersonal skills and rate yourself on how well you communicate with your coworkers when explaining technical issues and project goals. Are you a good listener when a landowner is expressing their concerns? If you have taken IRWA courses, make a list and include dates.

UPDATE YOUR PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Dig out your most recent resume and update your work experience. Add relevant highlights of your responsibilities and major accomplishments. Identify past jobs that contributed to your right of way expertise, and if they are not on your resume, include some of the skills you used in those roles.



DEFINE THE EXPECTATIONS

Do you have a clear idea about the tasks or responsibilities your supervisor expects performance on today and in the future? If not, have a conversation with them and review your company's policies to better understand the support they might offer toward your professional development. Be prepared to identify how you will have skin in the game.

CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITIES

Consider the different credentialing opportunities through IRWA that align with your goals. The "Credentialing" section on IRWA's website (www.irwaonline.org) outlines the two career paths available to right of way professionals. One is a generalist path and the other is a specialist path. The website is a great resource for helping you identify the coursework and work experience in right of way that is needed to achieve the certification goals you have established. In turn, with a sense of direction, I encourage you to share your course needs with your Chapter's Education Chair so the chapter can help you get where you want to go. Then seriously consider completing a candidacy form for certification and send it to your chapter Professional Development Committee Chair for processing.

I hope that this information helps you get off the couch by defining what is needed to further advance toward your professional development goals. As questions arise, you should know that your Chapter's officers and members are ready to offer any assistance needed.



Greg is a Senior Real Estate Representative with the Minnesota Department of Transportation.