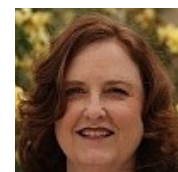


Creating **SMARTER** Goals

by Shirley Lee



Goals are a tangible way for organizations to measure how they are doing towards meeting their mission and moving toward their vision. Groups get together to set goals and/or objectives for a new fiscal year.

During the goal and objective setting process, leadership teams need to consider the standard acronym SMART when creating goals as part of the overall strategic plan. Then leaders need to move to **SMARTER** goals to not only decide what to do, but how to do it so that goals can easily be tracked for progress and flexibility.

The acronym **SMARTER**, stands for: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-based, Evaluate, and Resources.

Specific describes the details of what is to be accomplished in a concise yet clear manner. The goal must be easy to understand and well defined in order to make achieving it possible for everyone concerned within the organization. Unclear goals are easily misunderstood and therefore typically do not always accomplish the expected results. Being specific answers the question of what has to be done by most members of the organization so that they can take the necessary actions.

Measurable uses numeric terms in order to provide a way to compare or quantify where everyone is in relation to accomplishing the defined target goal. Establishing performance criteria for measuring the goal will allow flexibility for revising numbers during the goal period in order to better manage the process and stay on track to meeting the main target. Determining and utilizing a tracking method helps show how much is to be gained by accomplishing the set goal. It also encourages continued improvement as the goal amount comes closer during each measurement cycle.

Attainable indicates the goal is within the ability and capability of those involved. However, it should include a slightly higher number in order to stretch the collective talents and abilities or the involved people to reach the most desirable target. It must not only accomplish the defined goal which is possible and realistic, it needs to be challenging for both the organization and its people. Having a goal that stretches members involved and allows for growth opportunity often leads to better results.

Relevant indicates the goal is not only within reach of people's skill level but also has meaning that relates back to the mission or vision of those who are responsible for meeting the primary goal. Relevancy helps everyone involved understand how they directly influence the goal and how achieving it also affects them. When a goal is relevant to everyone involved, it elevates commitment and motivates their reaching the goal.

Time-based estimates a specific period for measuring the goal (such as year, quarter, or month) or a deadline date for achieving the final goal target. Setting a time frame establishes a frequency for monitoring progress; which in turns helps everyone to stay on-track, make adjustments to meet the overall goal, and gain momentum as they accomplish items during the path to reaching the ultimate goal. Without a time-based function within the goal, it may become impossible to know when changes are needed in order to make the goal a reality.

Evaluate by looking at the goals regularly. Strategic goals should be looked at more often than once a year. Goals need to be evaluated frequently not only to see where the organization is in meeting them but to re-evaluate if each goals is still relevant. The economy changes often. Flexible organizations and people need to change as well. Build an evaluation cycle into the goal setting and review process so changes and celebrations can happen based on a plan rather than as a result of a crisis.

Resources are important because goals can not be met if the proper resources are not provided and utilized. Is the necessary equipment, technology, or training in place? If not, what must be done to get it? For achieving most goals, human resources are often very important. Does everyone know what the goals are, how they are to be accomplished, when they must be done? Every good strategic plan includes developing and implementing a communication plan.

***About the Author:** Shirley Fine Lee is the author of "[R.A! R.A! A Meeting Wizard's Approach](#)" and "[TAPP Steps in Time management](#)." She has a long background in training and has been a member of Dallas ASTD since 2000. Find out more about her or to contact her visit www.ShirleyFineLee.com.*