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SMART Goals:
A How to Guide

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How to Write SMART Goals: A Guide for Managers and Employees

What are SMART Goals?

- Statements of the important results you are working to accomplish
- Designed in a way to foster clear and mutual understanding of what constitutes expected levels of performance and successful professional development

What is the SMART criteria?

S	Specific	What will be accomplished? What actions will you take?
M	Measurable	What data will measure the goal? (How much? How well?)
A	Achievable	Is the goal doable? Do you have the necessary skills and resources?
R	Relevant	How does the goal align with broader goals? Why is the result important?
T	Time-Bound	What is the time frame for accomplishing the goal?

How do I decide the right scope for my SMART Goals? (How big? How many?)

SMART goals are meant to address all of your major job responsibilities. Remember, goals are intended to focus attention and resources on what is most important so that you can be successful in achieving your priorities. SMART Goals are goals for your day-to-day job.

- Common types of goals are to:
 - Increase something
 - Make something
 - Improve something
 - Reduce something
 - Save something
 - Develop someone (yourself!)

Where to start?

1. Start by thinking about your whole job and the broad areas (or “buckets”) of responsibility and results for which you are accountable.
2. Develop a goal statement for each bucket. To get the scope right, remember to focus on end results not tasks.

3. Goals should be high level enough to encompass the core outcomes for which you are responsible, but specific and clear enough so you will be able to measure success.
4. Goals should be on-going job responsibilities and any new projects, assignments, priorities, or initiatives that are specific to this performance cycle.
5. Having too many goals can be an indicator that your goals are scoped at too low a level and are focused more on tasks than on end results.
6. If it seems that your goals are becoming too numerous and task-oriented, it may be helpful to consider combining several goal statements into a broader outcome area.

How to write your S-M-A-R-T goal

S – Specific

When setting a goal, be specific about what you want to accomplish. Think about this as the mission statement for your goal. This isn't a detailed list of how you're going to meet a goal, but it should include an answer to the popular 'w' questions:

- Who – Consider who needs to be involved to achieve the goal (this is especially important when you're working on a group project).
- What – Think about exactly what you are trying to accomplish and don't be afraid to get very detailed.
- When – You'll get more specific about this question under the "time-bound" section of defining S.M.A.R.T. goals, but you should at least set a time frame.
- Where – This question may not always apply, especially if you're setting personal goals, but if there's a location or relevant event, identify it here.
- Which – Determine any related obstacles or requirements. This question can be beneficial in deciding if your goal is realistic. For example, if the goal is to open a baking business, but you've never baked anything before, that might be an issue. As a result, you may refine the specifics of the goal to be "Learn how to bake in order to open a baking business."
- Why – What is the reason for the goal? When it comes to using this method for employees, the answer will likely be along the lines of company advancement or career development.

- “S” actions may include:

Oversee	Update	Write
Coordinate	Upgrade	Process
Supervise	Develop	Provide
Manage	Create	Maintain
Plan	Implement	Reconcile
Support	Evaluate	Direct
Transition	Produce	Administer

- Note that this list does not include verbs like “improve,” “reduce,” or “increase” (e.g. “Improve customer service” or “reduce cost.” These imply the direction that you want a result to move in, but don’t do much to explain the role or specific action that you will take to accomplish this change.

M – Measurable

What metrics are you going to use to determine if you meet the goal? This makes a goal more tangible because it provides a way to measure progress. If it’s a project that’s going to take a few months to complete, then set some milestones by considering specific tasks to accomplish. Milestones are a series of steps along the way that when added up will result in the completion of your main goal.

- As the “M” in SMART states, there should be a source of information to measure or determine whether a goal has been achieved.
- The M is a direct (or possibly indirect) indicator of what success for a particular goal will look like.
- Sometimes measurement is difficult and managers and employees will need to work together to identify the most relevant and feasible data sources and collection methods.
- Data collection efforts needed to measure a goal can be included in that goal’s action plan.
- Even if a perfect, direct measurement source is not immediately feasible for a given goal, the discussion about the desired end result (why this goal is important) and what the measurement options are (what success might look like) is an important and valuable part of performance planning.
- Measurement methods can be both quantitative (productivity results, money saved or earned, etc.) and qualitative (client testimonials, surveys, etc.).

- Some typical data types and data collection methods may include:

DATA TYPES	DATA COLLECTION METHODS
Quality/accuracy rates	Automated reports
Amounts produced	Audits, tests
Revenue generated	Surveys
Productivity rates	Work products, samples
Customer Satisfaction	Other documents

A – Achievable

This focuses on how important a goal is to you and what you can do to make it attainable and may require developing new skills and changing attitudes. The goal is meant to inspire motivation, not discouragement. Think about:

- how to accomplish the goal,
- if you have the tools/skills needed,
- if not, consider what it would take to attain them.

R – Relevant

Relevance refers focusing on something that makes sense with the broader business goals. For example, if the goal is to launch a new program or service, it should be something that's in alignment with the overall business/department objectives. Your team may be able to launch a new program, but if your division is not prioritizing launching that type of new programs, then the goal wouldn't be relevant.

T – Time-Bound

Anyone can set goals, but if it lacks realistic timing, chances are you're not going to succeed. Providing a target date for deliverables is imperative. Ask specific questions about the goal deadline and what can be accomplished within that time period. If the goal will take three months to complete, it's useful to define what should be achieved half-way through the process. Providing time constraints also creates a sense of urgency.

The Easiest Way to Write S.M.A.R.T. Goals

When it comes to writing S.M.A.R.T. goals, ask yourself and other team members a lot of questions. The answers will help fine-tune your strategy, ensuring the goals are something that's actually attainable. Utilize the template provided in the appendix as a guide.

This doesn't have to be a daunting experience; in fact, it should be quite illuminating. Below we demonstrate how to write S.M.A.R.T. goals for two typical business scenarios: completing a project and improving personal performance. We've also created an easy-to-use S.M.A.R.T. goals template and worksheet to help you get started.

Examples of Creating a SMART Goal

Here are two examples of initial goals we'll use to walk through this process:

1. I want to complete a project
2. I want to improve my performance

This is a typical approach to creating goals, but both of these are very vague. With the current wording, the goals probably aren't going to be attainable. The statements lack specifics, timelines, motivation, and a reality check.

Now, let's use the S.M.A.R.T. goals formula to clarify both and create new and improved goals.

Goal: I want to complete a project

- **Specific:** Many people are accessing our current site from their mobile devices. Since it's not a responsive site, it provides a poor experience for customers. I want to launch a mobile app for my company website by the end of June, which requires involvement from software development, design, and marketing.
- **Measurable:** Creating a mobile app for our company site will require a lot of resources. To make it worthwhile, I'd like to have 50,000 installs of the site within six months of launch. I'd also like to show a 5% conversion rate from customers using the mobile site.
- **Achievable:** The departments that will be involved have signed-off on creating a mobile app. I'll need to manage the project and set milestones to keep everyone motivated and on target.
- **Relevant:** Improving the customer experience on mobile devices is a core initiative for my company this year.
- **Time-Bound:** In order to achieve 50,000 mobile app installs and a 5% conversion rate by the end of the fiscal year, the app will need to be launched by Q2 with a robust marketing campaign that should continue through the end of the year.

Goal: I want to improve my performance

- **Specific:** I received low marks on my ability to use PowerPoint at my last performance review. Improving my skills requires that I learn how to use PowerPoint efficiently and practice using it by creating various presentations. I'd like to be more proficient using PowerPoint in time for my next review in six months.
- **Measurable:** By the time of my next review, I should be able to create presentations that incorporate graphs, images, and other media in a couple of hours. I should also be able to efficiently use and create templates in PowerPoint that my coworkers can also use.
- **Achievable:** Improving my PowerPoint skills is instrumental in moving forward in my career and receiving a better performance review. I can set time aside every week to watch PowerPoint tutorials and even enroll in an online class that can teach me new skills. I can also ask coworkers and my manager for PowerPoint tips.
- **Relevant:** Working with PowerPoint is currently 25% of my job. As I move up in the company, I'll need to spend 50% of my time creating PowerPoint presentations. I enjoy my career and want to continue to grow within this company.
- **Time-Bound:** In six months, I should be proficient in PowerPoint ensuring it only occupies 25% of my workload instead of the nearly 40% of the time it occupies now.

Once you go through and write your goals according to each S.M.A.R.T. characteristic, you can then combine and consolidate all the work you've done into one S.M.A.R.T. goal.

S.M.A.R.T. goal: I want to complete a project

- **Description:** Improving the customer experience on mobile devices is a core initiative for my company this year, so we are going to create a mobile app. By the end of the fiscal year, there should be 50,000 installs of the mobile app we develop, and it should produce a 5% conversion rate. We'll build the mobile app in-house and launch it by the end of June with an app-related marketing campaign that will continue to the end of the year.
- **Milestone:** Mobile app launches end of June.

- **Deadline:** End of the fiscal year.

S.M.A.R.T. goal: I want to improve my performance

- **Description:** To grow in my career, I need to improve my PowerPoint skills. By taking online classes and reviewing tutorials, I'll improve my PowerPoint skills so that it only requires 25% of my work time.
- **Milestone:** Complete an online PowerPoint course in three months.
- **Deadline:** Next employee review in six months.

Appendix

Template for writing a S.M.A.R.T. Goal

Crafting S.M.A.R.T. Goals are designed to help you identify if what you want to achieve is realistic and determine a deadline. When writing S.M.A.R.T. Goals use concise language, but include relevant information. These are designed to help you succeed, so be positive when answering the questions.

Initial Goal *(Write the goal you have in mind):*

1. Specific *(What do you want to accomplish? Who needs to be included? When do you want to do this? Why is this a goal?)*

2. Measurable *(How can you measure progress and know if you've successfully met your goal?):*

3. Achievable *(Do you have the skills required to achieve the goal? If not, can you obtain them? What is the motivation for this goal? Is the amount of effort required on par with what the goal will achieve?):*

4. Relevant *(Why am I setting this goal now? Is it aligned with overall objectives?):*

5. Time-bound *(What's the deadline and is it realistic?):*

S.M.A.R.T. Goal *(Review what you have written, and craft a new goal statement based on what the answers to the questions above have revealed):*

More SMART Goal Examples

Ongoing

- Provide high quality customer service resulting in a 90% customer satisfaction rating from external customers on accuracy, timeliness and courtesy measures on an ongoing basis.
- On an ongoing basis, reconcile the department financial reports by the 15th of every month with no increase in reconciliation errors.
- On an ongoing basis, accurately process and dispatch 95% of high priority calls for police, fire and medical services.
- On an ongoing basis, dispatch 82% of high priority calls for police, fire and medical services within established timeframes.
- Resolve 90% of complaints through a collaborative process without need for formal mediation on an ongoing basis.
- Conduct education, monitoring and enforcement to ensure that 98% of agricultural and pest control businesses are in compliance with all pesticide regulatory requirements on an ongoing basis.
- Manage and support effective performance resulting in achievement of 75% of program and individual performance targets by the end of the fiscal year.
- Manage the department budget to stay within appropriations and accomplish 85% of service results by the end of the fiscal year.
- Coach and support my direct reports resulting in attainment of 85% of all performance plan goals and feedback from direct reports that I provided them with clear expectations, meaningful feedback and fair performance evaluations by the end of the fiscal year.

New Project/Performance Cycle-Specific

- By March 2011, develop and implement a customer service plan that results in department staff reporting that they are clear about expectations for excellent customer service and have the skills and support to perform at that level and that results in customers reporting that they receive excellent customer service.
- Transition to a new automated case management system with minimal affects on customer service by developing a training program that ensures all staff can process 30 cases per day no later than three months after the end of the training classes.
- Reduce overtime in the department from 150 hours per month to 50 hours per month by the end of the fiscal year with no increase in incident reports.
- Develop a quality improvement process for the sanitary sewer system that reduces the failure rate to 1% by 12/31/11.
- Create a partnership with at least 5 local cities to deliver two compliance-related training workshops resulting in \$____ improvement in Net County Cost by 6/30/11.
- By 11/30/11, update the employee handbook to include a searchable intranet version that employees find easy to use and informative.
- Complete the Energy Watch Program to reduce countywide carbon emissions by 605 tons by the end of the fiscal year.

- Conduct outreach and education that reduces the amount of illegal dumping into the streets and drainage channels by __% by June 30, 2011.
- Develop and implement vehicle replacement plan to increase the Average Fuel Economy to 30 Miles per Gallon by 2012 for Midsize and Compact Vehicles and to increase the average Miles per Gallon on the total fleet to 25 MPG by 2016.
- Implement Evidence Based Probation Service (EPBS) practices in order to reduce recidivism among participants by __% by June 30, 2011.

Development Goals

- By June 30, 2011, develop and apply upgraded computer skills that enable me to produce budget reconciliation reports each month in a timely and accurate fashion.
- Develop and practice my coaching skills so that my direct reports report that they feel more satisfied with their work and able to perform at a higher level and such that I achieve a 30/70 split between coaching and doing by June 30, 2011.
- By June 30, 2011, complete course work and attain a CSAC credential to enhance my skills as an effective leader as measured by feedback from my supervisor and the accomplishment of my performance plan goals.