Goal setting

A goal is a concrete action, event or outcome that you strive to obtain. Goals enrich our lives, give us energy, create a sense of purpose and give us a "road map." "If you don’t know where you are going, you will probably end up somewhere else." - Laurence J. Peter

Creating S.M.A.R.T. goals

The S.M.A.R.T. acronym provides a certain methodology to develop meaningful goals.

Specific: Write your goal/idea as detailed as possible.

Measurable: Identify quantitative targets for tracking your progress and results

Attainable: Make certain that it is possible to achieve the desired result.

Realistic: Acknowledge practical requirements necessary to accomplish the goal.

Timed: Build the specific deadlines.

Specific

A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. A specific goal will usually answer the six ‘W’ questions:

- Who: Who is involved?
- What: What do I want to accomplish?
- Where: Where will this happen. Identify a location.
- When: When will this happen? Establish a time frame.
- Which: Which requirements and constraints will be part of the process?
  - Identify them.
- Why: Why am I setting this goal? Jot down the specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal.

EXAMPLE: A general goal would be, “Improve project management skills.” But a specific goal would say, “Take the Project Management Essentials workshop on 10-18-2016, report
what was learned to my team by 11-01-2016 and apply the relevant concepts while implementing my 2017 marketing plan.”

**Measurable**

Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each goal you set.

When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates, and experience the exhilaration of achievement that spurs you on to continued effort required to reach your goal.

To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions such as:

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

**Attainable**

Set realistic goals. Based on the present restrictions such as your schedule, workload, and knowledge, do you believe you can attain the objective you set? If not, then set a different goal, one that is attainable for you in the present.

As yourself the following questions:

- Will I be able to do this?
- Am I prepared to make the commitment to reach my target?
- Is there a more achievable target I am willing to work for?

**Realistic**

To be realistic, a goal must represent an objective toward which you are both willing and able to work. A goal can be both high and realistic; 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 realistic goal can answer yes to these questions:

- Does this seem worthwhile?
- Is this the right time?
- Does this match other efforts/needs?

**Timed**

A goal should have a timeframe – a deadline or date for completion. Setting a deadline reinforces the seriousness of the goal in your mind. It motivates you to take action. When you don’t set a timeline, there is no internal pressure to accomplish the goal, so it gets put on the back burner.
Within your established timeframe, ask yourself:

- What can I do today to reach my goal?
- What can I do 3 weeks from now to reach my goal?
- What can I do 3 months from now to reach my goal?

**Tips on Setting Goals**

**ALWAYS write down your goals.**

Why? Because the likelihood of you achieving your goals is significantly enhanced when you take the simple action of writing them down.

**Take time out to think through what it is you really want.**

It's almost impossible to generate new thinking when you are surrounded by the familiar.

Break away from your usual environment. Go for a walk, sit on a park bench, go somewhere you have never been before.

Writing goals is a very important activity so see it that way and make time and a place for it.

**Be clear about what it is you truly want.**

The S. in the S.M.A.R.T acronym stands for being specific - knowing what it is you want and specifying it as clearly as you can. Be as specific as you can.

Think about how you will know when you have achieved your goal.

In other words, what will you see? What will you hear? How will you feel?

**Determine WHY you want it.**

Why? Because when you are really clear on the reasons behind your goal, your reasons motivate you and provide you with the necessary fuel to achieve your goal.

**Brainstorm your measurables and keep brainstorming them as necessary all along the way.**

When you define the measurables in your smart goal, brainstorm as many measures as possible. Once you have your list prioritize them.

Achieving your goal is a process. You never know where your path might lead so review what is happening and at all points be prepared to brainstorm new pathways.
Sample Goals

Let’s look at some examples:

- General goal - Be more receptive to coaching suggestions and feedback.
- SMART goal - At my monthly progress meetings, ask for feedback on what I am 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.

- General goal - Improve Customer Service Skills.
- SMART goal – Decrease the time to respond to customer queries by 3 minutes by the end of this quarter. Decrease time to resolve customer issues from 2 hours to 1.5 hours by July.

- General goal – Increase attendance at Annual Conference.
- SMART goal – Increase the attendance of the Annual Conference by 100 guests by speaking to the guest via telephone and writing to them all by e-mail. All communication should happen 3 weeks before the event.

Goal setting resources

- Quintessential Careers Goal Setting Article