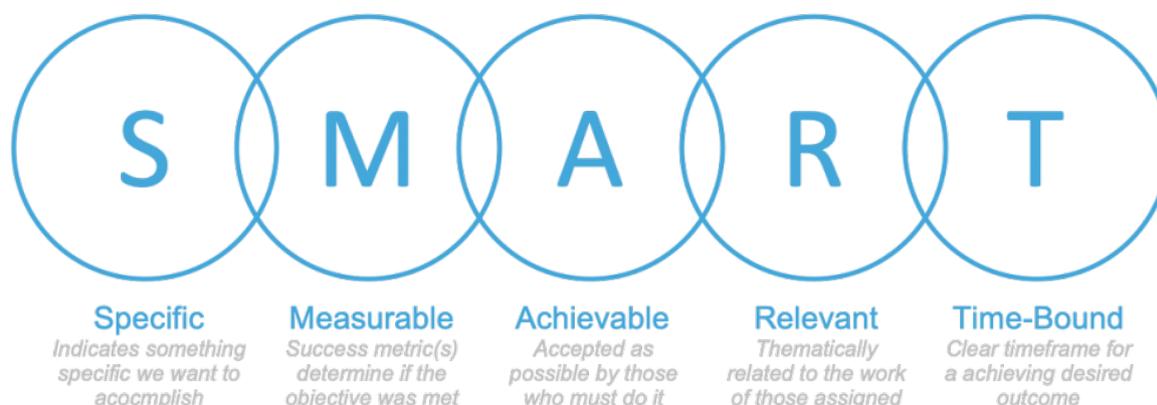


Setting and Agreeing SMART objectives

What Are SMART Objectives

Setting SMART objectives and goals form part of managing oneself and others in a business environment and provide a clear sense of direction, provide motivation and clarify the things which are important. By setting smart objectives, you provide yourself and others with achievable objectives and targets to meet. A SMART objective or goal is used in working on goal or objective setting. SMART is an acronym that stands for (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant or Realistic and Timely or Time-limited). A SMART objective or goal requires incorporating all of these elements to make it SMART. This helps to focus on the outcome and to give clarity of focus and to help ensure a successful outcome in achieving the objective or goal.



Specific

The more specific the objective the better, and is important to identify exactly what needs to be done and how. The actions and results need to be described in quantifiable terms so also try and think about;

- Who is involved and who will benefit
- What exactly are you trying to accomplish
- When do you need to complete the objective by
- Where will this happen
- Why is this objective important
- Which resources might be needed to complete.

Not Smart

My objective is to complete the project.

Smart

My objective is to fully complete the project and have it signed off and agreed by my line manager by Monday the 30th October at midday, meeting weekly to update the team and to monitor and feedback progress.

Where working with others or in a line management capacity, the line manager and employee may agree very detailed objectives on completion of a project etc. This should be agreed through discussion and also agreed upfront.

Measurable

It is important that some kind of system is in place to measure whether the objective is on track and will be achieved (or not). Setting milestones with small achievable tasks will help to make an objective or goal feel more tangible. The system to monitor should be fact based and which removes any challenges on the measure used.

It is important to detail and monitor any progress which can be measured on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly or yearly basis depending on the objective. Ordinarily this would feed into the business' reporting and performance management information.

Achievable

You can determine if your goal is achievable based on elements such as time-frame, costs, and skills needed to execute, and the objective set needs to be something that is achievable by the person undertaking. Although an objective may be challenging, it must be agreed by all parties including the line manager and person undertaking, that the person/s undertaking the project are capable of achieving the required outcome both in terms of skills but also capability and capacity.

Line managers should also be mindful to ensure the objective can be realised and as such should ensure there is a focus on what specifically the person undertaking must do, to deliver

the required outcomes and what performance measures they must focus on, ensuring they are able to enact.

Relevant

The objectives should be in alignment with the company's overall objectives or plan and draw from these at a team/departmental level too, also they must be meaningful to the person undertaking and be something they are able to influence.

Time-bound and time limited

Relevant dates including start and end dates/times need to be agreed and set, whether this is also dependent on other factors and determining when the objective needs to be finished by in order to measure performance against that deadline. The line manager should discuss and ensure deadlines are set in relation to the rest of the business or team the objectives are contributing to.

It is important to monitor the performance measures that have been set, sharing and updating them where this needs to happen.

Advantages and Disadvantages

As stated, the SMART process is a good way to ensure clarity on the required outcomes and objectives, to maintain motivation and to ensure that progress is on track to achieve the desired outcome. So Smart is a good tool for simple and clear objective setting and delivery.

The SMART process however can be seen as being too restrictive for some that lacks the flexibility to adapt through the delivery process. It is also fair to point out that there is little opportunity for feedback on the SMART Process through the implementation and delivery of objectives and that they are fairly basic and sometimes can feel like they lack creativity.

For more on helping managers and staff with setting and delivering SMART objectives, the Enable Growth Associates management development training can offer support to employees.

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