

What is SMART goal setting?

SMART goal setting brings structure and tractability into your goals and objectives. Instead, of vague resolutions, SMART goal setting creates verifiable trajectories towards a certain objective, with clear milestones and an estimation of the goal's attainability. Every goal or objective, from intermediary step to overarching objective, can be made S.M.A.R.T. and as such, brought closer to reality.

What does S.M.A.R.T. goal setting stand for?

Why not think of a small goal you want to set right now, personal or professional. To make your goal S.M.A.R.T., it needs to conform to the following criteria: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely.

S.M.A.R.T. goal setting: Specific

What exactly do you want to achieve? The more specific your description, the bigger the chance you'll get exactly that. S.M.A.R.T. goal setting clarifies the difference between 'I want to be a millionaire' and 'I want to make \$50,000 a month for the next ten years by creating a new software product'.

Questions you may ask yourself when setting your goals and objectives are:

- What exactly do I want to achieve?
- Where?
- How?
- When?
- With whom?
- What are the conditions and limitations?
- Why exactly do I want to reach this goal? What are possible alternative ways of achieving the same?

S.M.A.R.T. goal setting: Measurable

Measurable goals means that you identify exactly what it is you will see, hear and feel when you reach your goal. It means breaking your goal down into measurable elements. You'll need concrete evidence. Being happier is not evidence; not smoking anymore because you adhere to a healthy lifestyle where you eat vegetables twice a day and fat only once a week, is.

Measurable goals can go a long way in refining what exactly it is that you want, too. Defining the physical manifestations of your goal or objective makes it clearer, and easier to reach.

S.M.A.R.T. goal setting: Attainable

Is your goal attainable? That means investigating whether the goal really is acceptable to you. You weigh the effort, time and other costs your goal will take against the profits and the other obligations and priorities you have in life.

If you don't have the time, money or talent to reach a certain goal you'll certainly fail and be miserable. That doesn't mean that you can't take something that seems impossible and make it happen by planning smartly and going for it!

There's nothing wrong with shooting for the stars; if you aim to make your department twice as efficient this year as it was last year with no extra labor involved, how bad is it when you only reach 1.8 times? Not too bad...

S.M.A.R.T. goal setting: Relevant

Is reaching your goal relevant to you? Do you actually want to be famous, have three children and a busy job? You decide for yourself whether you have the personality for it, or your team has the bandwidth.

If you're lacking certain skills, you can plan trainings. If you lack certain resources, you can look for ways of getting them.

The main questions, why do you want to reach this goal? What is the objective behind the goal, and will this goal really achieve that?

S.M.A.R.T. goal setting: Timely

Time is money! Make a tentative plan of everything you do. Everybody knows that deadlines are what makes most people switch to action. So install deadlines and go after them. Keep the timeline realistic and flexible, that way you can keep morale high. Being too stringent on the timely aspect of your goal setting can have the perverse effect of making the learning path of achieving your goals and objectives into a hellish race against time – which is most likely not how you want to achieve anything.