

Establishing SMART Goals

Smart goals are an important part of the annual review process as it provides employees with a sense of direction, motivation and clear focus for the upcoming year. Smart goals should be developed collaboratively between the employee and the manager with all parties agreeing on the final goals for the year.

SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-Based. SMART goals incorporate all of these criteria to help focus the employee's efforts and increase the chances of them achieving their goals. If goals do not follow this criteria they may be too abstract and employees may lose focus and fall short on what they need to accomplish.

To be most effective, SMART goals should be established based on the following protocols:

1. Goals should be created collaboratively and mutually agreed upon between the employee and the manager
2. Goals should be aligned with the employee's job description, the mission and goals of the individual unit, as well as any presidential or divisional goals for the year
3. Goals should be clearly communicated, written, measurable and action-oriented
4. Goals should be reviewed frequently with the employee and updated as appropriate with ongoing feedback and advisement from the manager

The definitions and guidance on establishing the five criteria associated with SMART goals follows:

Specific – *Simple, Sensible, Significant*

Your goal should be clear and specific, otherwise you won't be able to focus your efforts or feel truly motivated to achieve it. When drafting your goal, try to answer the five "W" questions:

1. What do I want to accomplish?
2. Why is this goal important?
3. Who is involved?
4. Where is it located?
5. Which resources or limits are involved?

Measurable – *Meaningful, Motivating*

It's important to have measurable goals, so that you can track your progress and stay motivated. Assessing progress helps you to stay focused, meet your deadlines, and feel the excitement of getting closer to achieving your goal. A measurable goal should address questions such as:

1. How much?
2. How many?
3. How will I know when it is accomplished?

Attainable – *Agreed, Achievable*

Your goal also needs to be realistic and attainable to be successful. In other words, it should stretch your abilities but still remain possible. When you set an achievable goal, you may be able to identify previously overlooked opportunities or resources that can bring you closer to it.

An achievable goal will usually answer questions such as:

1. How realistic is the goal, based on other constraints, such as financial factors?
2. How can I accomplish this goal?

Relevant – *Reasonable, Realistic, Resourced, Results-based*

We all need support and assistance in achieving our goals, but it's important to retain control over them. So, make sure that your plans drive everyone forward, but that you're still responsible for achieving your own goal. A relevant goal can answer "yes" to these questions:

1. Does this seem worthwhile?
2. Is this the right time?
3. Does this match our other efforts/needs?
4. Am I the right person to reach this goal?
5. Is it applicable in the current socio-economic environment?

Time-Based – *Time Limited, Cost Limited, Timely, Time-sensitive*

Every goal needs a target date, so that you have a deadline to focus on and something to work toward. This part of the SMART goal criteria helps to prevent everyday tasks from taking priority over your longer-term goals.

1. A time-bound goal will usually answer these questions:
2. When?
3. What can I do six months from now?
4. What can I do six weeks from now?
5. What can I do today?

It is suggested that managers and employees agree on no more than five active goals with the gold standard being at least three job-specific goals per year. Please note that goals do not represent the only work to be accomplished by the employee throughout the year, but the goals outlined should represent the top priorities for the employee in the year.