

Work SMART-er and create your own plan for success

What is your vision of success? For some people it's having the corner office, to others it means a flexible schedule with plenty of time off to be with the kids. But, whatever your vision, setting goals can help make your dream a reality.

Setting goals is more than making vague statements like, "I will find a new job" or "I will increase my business." It means creating a written plan that includes long-term and short-term objectives. It means setting SMART goals: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time Framed.

Specific: Often we set goals that are so loose there is no way to evaluate our success. For example, "I will lose weight" is too vague. How will you know if and when you've reached your goal? Saying, "I will lose five

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pounds this month" is more specific. At the end of the month it will be easy to see if you've hit your target.

Measurable: Most of us know it's important to continually develop business connections. But, "make new contacts" is ambiguous. "I will attend four networking events each month and try to connect with one person at each," is a simple, concrete goal. One that is easy to measure.

Achievable: Nearly everyone has tried to drop a few pounds at one time or another. Whether we succeed often depends on our goals. Losing 15 pounds in 30 days is unreal-

istic. Losing six pounds in 30 days is reasonable. Don't set yourself up for failure by setting goals that are out of reach.

Realistic: When we're kids we think we can do anything. As adults we learn that while we can have a lot, we can't necessarily have it all at the same time. It's important to be realistic. Do you have the ability and commitment to make your dream come true? Or does it need a little tweaking? For example, you may love to cook, but do you have the time, talent and commitment to become a caterer? Be honest.

Time Framed: Having a time frame helps give your goals structure. For example, many of us want to find a new job or start our own business. Some people spend a lot of time talking about what they're going to do. Someday.

But, without a target date there is no sense of urgency, no reason to take any action today. Developing a time frame gives you the impetus to get moving. It also will help you monitor your progress.

Creating Your Plan

These are the fundamentals of goal setting. The next step is translating this process to fit your needs. Keep the SMART acronym in mind as you create your plan.

Start by deciding what you want to accomplish. Now you're ready to create your goals. Begin by establishing a few long-term objectives. These are things you want to accomplish in one-to-five years. Next, develop your short-term goals. These are monthly, weekly and even daily targets that will move

you toward your long-term objectives.

Be careful not to push yourself too hard or too fast. While successful people know you need to stretch your talents in order to grow, they also know it's important to set reasonable goals. Always be your own best friend. Don't set yourself up for failure.

The first step to success is knowing where you want to go. The second step is having a plan to get there. Your goals are your road map. Follow them and you'll be well on your way.

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