

## SETTING AND COMMUNICATING OBJECTIVES IN BASKETBALL VERSUS BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS

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**ABSTRACT.** Basketball and business organizations can be compared from various standpoints (organizational structure, type of teams, processes etc.). One such standpoint is regarding objective setting. By undergoing a literature review analysis on the topic of objective setting in basketball versus business organization, the author tried to answer the research question: “are there any differences in the way basketball and business organizations conduct their objective setting activities?” Considering this, the objective of this paper is to provide an insight into how objectives in basketball and business organizations are set, and if there are any similarities or differences in the way they conduct this activity. The results however, did not provide clear and sufficient information if there are any differences between how objectives are set and communicated in basketball versus business organizations. Furthermore, a simple literature review like this one cannot provide a clear answer to the research question, as the necessary information regarding objective setting in basketball organizations is, in most cases, not public or easily identifiable. Moreover, the author was not able to identify research on the topic of how exactly basketball organizations set their objectives or what criteria they take into consideration when setting these objectives. This proves the fact that topics like how basketball organization set their objectives for each season or what criteria they take into consideration when undergoing this activity could be considered relevant for a future and more detailed qualitative/quantitative research having as target group: basketball teams that play in the Euroleague/Romanian National Basketball League.

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## **Introduction**

Firstly, as stated in a previous article “*Basketball and business have always had a relationship, be it on the side of the club owners that also own and lead businesses or on the side of partnerships, endorsements or other marketing activities*” (Branga, 2021). Secondly, basketball and business organizations can be compared from various standpoints such as organizational structure and/or activities, marketing, and objective setting. The latter, the way objectives are set in basketball versus business organization, represents the topic of this article. Furthermore, the purpose of this paper is to provide an insight into how objectives in basketball and business organizations are set, and if there are any similarities or differences in the way they conduct this activity. In addition, this study will contribute to the further development of theory on the topic of objective setting especially in basketball organizations. The fact that this area is not sufficiently researched is a reason for why further research on this topic is needed. Considering this, the research objective and question for this article is to identify if there are any differences in the way basketball and business organizations conduct their objective setting activities.

## **Methodology**

First, the research philosophy chosen by the author for this article is critical realism. Based on this, the research type is inductive as the gathered data serves as basis for the theory. Second, the objective for this article was to provide an insight into how objectives in basketball and

business organizations are set, and if there are any similarities or differences in the way they conduct this activity. Third, concerning the time horizon, this is a cross-sectional study as the information researched was at one point in time (the moment the article was written). Regarding the information, the source of the data is external, secondary and multiple sourced (ex.: Organizations' websites, Journals, News websites, Media accounts etc.). Considering this, the research question for this article was *"are there any differences in the way basketball and business organizations conduct their objective setting activities?"* The research hypothesis is *"objective setting in basketball is conducted the same as in business organizations."*

## Literature Review

### *Objectives or goals?*

In basketball and business organizations, planning can be considered as one of the most important management activities. In this regard, according to Robbins & Coulter (2016) *"planning is often called the primary management function because it establishes the basis for all the other things managers do as they organize, lead, and control"*. More so, the two authors mention that planning *"involves two important aspects: goals and plans"* Robbins & Coulter (2016). As a definition of what goals are, the authors quote Molz who wrote, *"Goals are desired outcomes or targets"* Robbins & Coulter (2016). On the other hand, plans are defined, according to Robbins & Coulter (2016), as *"documents that outline how goals are going to be met"*. A similar opinion comes from Baker & Esherick (2013) who wrote, *"Planning involves developing organizational goals and objectives, then establishing the necessary methods, processes, and activities to attain those goals"*. Because this article analyzes objective setting in basketball versus business organizations, we will focus in the following sections only on objective setting and not on planning.

Regarding objectives, Witcher (2020) wrote, *"Objectives are strategically desired outcomes that must be managed effectively if the organization is to continue to fulfil its purpose"*. Moreover, Witcher (2020) underlines the idea that *"objectives must be meaningful and clear to the people who use them and linked to realistic measures of progress so that*

*those managing the objectives will know in enough time if it is necessary to intervene and make appropriate changes*". As can be observed in this last statement, the author analyzes the topic from a strategic management point of view. Similar to Witcher (2020), Hill et al. (2016) wrote, "A goal is a precise, measurable, desired future state that a company attempts to realize". In the same context, Wheelen et al. (2018) wrote, "a company's objectives are also critical to the effort to implement a strategy". Considering this, one could state that objective setting has a strategical importance for both basketball and business organizations alike. However, Gallery & Carey (2014) et al write about goals and objectives from a different standpoint. They write, "Goals are defined as aspirational statements of desired ends. They are not necessarily meant to be achieved. Rather, they are something the organization continually strives to attain". Furthermore, they go on and state "...it's fine to include organizational goals as long as the organization develops specific objectives that further define their intended outcome for each goal" (Gallery & Carey, 2014). Similar to other quoted authors before, Mullin et al., (2014) differentiate in their book "Sports Marketing" between goals and objective noting, "Goals are typically broad statements, whereas objectives provide more detailed, usually quantified targets". More so, they go on and state, "clarifying goals and objectives is what sets the "manager" apart from the "caretaker"" (Mullin et al., 2014). This again underlines the fact that objective setting has a strategical importance for basketball organizations. Therefore, as can be observed, some authors differentiate between goals and objective, others treat them as being similar. In this regard and for a better understanding of the topic at hand, we will use the terms "goal" and "objective" synonymously across this article.

### ***Characteristics and benefits of setting objectives***

It can be stated that the literature (for sports or business organizations alike) available at the moment is filled with scientific articles or books that underline the importance of goals or objectives. A first aspect that needs to be considered when setting goals and objectives is, according to Mullin et al. (2014), that they "should emanate from ongoing analysis". Also, in their work entitled "Sport Management – Principles and Application" Hoye et al. (2006) underline the fact that "organizational

*objectives serve as markers*” on the way to fulfilling the vision of the organization. Furthermore, according to Armstrong (2006), in business organizations *“at the beginning of each year, senior business and functional leaders meet with the CEO to discuss and set goals for the coming year”*. Another important characteristic about goals that Armstrong (2006) mentions is that *“employee goals are updated as necessary to reflect changes in priorities and new opportunities”*. Considering this, one can state that an organizations ability to adapt its objectives should be an important aspect to focus on.

Regarding the characteristics of objectives, some authors consider that they need to be S.M.A.R.T. – Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Realistic, Time bound. In this regard, Hill et al. (2016) provide four main characteristics for a well-constructed goal:

- Precise and measurable;
- Address crucial issues;
- Challenging but realistic;
- Specifies a time period in which goals should be achieved;

Other authors, such as David and David (2017), go a step further and consider that there are eight desired characteristics of objectives:

- Quantitative;
- Measurable;
- Realistic;
- Understandable;
- Challenging;
- Hierarchical;
- Obtainable;
- Congruent across departments;

The previous mentioned authors also consider the fact that clearly established objectives offer many benefits such as David and David (2017):

- provide direction;
- allow synergy;
- assist in evaluation;

- establish priorities;
- reduce uncertainty;
- minimize conflicts;
- stimulate exertion
- aid in both the allocation of resources and the design of jobs;
- provide a basis for consistent decision making by managers;
- serve as standards by which individuals, groups, departments, divisions, and entire organizations can be evaluated;

Considering all these characteristics for objectives and benefits that they might bring, two questions (one for each domain) come to mind:

- Do basketball organizations take into account all the characteristics of an objective when setting them, or are they mostly considering their budget?
- Do business and basketball organizations adapt their individual employee objectives during the year or not?

However, the current literature review done for this article cannot provide an answer to these two questions. This shows, once again, how important and necessary future research on the topic is.

### ***Types of objectives in basketball and business organizations***

The same as with any other management aspect, objectives are, according to the literature, categorized in various types as the literature review for this article has shown. First, in the case of sports organizations, an important aspect that Hoye et al. (2006) note is that *“objectives are normally set in each of the major operational areas of an organization, such as on-field performance, youth development, finances, facilities, marketing and human resources”*. A similar opinion comes from Locke & Latham (2013) who divide goals into three types:

- Outcome goals: *“refer to the end points of activities, such as results of competition (ex.: winning versus losing; finishing a race; making the varsity team)”*;
- Performance goals: *“refer to an athlete’s personal achievement, such as the number of points scored in a game or finishing time for a 5K race”*;

- Process goals: “refer to specific skills, technique, and strategies used to perform satisfactorily”;

The World Association of Basketball Coaches who differentiates between two types of goals also underlines the fact that objectives/goals can be set on different levels (individual/team/organization). Also, there are outcome and performance goals. “Outcome goals refer to collective or individual results”, while “performance goals focus on the desired steps toward an outcome, rather than the outcome itself” (World Association of Basketball Coaches). However, these aspects are from the standpoint of practice planning and not from the organizational standpoint as those described by Hoye et al. (2006).

For a better understanding on how objectives/goals can look like for a basketball organization, the author has given some examples of such objectives in the following table.

**Table 1.** Examples of objectives 1

Domain	Area	Source	Authors own examples
Sports (Basketball)	Operations	Hoye et al. (2006)	Ensure a sufficient budget in order to reach the playoff this season.
	On-field performance		Increase rebounds by +5 per game.
	Youth development		Qualify with all youth teams to the final 4.
	Finances		Increase revenue by 10%.
	Facilities		Lower the energy consumption.
	Marketing		Develop new campaigns for the sponsors.
	Human resources		Hire two new members for the scouting department.

Source: Author’s representation according to Hoye et al. (2006)

For a better understanding on how objectives/goals for a basketball organization can look like, the author provides some examples of objectives, according to the three types developed by Locke & Latham (2013), in the following table.

**Table 2.** Examples of objectives 2

Domain	Type	Source	Authors own examples
Sports (Basketball)	Outcome	Locke & Latham (2013)	Win the championship this season.
	Performance		Individual level: increase the number of points scored per game. Team level: Decrease the number of points received.
	Process		Individual: apply new training technique to develop more skills. Organization: develop and implement new strategy in order to bring more fans to the games.

Source: Author's representation according to Locke & Latham (2013)

Second, moving on to business organizations, Armstrong (2006) categorizes objectives into four types:

- *goals for customer satisfaction;*
- *goals for people;*
- *goals for growth;*
- *goals for productivity;*

A different point of view comes from Robbins & Coulter (2016) who wrote that there are just two types of goals:

- Stated goals – *“official statements of what an organization says, and what it wants its various stakeholders to believe, its goals are”;*
- Real goals – *“goals that an organization actually pursues, as defined by the actions of its members”;*



However, this means that if one would like to find out what the objectives of an organization are, one should follow the actions of its members. The questions that arise are if and how big the difference between stated goals and real goals are? Because the aim of this paper is a different one, we will not provide an answer to this question now. Moreover, this aspect can also serve as a topic for further research.

Another different point of view comes from David & David (2017) who classify objectives in three categories:

- Long-term - *“they represent the results expected from pursuing certain strategies....Without long-term objectives; an organization would drift aimlessly toward some unknown end.”*
- Financial objectives - *“growth in revenue, growth in earnings, higher dividends etc.”*
- Strategic objectives - *“larger market share, quicker on-time delivery than rivals, higher product quality than rivals etc.”*

As one can observe, there are different points of views about the types of objectives. However, even though they might seem different at first, they are similar because they all give the individuals/teams/organizations a sense of direction. If we look at what types of objectives there are in basketball and business organizations, we can state that, from this point of view, they are similar.

## **Objective setting in Basketball versus Business organizations**

In the previous sections, we saw how the literature describes what objectives/goals are in basketball and business organization. However, how do they look like in reality? Are there any differences? In order to be able to give an answer to these questions and for a better understanding of the subject at hand, the author underwent a research in order to identify how the objectives of basketball organizations that play in Euroleague and in the Romanian National League look like for the 2022-2023 season.

**Table 3.** The objectives of Euroleague Teams for the 2022-2023 season

<b>Nr. Crt.</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Team</b>	<b>Objective for 2022-2023 season</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Source</b>
1	Germany	Alba Berlin	Could not be clearly identified	-	(Alba Berlin, 2022)
2	Turkey	Anadolu Efes Istanbul	Win Euroleague	X	(Anadolu Efes, 2022)
3	Monaco	AS Monaco	Become a shareholder of the Euroleague	✓	(Basket News, 2022a)
4	Spain	Cazoo Baskonia Viktoria-Gasteiz	Could not be clearly identified	-	(Baskonia Basketball Club, 2022)
5	Serbia	Crvena Zvezda mts Belgrade	Could not be clearly identified	-	(Crvena Zvezda Belgrade, 2022)
6	Italy	EA7 Emporio Armani Milan	Reach the Euroleague final four	X	(Basket News, 2022b)
7	Spain	FC Barcelona	Win Euroleague	X	FC Barcelona, 2022)
8	Germany	FC Bayern Munich	Reach the Euroleague playoffs	X	(Cauchi, 2022)
9	Turkey	Fenerbahce Beko Istanbul	Win Euroleague	X	(Itoudis, 2022)
10	France	LDLC ASVEL Villeurbanne	Win Euroleague in 5-7 years	X	(Basket News, 2022c)
11	Israel	Maccabi Playtika Tel Aviv	Reach the Euroleague playoffs	✓	(Euroleague Basketball, 2022)
12	Greece	Olympiacos Piraeus	Reach the Euroleague playoffs	✓	(Basket News, 2022d)
13	Greece	Panathinaikos Athens	Could not be clearly identified	-	(Radonjic, 2022)
14	Serbia	Partizan Mozart Bet Belgrade	Reach the Euroleague playoffs	✓	(EuroHoops, 2022)
15	Spain	Real Madrid	Win Euroleague	✓	(Euroleague, 2022)
16	Spain	Valencia Basket	Could not be clearly identified	-	(Vidal, 2022)
17	Italy	Virtus Segafredo Bologna	Reach the Euroleague playoffs	X	(Scariolo, 2022)
18	Lithuania	Zalgiris Kaunas	Reach the Euroleague playoffs	✓	(EuroHoops, 2022)

Source: Author's own research based on sources mentioned within the table

**Table 4.** The objectives of Basketball Teams in the Romanian National League for the 2022-2023 season

<b>Nr. Crt.</b>	<b>Team</b>	<b>Objective for 2022-2023 season</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Source</b>
1	ABC Laguna Sharks București	Could not be clearly identified	-	(BC Laguna Sharks Bucuresti, 2022)
2	U Banca Transilvania Cluj-Napoca	Win the Super Cup, National Cup, Championship	✓	(U BT Cluj-Napoca, 2022)
3	BC CSU Sibiu	Reach the playoff	✓	(Sadean, 2022)
4	CS Dinamo București	Could not be clearly identified	-	CS Dinamo Bucuresti Baschet, 2022)
5	CSM 2007 Focșani	Could not be clearly identified	-	(CSM Focsani 2007, 2022)
6	CSM Galați	Could not be clearly identified	-	(CSM Galati, 2022)
7	CSM Târgu Jiu	Remaining in the first league	✓	(CSM Targu Jiu, 2022)
8	CSM Târgu Mureș	Could not be clearly identified	-	(CSM Targu Mures, 2022)
9	CS Rapid București	One of the first three places	✓	(Helcioiu, 2022)
10	CSA Steaua București	Reach the playoff	X	(Ilie, 2022)
11	CSM ABC Athletic Constanța	Could not be clearly identified	-	(CSM Constanta, 2022)
12	CSM Petrolul Ploiești	Reach the playoff	X	(CSM Ploiesti, 2022)
13	CSM CSU Oradea	Win the Super Cup, National Cup, Championship	X	(Sere, 2022)
14	CSM VSKC Miercurea Ciuc	Could not be clearly identified	-	(CSM VSKC Miercurea Ciuc, 2022)
15	CSO Voluntari	Win the National Cup, Championship in order to constantly play in european championships	X	(Istrate, 2022)
16	FC Argeș Pitești	Could not be clearly identified	-	(fotbalclubarges.ro, 2022)
17	SCM OHMA Mozzart Bet Timișoara	Reach the playoff	✓	(SCM Timisoara, 2022)
18	SCMU Craiova	Could not be clearly identified	-	(SCMU Craiova, 2022)

Source: Author's own research based on sources mentioned within the table

In order to determine the objectives for Euroleague and Romanian Basketball Teams in the 2022-2023 a research on different sources (ex.: official websites, basketball related news websites, social media) was undergone. As can be observed in the previous tables, the author was not able to identify all the objectives for the teams enrolled in the Euroleague championship or in the Romanian National Basketball League in 2022-2023. However, this aspect can be further analyzed from two perspectives: first, this does not mean that the organization does not have any objectives set, but rather that they did not make them public; second, in some cases the objectives that were made public were not clear or rather specific enough. Examples for the latter from the research: *“we want to be better from game to game”*, *“we want to improve our game and then we will see what we can achieve”*, *“we want to give our best in each game”*.

As can be observed in the previous two tables, some basketball organizations clearly communicate that they want to win the trophy, while others are very vague about what their intentions in the season are. Although, as mentioned previously, the objectives might be set internally in each organization and known by all the players and staff. This is an important aspect in objective setting. However, many clubs do not clearly communicate their objectives to the communities of fans and other interested in this aspect. This raises the question as to *why would a basketball organization not clearly communicate their objective also externally?* Especially if we consider what Covell et al. (2007) wrote about smart goals or objectives: *“they provide consistency throughout the organization and a blueprint for effectiveness”*. An answer to the above written question might be, that the clubs do not want to communicate their objectives *“to the outside world”* in order to not be required to give explanation to their stakeholders in case they do not achieve the established objectives. As we can see in the tables above, from the 18 clubs that play the Euroleague, 13 have disclosed their objectives and only six managed to achieve them. In comparison, in the Romanian National Basketball League, from the 18 clubs, half disclosed their objectives and only five managed to achieve them.

In the case of objective setting for business organizations, we can look at what objectives Apple has set for the following years. The reason why the author chose this specific company is that Apple is one of the

most valuable companies in the world. According to (Apple Corporation, 2021), the company has an objective to increase the number of employees at the San Diego headquarters with more than 5000 new employees until 2026. Moreover, Apple set an objective of building a campus in Austin worth 1 billion dollars. As we can see, Apple's objectives are S.M.A.R.T. – Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Realistic, Time bound. Comparing Apple's objectives with those set by basketball organizations active in Euroleague or in the Romanian National League we can clearly see a big difference as very few basketball organizations have stated objectives that can be considered as being S.M.A.R.T.

Setting objectives can have positive benefits not only for the team/organization but also for the individual. So, clear objective can be considered as a motivational factor that drives individuals to achieve the desired performance. More so, in his book *“Organizational Behavior”* Witcher(2022) underlines the idea that many studies support the fact that performance can be enhanced through specific and difficult goals.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, considering the aim of this paper, a research was done in order to find out how objectives in basketball and business organizations are set. For this, several databases such as: ProQuest, Science Direct, Web of Science or Google Scholar were questioned on keyword or phrases such as *“goal setting in Basketball organizations”, “objective setting in Basketball organizations”, “objectives of Basketball organizations”, “what to consider when setting objectives for Basketball organizations”, “criteria for setting objectives in Basketball organizations”*. The results however, did not provide clear and sufficient information for answering the research question: *“are there any differences in the way basketball and business organizations conduct their objective setting and communication activities?”* Moreover, the author was not able to identify research on the topic of how exactly basketball organizations set their objectives or what criteria they take into consideration when setting these objectives. This means that in order to be able to validate/ invalidate the defined hypothesis more specific research is required. This

proves the fact that topics like how basketball organization set their objectives for each season or what criteria they take into consideration when undergoing this activity could be considered relevant for a future and more detailed qualitative/quantitative research having as target group: basketball teams that play in the Euroleague/Romanian National Basketball League. In addition, the fact that previous research on the topic was not identified can be considered a limitation for the present paper and a potential topic for future researches.

Furthermore, if for business organizations goals/objectives appear in the mission statements, the same is not the case for basketball organizations, as the research for this article has shown. The objectives, in the case of basketball organizations active in Euroleague or in the Romanian National League, were not easily found, and in some cases are even nowhere publicly communicated. However, this does not mean that they do not exist; it simply means that the organization did not state them publicly and thus are not easily or at all identifiable. That is why, the author suggests, having an “objective tracker” on their website. This would mean that the objectives for each team would be visible for everyone and they can thus track their progress in achieving them. This would ensure a better communication with the fan base of each team.

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