Creating S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Relevant
Time-bound

Specific: Goal objectives should address the five Ws… who, what, when, where, and why. Make sure the goal specifies what needs to be done with a timeframe for completion. Use action verbs… create, design, develop, implement, produce, etc. *Example: resolve accounting discrepancies within 48 hours.*

Measurable: Goal objectives should include numeric or descriptive measures that define quantity, quality, cost, etc. How will you and your staff member know when the goal has been successfully met? Focus on elements such as observable actions, quantity, quality, cycle time, efficiency, and/or flexibility to measure outcomes, not activities. *Example: secure pledges from ten new donors by the end of each week.*

Achievable: Goal objectives should be within the staff member's control and influence; a goal may be a "stretch" but still feasible. Is the goal achievable with the available resources? Is the goal achievable within the timeframe originally outlined? Consider authority or control, influence, resources, and work environment support to meet the goal. *Example: obtain the XYZ professional certification within two years.*

Relevant: Goals should be instrumental to the mission of the department (and ultimately, the institution). Why is the goal important? How will the goal help the department achieve its objectives? Develop goals that relate to the staff member's key accountabilities or link with departmental goals that align with the institutional strategic goals. *Example: develop and implement a diversity recruitment plan that increases the number of diversity candidates by ten percent*

Time-bound: Goal objectives should identify a definite target date for completion and/or frequencies for specific action steps that are important for achieving the goal. How often should the staff member work on this assignment? By when should this goal be accomplished? Incorporate specific dates, calendar milestones, or timeframes that are relative to the achievement of another result (i.e., dependencies and linkages to other projects). *Example: check the fire alarms and emergency lighting in all buildings every six months.*

S.M.A.R.T. Goal Examples

Not SMART: Improve customer service.
SMART: Achieve and maintain an average customer service rating of at least 4.0 (out of a possible 5.0) on our annual survey by 4/30/2011.

Not SMART: Create the unit's 2012 strategic plan.
SMART: Create the unit's 2012 strategic plan, obtain final approval from executive leadership, and discuss with department so individuals can begin setting performance objectives by July 2011.

Not SMART: Improve project management skills.
SMART: Take the Project Management Essentials workshop on 11-18-2010, report what was learned to our team by 01-01-2011, and apply the relevant concepts while implementing our 2012 IT plan.

Not SMART: Send out welcome letters to new students.
SMART: Produce and distribute personalized welcome letters, error free, to all new students by 9-26-11.

Not SMART: Be more receptive to coaching suggestions and feedback.
SMART: At our monthly progress meetings, ask for feedback on what you are 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 did not work.

Not SMART: Keep the department's Website up-to-date.
SMART: Solicit updates and new material for the Website from department managers on the first Friday of each month; publish this new material by the following Friday. Each time material is published, review the Website for material that is out-of-date and delete or archive that material.

Remember the S.M.A.R.T. acronym when establishing goals and objectives. This formula for goal-setting helps ensure that both supervisors and staff members share the same understanding and clarity on goals set during the performance management cycle.