

## Writing Objectives

### The SMART Rule

When setting objectives remember to think about the **SMART** rule. Set yourself challenging objectives, but ensure that they are still:

<b>S</b> pecific	Clear and unambiguous, not part of a 'wish list' or 'woolly'
<b>M</b> easurable	There is an outcome you can measure to see if you were successful or not
<b>A</b> greed	Agreed by both parties as being something to go for – not just imposed by the manager
<b>R</b> ealistic	Challenging, but within the scope of your resources, ability & time available. In line with the overall direction of your dept. and company
<b>T</b> ime-bound	The overall objective (and maybe parts of it) have time-frames specified

### Issues to Consider

When agreeing an objective you should consider issues such as:

- ◆ How does it relate to the strategic direction or to other planning documents relevant to your area?
- ◆ The budgetary impact of your objective. Does it require additional resources that you need to budget for, borrow or acquire?
- ◆ Does your objective "add value" to your area and the organisation?
- ◆ Does the objective involve the assistance or co-operation of other people? If so, are they aware of their role/responsibilities and your proposed time frame requirements? Have they set this objective as part of their work plans too?
- ◆ What are the steps you need to complete in order to achieve the overall objective? When will each step be completed and how will you know that you have completed it? (i.e. How will you measure that you have completed it?)
- ◆ Are there any obvious barriers that may prevent you from achieving this objective in the set time frame? If so, can you plan to remove them before you begin?

### How to Write an Objective

- Keep the wording of your goal/objective simple and succinct. Avoid jargon.
- Ensure that your goal statement and the associated measure (performance target/indicator) nominates the **what, when, how and who**.
- When writing the steps to achieve your goal, endeavour to start each sentence with "action words". For example:

Identify	Implement	Initiate	Assess
Review	Evaluate	Produce	Conduct
Table	Prepare	Create	Monitor
Determine	Define	Discuss	Seek

Modify	Develop	Undertake	Gather
Lodge	Clarify	Promote	Source
Complete	Secure	Schedule	Distribute
Order	Trial	Provide	Interview

## How to Set Measures (Performance Targets/Indicators)

The key to identifying measures of progress, or end measures for your goals is to think about **how you will know if your purpose is being achieved**. That is, what will be.....

**Different? Improved? Increased?**  
**Reduced? Produced? Eliminated?**

Depending on what your purpose is, you then must think about and define either:

1. the **quantity of change you desire** (in the case of Different, Improved, Increased or Reduced)
2. the **product of your objective** (in the case of Produced) OR
3. the **task/process/activity/habit/event that is to be eliminated** (in the case of Eliminated)

## Some Miscellaneous Tips for Objective Setting

- ◆ Remember it is better to under promise and over deliver, than to over promise and under deliver.
- ◆ Focus on "high impact" areas. (This does not necessarily mean it has to be a monumental project. Sometimes little things make a big difference.)
- ◆ Plan the objective fully at the start, by identifying the steps to achieve it. The steps are the manageable increments - the mini milestones along the path toward your overall objective.
- ◆ By breaking the objective down, it is less overwhelming and you can feel like you are achieving something through the process, not just at the end of the process.
- ◆ Remove barriers to success at the start. It's in everyone's interests that people succeed.
- ◆ Measure positive outcomes wherever you can – not mistakes.
- ◆ Go for a few quality objectives rather than a large quantity.

**For related topics see Top Tips:**

- **Assessing**
- **One-to-One Meetings (OTOMs)**
- **PDR**