**A Brief Guide to SMART Goal Setting**  
(adapted from Cornerstone: Executive & Life Coaching. Available at: https://www.ndi.org)

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A SMART goal is a goal that is specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time based. In other words, **a goal that is very clear and easily understood.**

**SPECIFIC**

The goal must clearly state **what** is to be achieved, by **whom**, **where** and **when** it is to be achieved. Sometimes it may even state why that goal is important.   
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.

**MEASURABLE**

Measurability applies to both the end result and the milestones along the way to attaining a goal. It answers the question of quantity – how much, how often, how many?   
The milestones are signs along the way that will tell you that you are on the right track to achieving your goal.

It has been said that what cannot be measured cannot be managed. This is often true when it comes to goals. Sometimes it is difficult to measure a goal, but at such times there is usually an indirect measure that can be applied.

**ATTAINABLE**

You should ensure that the goals you set are achievable.

Firstly, you must believe that you can manage to do what you are setting out to do. If you set goals that re unbelievable even to yourself it is very unlikely you will achieve them.

Secondly, the goals must be possible. Be careful however, that you do not limit yourself based on what other people believe to be achievable or not. Set your own standards by understanding your own abilities, strengths and weaknesses.

**RELEVANT**

Your goals must be relevant to what you want to achieve in the short term and the long term.

Understanding your personal vision, mission and purpose is critical in this respect.  
 Sometimes you can be tempted to do something simply because it is easy and sounds great, only to discover later on that is has no long term importance to what you want to achieve. Do those things that are most important and in line with your long term vision and mission

**TIME-BASED**

This sometimes overlaps with the goal being Specific, but it aims to ensure that you put a time-frame to your goals. Someone said a goal is a dream with a time-frame to it. Simply deciding by when you want to achieve something can be a good motivator. It can prevent you from procrastinating because you know that you are working to a deadline.

**“Failing to plan is planning to fail”**

If you find yourself unable to set a SMART goal it is more than likely that your future plans are not clear enough and need to be worked on. Furthermore do not get tempted to skip the process of SMART goal setting and “get on with it” without fully analyzing your goals. Doing this careful planning at the beginning will save you lots of time and disappointment at a later stage and you will avoid making costly mistakes.