

Creating Team Goals

To develop a "winning team," unambiguous, measurable, and time-certain goals need to be established. The goals must be understood by each team member, such that each team member can clearly articulate them. Goals must be measurable, or at least verifiable. Without measurable goals, teams may lose direction and will not be able to gauge performance or determine progress. Goals need to have defined dates for accomplishment. A sense of urgency keeps teams motivated and moving towards goal achievement.

Goals need to be set by the team, not imposed by the organization or the team leader. The organization establishes the team to solve a problem. Team goals and how the problem is to be resolved are up to the team. Goals must be achievable, that is, neither too easy nor too difficult. Goals should be structured so that there are opportunities for "small wins" along the way in the progression to full achievement. Goals should also be tied to concrete work products from the team.

Goals must not be generic, such as "increase customer service satisfaction," "reduce internet wait times," or "increase the number of customers served." Goals must be specific, such as: "decrease customer complaint letters by 30% with no increase in cost by the end of the fourth quarter," "reduce the average wait time to use a computer by 20% by the end of June," or "increase the number of library card holders by 10% by January 2007."

Goals need to be measured by the SMART scale:

- Specific
- Measured
- Attainable
- Realistic
- Tangible

Specific - A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. To set a specific goal you must answer the six "W" questions:

*Who:	Who is involved?	*What:	What do I want to accomplish?
*Where:	Identify a location.	*When:	Establish a time frame.
*Which:	Identify requirements and constraints.	*Why:	Specific reasons, purpose or benefits

EXAMPLE: A general goal would be, "Get in shape." But a specific goal would say, "Join a health club and workout three days a week."

Measurable - 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 goal. To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions such as, "How much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?"

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Attainable - When you identify goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true. You develop the 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.

You can attain most any goal you set when you plan your steps wisely and establish a time frame that allows you to carry out those steps. Goals that may have seemed far away and out of reach eventually move closer and become attainable, not because your goals shrink, but because you grow and expand to match them. When you list your goals you build your self-image. You see yourself as worthy of these goals, and develop the traits and personality that allow you to possess them.

Realistic - To be realistic, a goal must represent an objective toward which you are both *willing* and *able* to work. 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 ever accomplished actually seem easy simply because they were a labor of love.

Your goal is probably realistic if you truly *believe* that it can be accomplished. Additional ways to know if your goal is realistic is to determine if you have accomplished anything similar in the past or ask yourself what conditions would have to exist to accomplish this goal.

Tangible - A goal is tangible when you can experience it with one of the senses, that is, taste, touch, smell, sight, or hearing. When your goal is tangible, or when you tie a tangible goal to a intangible goal, you have a better chance of making it specific and measurable and thus attainable.

Intangible goals are your goals for the internal changes required to reach more tangible goals. They are the personality characteristics and the behavior patterns you must develop to pave the way to success in your career or for reaching some other long-term goal. Since intangible goals are vital for improving your effectiveness, give close attention to *tangible* ways for measuring them.