

Developing SMART Goals

The information below is adapted from Paul J. Meyer's descriptions of the characteristics of S.M.A.R.T. goals in *Attitude is Everything*.

Specific

The first term stresses the need for a specific goal over and against a more general one. This means the goal is clear and unambiguous, without vagaries and platitudes. To make goals specific, they must tell exactly what is expected, why it's important, who's involved, where it's going to happen and which attributes are important.

A specific goal will usually answer the five "W" questions:

- What: What do I want to accomplish?
- Why: Specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal
- Who: Who is involved?
- Where: Identify a location
- Which: Identify requirements and constraints

Measurable

The second term stresses the need for concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of the goal. The thought behind this is that if a goal is not measurable, it is not possible to know whether an individual or team is making progress toward its successful completion. Measuring progress has been shown to help us stay on track, reach target dates, and experience the exhilaration of achievement that spurs us on to continue the effort required to reach the ultimate goal.

A measurable goal will usually answer questions such as:

- How much?
- How many?
- How will I know when it is accomplished?

Attainable

The third term stresses the importance of goals that are realistic and attainable. While an attainable goal may stretch an individual or team in order to achieve it, the goal is not extreme. That is, the goals are neither out of reach nor below standard performance, as these may be considered meaningless. When you identify goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true. You develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach them. The theory states that an attainable goal may cause goal-setters to identify previously overlooked opportunities to bring themselves closer to the achievement of their goals.

An attainable goal will usually answer the question:

- How: How can the goal be accomplished?

Relevant

The fourth term stresses the importance of choosing goals that **matter**. A bank manager's goal to "make 50 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches by 2:00pm." may be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, and even Time-Bound, but lacks Relevance. Many times you will need support to accomplish a goal: resources, a champion voice, someone to knock down obstacles. Goals that are relevant to your employer, your advisor, your team, your organization, etc., will receive that needed support.

Relevant goals, when met, drive the individual (or team, or department, or organization) forward. A goal that supports or is in alignment with other goals would be considered a relevant goal.

A relevant goal can answer yes to these questions:

- Does this seem worthwhile?
- Is this the right time?
- Does this match my/our other efforts/needs?
- Am I the right person?

Time-bound

The fifth term stresses the importance of grounding goals within a time frame, giving them a target date. A commitment to a deadline helps you focus your efforts on completion of the goal on or before the due date. This part of the SMART goal criteria is intended to prevent goals from being overtaken by day-to-day crises that invariably arise. A time-bound goal is intended to establish a sense of urgency.

A time-bound goal will usually answer the questions:

- When?
- What can I do 6 months from now?
- What can I do 6 weeks from now?
- What can I do today