

SMART Goals:

# The Essential Guide

The SMART acronym first appeared in the November 1981 issue of Management Review. “There’s a S.M.A.R.T. way to write management goals and objectives” was the title and it was written by George Doran. Since, then SMART goals have been universally adopted as an effective approach for designing appropriate goals to help achieve higher levels of performance. It is an approach that brings focus, clarity and motivation to goal setting.

## SMART Goals: Why do goals matter?

Setting goals is challenging. Not many of us find it easy to set meaningful goals, and sometimes it can be even difficult to see the value of setting SMART goals. "Going with the flow" and "seeing where we get to" is very tempting. Not setting goals is comfortable and takes the pressure off of a potential failure, which is scary to most of us.

However, if you don't set your mind on what you want to achieve and how you aim to get there, it's more than likely that you will NOT achieve anything at all. A lot of us are setting the wrong goals and some aren't setting goals at all.

Setting goals helps you keep up with your progress and essentially puts your decision making on an autopilot. SMART is an acronym that stands for specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely - all attributes you'll need to set effective goals. Applying this method will enable you to break down unachievable dreams into actionable objectives so you can progress in your career as well as personal life.

## 5 reasons to set smart goals

1. Goals provoke behaviour.
2. Goals help to guide your focus.
3. Goals sustain momentum.
4. Goals help you to align your behaviour with the bigger picture.
5. Goal setting is essential for self-leadership.
6. Sharing your goals with others contributes to increased accountability.

## How to set SMART goals for yourself:

### Specific

Firstly, your goals need to be clear and provide you with a concise aim that will give you a sense of direction. If you simply set a goal to become an engineer, it won't give you enough guidance to stay motivated or focused. You need to state in clear and specific terms, what outcome, result or behaviour you want to achieve.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the outcome, result or behaviour I want to achieve?
- What are the possible challenges and my limitations?
- How am I going to achieve this?

For business-oriented goals, you may specify an improved level of quality, quantity or use of resources, a new/innovative result, a faster timeline, or an improved behavioural outcome that you want to achieve.

SMART goals should be action-oriented and you can access this [useful list of action verbs for SMART goals](#).

## Measurable

In order for your goals to be effective they need to be measurable. That way you'll be able to assess your success and know whether or not you have achieved your objectives.

Therefore, you should consider:

- How will I know when it is accomplished?
- What measures am I going to use to assess when I am successful? What? How much? How well?

## Achievable or Attainable

We often have big targets and big dreams that seem impossible to accomplish. Breaking one big goal into a series of smaller ones will give you a series of joyful moments that occur once you have managed to achieve something small along the way. Your goals should be challenging yet achievable.

Ask yourself:

- How can I accomplish this goal?
- How realistic is the goal?
- Do I have the sufficient resources, authority level, skills or knowledge to achieve this goal? If not, how will I obtain that?
- Does it require a stretch of effort? How willing am I to stretch?

## Relevant

Why do you want to achieve this goal? Smaller goals should be always relevant to the broader goals you want to achieve, or the ones your company and team is striving for.

- Will it matter when it is done? Is this goal worthwhile?
- Does my goal align to the team, department and organizational target?

## Timebound

It is unlikely that you will achieve your goals if you don't set a deadline. Every goal needs to have a time frame as well as a process for tracking phases of completion. It is imperative for time management and project management to make your goals time based.

To set up time specific goals you usually need to answer one of these questions:

- When do I aim to achieve this goal?
- What is a realistic deadline?
- How can I break this down into realistic milestones or checkpoints?



## What does a good SMART goal look like?

- Improve traffic to the website by 10% in the next six months by increasing The number of blogposts from 2 to 4 per week, focusing on our 5 most successful topics.
- By June 2021, 75% of our customers will report a customer satisfaction rate of 'good' or 'excellent' in our annual customer survey.
- By the end of the year, we will have received a 20% reduction of last year's customer complaints saving 5% of our annual profits.
- By December 2020 implement new lunch time staff rota to achieve 75% customer satisfaction rate of 'good' or 'excellent' in our annual customer survey.
- By October 2020 coach both of my direct reports in negotiating with suppliers to achieve savings of 10% in our departmental operating costs.
- By September 2021 construct and implement a technical project management tracking system that provides instant information on the current stage of departmental projects.

## Resources to further build your knowledge about SMART goals

<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/smart-goals>

<https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/other/smart-goal/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCRSVRD2EAK>