

Consider Developing SMART Goals

S – SPECIFIC & SHARED

M – MEASURABLE

A – ATTAINABLE

R – REACHING & CHALLENGING

T – TIME SPECIFIC

Specific and Shared

A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. Goals must be clear and concise. If a goal ends up being vague or all encompassing, then how can anyone be successful in reaching them? When goals are specific, they tell your committee members or team exactly what is expected, why it is important, who is involved, where it is going to happen and which resources are important.

We cannot begin to measure goals that are broad and open ended. As you begin to define the specifics of a goal, you can now easily measure your teams' progress toward their completion. To set a specific goal you must answer the five "W" questions:

- What: What do I want to accomplish?
- Why: Specific reasons or the purpose of accomplishing the goal.
- Who: Who is involved and who will do the work?
- Where: Identify a location.
- Which: Identify requirements (necessary resources) and constraints.

A shared goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a goal hidden in someone's mind or a document tucked away in a file cabinet or saved in some electronic file system. Challenge yourself and your committee to write the goals in such a way that you can share them with others. The more public you make them, the more you will feel obligated to follow through with what you have committed and the more likely that others will remember and ask you about your progress. When you share your goals you develop your self-image. You see yourself as worthy of these goals, and develop the traits and personality that will allow you to "own" the work.

Measurable

Establish how you will measure progress as you begin working on reaching the goals you have set. Identify what it is that can and will be measured. If your goals are not measurable, you will never know whether your team is making progress toward their successful completion. When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates, and experience the excitement of moving forward that helps you to continue the steps required to reach the final goal. Measuring may include setting

“milestones” of progress. That means establishing smaller, attainable steps that can be measured as you move along. Sometimes it is easier to accept milestone progress steps than to wait for the very end to reach one final measured target like “100% completed”. To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions such as:

- How much?
- How many?
- How will I know when it is accomplished?
- How will we know when we hit our target?

Attainable

Goals must be realistic in order for a group of people to believe that they can actually attain the outcome or target. The best goals require the team to stretch a bit to achieve them, but they aren't so extreme that individuals give up and justify that it would take too much effort. When this occurs, you will hear people commenting that they just can't get behind it and support the goal. It takes some practice to set realistic goals. Goals that are set too high or too low become meaningless and will eventually either be dropped or need to be modified down the road. When you identify goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true and the way to make them come true is to be very honest and realistic about how much it will take to get the work done. To set an attainable goal you must answer the "H" question:

- How: How can the goal be accomplished?

By identifying all the issues and points that surround the “how”, a team can attain almost any goal set. Through the “how” you begin to plan your steps wisely and establish time frames that allow you to carry out those steps. Goals that may have seemed far away and out of reach eventually move closer and become attainable, not because your goals shrink, but because you grow and expand to match them. By answering the “how” and identifying a timeline, your team will begin to scrutinize the goal itself. This is where team members start to realize whether or not the original goal statement needs to be modified...perhaps the way the goal was stated needs to be changed because you now see how the timeline reflects a truer picture of the many steps it will take to be “attainable”.

Relevant

To be relevant, a goal must represent an objective toward which you are willing and able to work. A goal can be both high and relevant; you are the only one who can decide just how high your goal should be. But be sure that every goal represents substantial progress. A high goal is frequently easier to reach than a low one because a low goal exerts low motivational force. Your goal is probably relevant if you truly believe that it can be accomplished. Additional ways to know if your goal is relevant is to determine if you have accomplished anything similar in the past or ask yourself what conditions would have to exist to accomplish this goal. Ask yourself how much of an impact attaining this goal will have on your organization. Ask your team how important and/or critical this goal is to them.

Timely

A goal should be grounded within a time frame. A goal must have a target date. Commitment to deadlines helps committees and teams to focus their efforts on completion of the goal on or before the due date. Goals without deadlines or schedules for completion tend to be forgotten. There is a lot that we all have on our plate daily. With no time frame tied to the goal, there is less urgency to go after the goal because it is easier for us just to keep doing the work we already have to do. To set a timely goal you must answer the sixth "W" question:

- When: Establish a time frame.

If you want to accomplish a goal, when do you want to accomplish it by? "Someday" won't work. But if you anchor it within a timeframe, "by January 1st", then you've set your unconscious mind into motion to begin working on the goal. A deadline too far in the future is too easily put off. A goal that's set too close is not only unrealistic, it's discouraging. Long-term goals are simply a description of what you want for yourself in the future -- say about 3 to 5 years out. A goal is not a plan; it's more like a wish list with (hopefully) a basis in reality. From the long term goals you must now break down these large goals into smaller ones. There are many names for these smaller parts of the goal (i.e. objectives, actions, short-term goals, intermediate goals). Whatever title you give them, as you identify these smaller parts, they become more manageable with team members realizing that each step or action is simply a part of the larger plan. Short term goals can be developed by asking "What" questions as it pertains to the near future. Narrow down to the most immediate, yet realistic time frame you are capable of working within:

- What can I do 6 months from now?
- What can I do 6 weeks from now?
- What can I do today?