

Developing S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Goals

Paul J. Meyer describes the characteristics of S.M.A.R.T. goals in his book "Attitude is Everything" (2003). This S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goal is a variation of the S.M.A.R.T. goals. (Content adapted for this course)

Specific

The first SMARTER component stresses the need for a specific goal over and against a more general one (i.e. "I want to get more sleep"). This means the goal is clear and unambiguous; without vagaries and platitudes. To make goals specific, they must communicate *exactly* what is expected, why is it important, who's involved, where is it going to happen and which requirements/resources are needed.

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

- What: What do I want to accomplish?
- Why: Specific reasons, purposes or benefits of accomplishing the goal.
- Who: Who will be involved?
- Where: Identify a physical location.
- Which: Identify requirements and/or resources needed to accomplish the goal.

Measurable

The second component stresses the need for concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the goal. The thought behind this SMARTER component is that if a goal is not measurable, it is not possible to know whether you are making progress toward the goal or not. Measuring progress is supposed to help a person stay on track and serve as motivation to keep trying.

A measurable goal will usually answer questions such as:

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

Attainable

The third component stresses the importance of setting goals that are realistic and attainable. While an attainable goal may stretch a person to achieve it, the goal is not impossible. That is, the goal is neither out of reach nor below a person's capabilities. 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 maybe financial capacity to reach them. The theory goes 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 questions:

- How can the goal be reached?
- Why is this a realistic/attainable goal for me?
- Do I have the resources/abilities/supports needed to achieve my goal?

Relevant

The fourth component 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 time-specific, but lacks *relevance*. What has making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches have to do with a bank manager's role and responsibilities? Relevant goals can drive a person/team forward. A goal that supports or is in alignment with one's role, purpose, values and/or responsibilities would be considered a relevant goal.

A relevant goal can answer "Yes" to questions like:

- Does this goal seem worthwhile to me?
- Is this the right time to work towards this particular goal? Why or why not?
- Does this goal reflect my purpose, values, role and/or responsibilities?

Time-specific

The fifth component stresses the importance of grounding goals within a time frame, setting a target date(s). A commitment to a deadline helps one focus their efforts on completion of the goal on or before the due date. This SMARTER component is intended to prevent goals from being overtaken by day-to-day obligations and/or crises that invariably arise in life. A time-specific goal is intended to establish a sense of urgency and commitment.

A time-specific goal will usually answer the questions:

- How often will I work on my goal? Daily? Weekly? Monthly?
- Is this a short-term (weeks to months) or long-term (months to years) goal?
- At what point in time will I measure my progress towards my goal to determine if it needs revisions?
- When do I anticipate having all the criteria/expectations of my goal achieved?

Evaluate

The sixth component stresses the importance of always evaluating how your goal is progressing (or has progressed). It is important to understand that this step is conducted throughout the entire goal process, as well as after the goal is met. The idea is to create a progress report to see if you are where you want to be in your goal. This is a crucial step for learning from your experiences and perhaps revising your goal for continued growth.

When evaluating a goal, consider:

- Am I on the right track to achieving my goal? (Reflect on measures taken while working towards goal)
- Did I achieve what I set out to accomplish?

Revise

The seventh component brings everything back in full circle. Barriers and challenges may arise while working towards your goal. Revision allows you to adapt your goals to overcome such barriers and challenges. It also allows you to learn from mistakes and provide insight into setting new goals.

Consider these questions in regard to revising a goal:

- Is something or someone getting in the way of my work towards my goal?
- What barriers/challenges could I anticipate occurring when working towards my goal?
- What will be my course of action or plan of attack to overcome barriers/challenges that occur?
- If I were to work towards this goal again, what would I do differently?

Example of a S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Goal

Example Goal: My goal is to recruit 5 new active members to our Rotaract Club by the end of next March. I will accomplish this by bringing 12 guests to our club meetings, having 8 of them become paid members, and by personally following-up and inviting these recruits to future club meetings as well as club events. I will evaluate my progress every two months. If I achieve my goal early, I will increase the number of guests I will bring to club meetings. If I find I'm falling short of my goal, perhaps I will decrease the number of guests I invite.

- **Specific:** The goal has the who/what/where/when (bring in new members, for Rotaract, to club meetings, by next March)
- **Measurable:** The goal has specific quantifiable numbers that allow it to be measured (5 new active members, 12 guests, 8 paid members).
- **Attainable:** Is this attainable? Yes, for a club of about 25 active members right now, this is a reasonable goal for someone to take on.
- **Time-specific:** Is this time-specific? Yes, it says it will be accomplished by next March. Let's say for the purpose of this example, this is a 10-month time-frame. That sounds reasonable.
- **Evaluate:** Evaluate this periodically every two months to see how the goal is working out. By the 5 month mark, the person should have at least half the goal (two active members recruited by him/her personally) completed.
- **Revise:** If evaluation of the goal reveals the person already completed the goal in three months, then increase the goal. If evaluation reveals the person is behind, then perhaps decrease the goal.