

SMART Goals...Explained

- **Specific:** You should target a specific subject area and provide enough detail so there is no indecision as to what exactly you should be doing when the time comes to do it. A goal of: “Minimizing Customer Complaints” is poor. Where are the complaints coming from? The internal or external customer or both? Is the system at fault or is it the staff? A much better goal would be: Examine Customer Complaints to Determine Avoidable Errors and Service Failures.”
- **Measurable:** You should identify the measurement instrument to be used and the element explained must be measurable. Your goal should be such that when you are through you have some tangible evidence of completion. It feels good to see something in front of you showing a job well done. Equally important, you will be able to prove to yourself that you were successful and your time wasn’t wasted.
- **Achievable/Acceptable:** Your goal should be set by you and by no one else. If it is a group goal then it should be a goal gained through consensus of the group. Assessment will best show your strengths and weaknesses, and you can use this information to maximize your chances of success. It should be achievable in the sense that achievable percentage gains are expected.
- **Relevant/Realistic:** Make sure the goal addresses a relevant subject area. Is the goal an urgent need? Don’t plan to do things if you are unlikely to follow through. Better to plan a few comprehensive goals rather than many things and be unsuccessful. Success breeds success. Start small with what you can do, experience the joys of meeting your goal, and only then gradually increase the amount of work that you ask of yourself. Setting goals in which every minute of the day is devoted to your goal(s) is unrealistic; unplanned events will crop up and wreak havoc with your schedule. Give yourself some flexibility.
- **Timely:** What is a reasonable timeframe to accomplish your goal? Is it one month? Is it one year? Is it a two-week period of intense study? You should be using reality or baseline data points if available. Bottom line: Keep it real. Keep goals set within realistic timeframes.