

## **SMART Goals**

Goal setting is the process of deciding what you want to accomplish and devising a plan to achieve the result you desire. For effective goal setting, you need to do more than just decide what you want to do, you also have to work at accomplishing whatever goal you have set for your club.

For many people they know what they want to do, but have trouble creating a plan to get there. Goals without action plans are just words.

How do we capitalize on the successes of the year before and make them even better?

It's a bit like making a New Year's Resolution. Did you know that those who make resolutions are 10 times more likely to attain their goals than people who don't make resolutions? Having a clear vision as to what you want to accomplish; allowing you to prioritize what is important, have strong direction, and keep you on track throughout the year.

How do you know what kind of goals to set? The whole point of setting goals, after all, is to achieve them. It does you no good to go to the trouble of calling meetings, working through the needs of your club, and burning up precious time, only to end up with goals that aren't acted on or completed.

One way to make sure you have a good shot at actually accomplishing the goals you set is to make sure that the goals you set follow the SMART acronym and are:

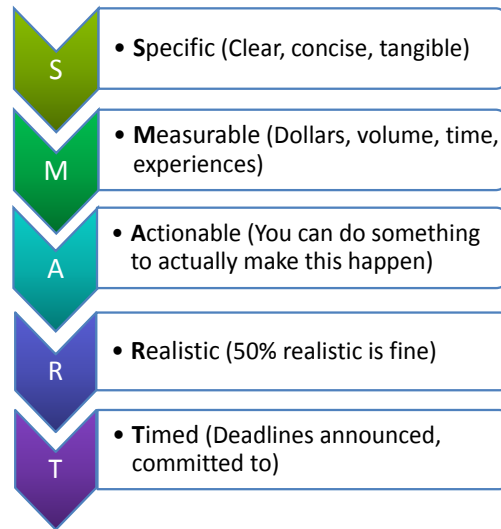
- **Specific**
- **Measurable**
- **Actionable**
- **Realistic**
- **Timed**

When a goal is SMART then it is more likely to be achieved, going beyond the realm of fuzzy goal-setting into an actionable plan for results. A SMART goal clarifies exactly what is expected and measures are used to determine if the goal is achieved and successfully completed.

The method of SMART goals is one of the most effective tools used by high achievers to reach their goals, realistically and consistently. Learning how to set SMART goals can make the difference between failure and achievement.

Setting goals is more than making vague statements. It means creating a written plan that includes reasonable and measurable long-term and short-term objectives. It means setting SMART goals.

## S.M.A.R.T. Goals Defined



### SMART

#### S – Specific (Clear, Concise, Tangible)

To set up SMART goals, you need to start by being specific about what you want to achieve. Be straightforward and emphasize what you want to happen. Great goals are well-defined and focused, vague goals equate to vague results.

Break your large goals into smaller pieces that you can realistically attain with ease. Specifics help us to focus our efforts and clearly define what we are going to do:

- **WHAT:** What do you want to accomplish? Use action words such as direct, organize, lead, coordinate, develop, plan, build, etc.
- **WHY:** Specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal.
- **WHO:** Who is involved?
- **WHERE:** Identify a location.
- **WHEN:** Establish a time frame.
- **HOW** are you going to do it? Identify requirements and constraints.

Not all of these questions will apply to every goal, but it is important to ask all the questions in order to assess how specific your goal is and make it as clear as possible. When goals are specific, you can easily measure progress toward them.

Set goals that you can and will actually achieve:

- Choose goals that are worthwhile. The purpose of goal setting is to move us forward and spur positive change. If a goal doesn't have this motivating, transformational quality, don't bother with it. You'll be disappointed.
- Choose goals that are achievable stretches. If a goal isn't engaging, you'll get bored and abandon it.
- Commit to your goals. You and your club need to dedicate yourselves to accomplish the goal you have chosen. That's why writing your goals down is a common goal setting practice, it's the first step to committing to achieving your goals.
- Announce your goals. Making your goals public is a goal setting technique that is really effective for many people. Knowing that others are going to be monitoring your results ensures commitment to the goal and is extremely motivating.

## **SMART**

### **M – Measurable** (Dollars, Volume, Time, Experiences)

Now that you have an idea of the goals you want to achieve, you need to decide how you will measure your success. A goal without a measurable outcome is like a sports competition without a scoreboard or scorekeeper.

Put concrete numbers in your goals to know if you're falling behind or if you're on track. Goals should be measurable so that you have tangible evidence that you have accomplished the goal. Usually, the entire goal statement is a measure for the project, but there are usually several short-term or small measurements that can be built into the goal. Choose a goal with measurable progress so you can see the change occur.

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 goals.

To determine if your goal is measurable ask questions like:

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

In order for a goal to be stated specifically, you must determine what the tangible measures for your goal will be. In other words, what will you see, hear or feel when you have achieved your goal? Your answers to this question are the way you will recognize when you have achieved your goal.

Without measures, how will you know that you have been successful?

Create a way to measure your goals. Add time limits, time frames and tools that measure what you are trying to attain. Aim to complete a goal at a certain time, but also be flexible enough to change the time if needed.

When you list the measures for your goal, then you can create a sentence that summarizes your goal much more easily. And remember, "What can't be measured, can't be managed".

## **SMART**

**A – Actionable** (You can do something to actually make this happen)

When you identify goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true. You develop attitudes, abilities, skills and financial capacity to reach them. You begin seeing previously overlooked opportunities to bring yourself closer to the achievement of your goals.

Your goals must be attainable. High goals that stretch your club are okay, but high and realistic goals are better. Unattainable goals can de-motivate your club, while easy goals won't be challenging and might seem meaningless. If a goal is impossible to achieve, they may not even try to accomplish it.

A goal needs to push you slightly so you feel a sense of real accomplishment, but still believe you can achieve it. The feeling of success helps you to remain motivated.

An actionable goal will usually answer the question:

- How: How can the goal be accomplished?

Goals should be achievable; they should stretch you slightly so you feel challenged, but defined well enough so that you can achieve them. Your club must possess the appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to achieve the goal.

Be careful that you do not limit your club based on what people believe to be achievable or not. Set your own standards by understanding your club's abilities, strengths and weaknesses.

You can meet almost any goal when you plan your steps wisely and establish a timeframe that allows you to carry out those steps. As you carry out the steps, you can achieve goals that may have seemed impossible when you started; not because your

goals shrink, but because you grow and expand to match them. As you achieve those smaller goals, you will be more motivated to stay the course.

When you list your goals, you build your club's self-image. You see your club as worthy of these goals, and your club develops the traits and personality that allow them to possess the goals.

Based on your present club restrictions, do you believe you can attain the objective you set? If not, then set a different goal, one that is attainable for your club in the present.

Ask the following questions:

- Is your club prepared to make the commitment to reach your target?
- Are you willing to dramatically alter or at least tweak aspects of your club?
- Is there a more achievable target you are willing to work for?

Dream big and aim for the stars, but keep one foot firmly based in reality.

## **SMART**

### **R – Realistic** (50% realistic is fine)

The key to setting goals that you can achieve is to set realistic or relevant goals. By setting realistic, relevant goals there is far more chance of your club achieving your goals and ultimately sticking to your long-term goal. Your SMART goals should be realistic so you can be confident that you will meet the goal. Make sure your club has the means to achieve the goal and that you can overcome any financial or educational obstacles.

Realistic means do-able, the skills needed to do the work are available and the project fits with the overall strategy and goals of the club. A realistic project may push the skills and knowledge of the people working on it, but it shouldn't break them.

To be realistic, a goal must represent an objective toward which you are both willing and able to work. Goals should be challenging, not impossible. 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 high goal is frequently easier to reach than a low one because a low goal exerts low motivational force. Some of the hardest jobs you've ever accomplished actually seemed easy simply because they were a labor of love.

Your goal should also be stretching and motivating, but not so big or complex that you will lose the motivation to achieve it. Setting goals that are not challenging often will

not accomplish much of anything. Try to find the ideal balance between challenging and impossible that works for your club.

It's important to honestly evaluate your club and ask the following questions about your goals:

- Is your goal realistic and within your club's reach?
- Is your goal relevant to your club's purpose? Is it in line with Rotary's beliefs and values?
- Does this seem worthwhile?
- Is this the right time?
- Does this match your other efforts/needs?
- Is it applicable in the current socio-economic-technical environment?

## **SMART**

### **T – Timed** (Deadlines announced, committed to)

This is often one of the most intimidating steps in goal setting. For some reason, setting a deadline or date of completion makes one's heart skip a beat. Don't let the fear of setting a deadline sidetrack you from achieving what you want. When you set your time limits, set the deadlines for the steps along the way and in no time at all you will have completed the goal.

Goals should be linked to a timeframe that creates a practical sense of urgency, or results in tension between the current reality and the vision of the goal. Without such tension, the goal is unlikely to produce a relevant outcome. Goals must have starting points, ending points, and fixed durations.

A commitment to a target date helps a team focus on completion of the goal on or before the due date. This part of the SMART goal criteria is intended to prevent goals from being overtaken by the day-to-day activities of a club. A timed goal will usually answer the questions:

- When? By when do I want to have achieved my goal?
- What can I do six months from now?
- What can I do six weeks from now?
- What can I do today?

You want timed steps so you know what you can expect to achieve at a given date. Set long-term goals that sit in the future, but also include short-term goals with closer time frames that you can meet as you move toward your longer goal.

Putting an end point on your goal gives you a clear target to work towards. If you don't set a time, the commitment is too vague and tends not to happen because you feel you can start at any time. Without a time limit, there's no urgency to start taking action now and procrastination sets in.

Setting a deadline reinforces the seriousness of the goal. It motivates your club 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. Having a set amount of time to complete a goal gives it structure, gives your club the impetus to get started and helps you monitor your club's progress.

Checking off that a deadline is included in a goal is fairly straightforward. Making sure that it is realistic may be an entirely different matter. Consider all of your priorities and time constraints and set a realistic deadline. If outside pressures are making the deadline unrealistic, then look at ways to change the strategy for completion.

Setting a realistic time-frame for your club's accomplishments helps you maintain momentum and follow-through with the completion of your tasks. Someone once said "A goal is a dream with a time-frame attached to it".

## **What are SMARTER Goals?**

The E and R have been added to the SMART goals list recently.

### **E – Evaluate (your goals)**

Review, analyze, and adjust. Check your progress throughout the year at regular intervals so that you can decide if you need to change something, add something, etc. Napoleon Hill stated "The primary reason for failure is that people do not develop new plans to replace those plans that didn't work."

Remember that goal setting is a process and evaluation is an important part of that process. Think about what you did, how you did it and what you got out of it. Whether you successfully accomplished your goal or not, there's always something to be learned:

- What worked or didn't work
- Did achieving your goal live up to your expectations?
- If you failed, why?

Extracting these lessons will increase your accomplishments even more as you apply them to your future goal setting experiences.

### **R – Reward** (your club for accomplishments)

Internal satisfaction is a great thing, but external rewards can be immensely satisfying also. When your club accomplishes a goal, you've devoted time and effort to your club's success, so take the time to celebrate your club's success too. If the goal is a long-term goal, celebrating the smaller accomplishments keeps motivation going.

### **Conclusion**

As you can see, SMART goals are crucial to your success. Once you have a SMART goal clearly defined, you need to come up with an action plan of how you are going to get there.

Break down each goal into a specific set of tasks and activities to accomplish your goals. It is important to periodically review your goals and make adjustments if necessary.

Last but not least, you need to take action towards your goals. Goals won't magically happen just because you've written them down. Even if you come up with amazing SMART goals, nothing happens if you don't act on them.