

Setting S.M.A.R.T. Goals



Differentiating between a goal and an accountability:

- An *accountability* is a statement about normal work output... a clearly defined and established on-going responsibility or requirement of a job. Accountabilities and associated supporting activities are found on the position description. They describe what the person in that position is responsible for regularly producing or providing – i.e., what are the normal expected outcomes of the position.
- A *goal* is a general statement about a desired outcome with one or more specific objectives that define in precise terms what is to be accomplished within a designated time frame. A goal may be performance-related, developmental, a special project, or some combination.

Types of performance, developmental, and special project goals:

- A performance goal is usually linked to an accountability and could involve problem-solving, innovation, or implementation of some type of improvement.
- A developmental goal may serve to enhance performance in the current role (greater depth of knowledge/skills) or prepare for a new or future role.
- Special projects could include a “stretch” assignment (build experience), be based on the departmental plan, or meet a particular organizational need.

S	=	Specific
M	=	Measurable
A	=	Achievable
R	=	Relevant
T	=	Time-bound

S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Goals should describe accomplishments, not activities. First, let's look at what the S.M.A.R.T. acronym means...

Specific: Goal objectives should address the five Ws... who, what, when, where, and why. Make sure the goal specifies what needs to be done with a timeframe for completion. Use action verbs... create, design, develop, implement, produce, etc. *Example: resolve accounting discrepancies within 48 hours.*

Measurable: Goal objectives should include numeric or descriptive measures that define quantity, quality, cost, etc. How will you and your staff member know when the goal has been successfully met? Focus on elements such as observable actions, quantity, quality, cycle time, efficiency, and/or flexibility to measure outcomes, not activities. *Example: secure pledges from ten new donors by the end of each week.*

Achievable: Goal objectives should be within the staff member's control and influence; a goal may be a “stretch” but still feasible. Is the goal achievable with the available resources? Is the goal achievable within the timeframe originally outlined? Consider authority or control, influence, resources, and work environment support to meet the goal. *Example: obtain the XYZ professional certification within two years.*

Relevant: Goals should be instrumental to the mission of the department (and ultimately, the institution). Why is the goal important? How will the goal help the department achieve its objectives? Develop goals that relate to the staff member's key accountabilities or link with departmental goals that align with the institutional agenda. *Example: develop and implement a diversity recruitment plan that increases the number of diversity candidates by ten percent.*

Time-bound: Goal objectives should identify a definite target date for completion and/or frequencies for specific action steps that are important for achieving the goal. How often should the staff member work on this assignment? By when should this goal be accomplished? Incorporate specific dates, calendar milestones, or timeframes that are relative to the achievement of another result (i.e., dependencies and linkages to other projects). *Example: check the fire alarms and emergency lighting in all buildings every six months.*

Let's look at some more examples:

For an organization or department...

Not SMART "Improve our student service."

SMART "Achieve and maintain an average student service rating of at least 4.0 (out of a possible 5.0) on our annual survey by 11/20/08."

For an exempt staff member...

Not SMART "Create our 2008 strategic plan."

SMART "Create our 2008 strategic plan, obtain final approval from the Budget Committee, and discuss it with our department so individuals can begin setting their performance objectives by 8-29-07."

Not SMART "Improve project management skills."

SMART "Take the Project Management Essentials workshop on 10-18-2007, report what was learned to our team by 11-01-2007, and apply the relevant concepts while implementing our 2008 marketing plan."

For a nonexempt staff member...

Not SMART "Send out welcome letters to our new students."

SMART "Produce and distribute personalized welcome letters, error free, to all new students in our department by 9-26-07."

Not SMART "Be more receptive to coaching suggestions and feedback."

SMART "At our monthly progress meetings, ask for feedback on what you are doing well and what things to improve. Keep a notebook with this information, try out the suggestions, and document each week what worked and what didn't."

For an exempt or nonexempt staff member...

Not SMART "Keep our department's Website up-to-date."

SMART "Solicit updates and new material for the Website from our department managers on the first Friday of each month; publish this new material by the following Friday. Each time material is published, review the Website for material that is out-of-date and delete or archive that material."

Remember the S.M.A.R.T. acronym when establishing goals and objectives. This formula for goal-setting helps ensure that both supervisors and staff members share the same understanding and clarity on goals set during the performance management cycle.