

HOW TO SUCCEED AT VIRTUALLY ANYTHING

- Dr. David Turpen



To succeed: To achieve the desired aim or result. To achieve success. To do well. To thrive, prosper, or grow. To accomplish what is attempted.

What you're about to read may not be new to you. In fact, if you've spent any amount of time in leadership training or team building seminars, no doubt this has come up. It's not a new approach or the "latest and greatest" way to do something. But it is tied closely together with something you may or may not be aware of.

Goal setting is a primary component to successful living and the concept of SMART goals has been around since the early '80s. Originally appearing in a 1981 issue of *Management Review*¹, the acronym S.M.A.R.T. was presented as criteria that objectives should meet. Given that this approach to goal identification and tracking has been around for 30+ years, there's a good chance you've seen this presentation before. But keep reading to the end because you may be in for a big surprise.

SMART is an acronym for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time bound.

- First, goals need to be *specific*.
You must clearly and concisely state **what** is going to be achieved, by **whom**, **where**, and **when** it is to be achieved. You may even want to include **why** the goal is important. Obviously, not all of these questions will apply to every goal, but your assessment of each of these questions relative to your goal will help you make it as clear as is possible. You must have a target – successful hunters hunt with a rifle, not a shotgun.
- Second, goals need to be *measurable*.
Quantify and state an indicator of success. How will you know that you have accomplished the goal? What will be different? How will things change? What will be the observable results of success? You're asking the questions, How much? How many? and How often? You may have heard the phrase, what cannot be measured cannot be managed. It can be difficult to measure a goal, but when that happens, there are usually indirect measures that can be applied. What will others notice? How will your attitude/perspective/temperament change? It can also be helpful to break down larger goals into smaller bit-size pieces. Want to make \$60K/yr.? Start by breaking that down to \$5K/month. Do that every month and in a year you will have made your goal of \$60K.
- Third, goals must be *achievable* and *attainable*.

¹ Doran, G. T., Miller, A., & Cunningham, J. (1981, November). There's a S.M.A.R.T. way write management's goals and objectives. *Management Review*, 70 (11), 35-36.

It makes no sense to set goals that you have no way of accomplishing. That said, you should be encouraged to set *BHAGs* – Big Hairy Audacious Goals – that unless God is in it and a key part of it, it will never be accomplished. Dream big! Shoot for the stars! But also keep in mind that goals need to be something you can legitimately accomplish. If God gives you a BHAG, it's because He's planning to be a part of it and is looking for you to have faith in Him to work in and through you to make it happen. BHAGs are most always laid on your heart by Divine providence (a conversation we'll have on another day). The point is this, you must believe that you can accomplish what it is you are setting out to do. If your goal is so far "out there" and unbelievable, even to yourself, it is highly unlikely that you'll accomplish it (again, BHAGs from God notwithstanding). This does not mean the goal should be or will be easy. But you do need to have the basic abilities, passions, and resources to reach it. There can be a fine line between "wishful thinking" and limiting yourself to the point that you clip your own wings. You are capable of far more than you think!

- Fourth, goals should be *relevant*. Write down what results can realistically be achieved, given available resources. This applies to both the short term and long term goals you've set for yourself. What is your personal mission, vision, and purpose? Setting a goal that you think is easy but ultimately has no long term importance to what you want to achieve as an individual is a waste of valuable time and resources – not to mention energy and emotional drain. Set goals that are most important to you and in line with who you want to be and the life you want to live. Is this goal consistent with your passion and purpose? Your goals must have high levels of merit and value.
- Fifth, your goals should be *time bound* and *time based*. This means that you set a timeline and deadlines for the accomplishment of individual tasks and the overall goal. This can overlap with your goal being specific. Recall that specific goals have a "when" factor – when will it be accomplished? What is the time frame? Timelines and deadlines give you clear targets and provide a means for measurability as you go through the process. Someone has said, "a goal is a dream with a time-frame attached to it." Setting hard deadlines will also help keep you from procrastinating and can serve as a good motivator.

Now, as I mentioned, the SMART goal setting process may not be new to you. But what follows may be. What is the probability that you will succeed at the goals that you set? You've certainly had the experience of thinking about and then even setting a goal only to watch it go on by without fulfillment or accomplishment. We all have. But what if you could raise the odds – a lot – in your favor? Would you be interested in learning how to do that? Of course you would, if you have even an ounce of desire to reach your potential, you absolutely would. The following chart shows how the probability of success dramatically increases as you raise the level of commitment, and not just commitment as you might first conceive it when hearing the word.

ACTION TAKEN	PROBABILITY OF COMPLETION
Hear / Develop an Idea (i.e. goal).	10%
Consciously decide to adopt an idea / set a goal.	25%
Decide to act on the idea.	40%
Design a plan to act on the idea.	50%
Make a commitment to another person to implement the plan.	65%
Have a specific accountability appointment with another person related to implementing the plan.	95%

Research project conducted by The Association for Talent Development (ATD); formerly known as The American Society of Training and Development (ASTD); www.td.org.

Making a commitment and setting a goal to yourself is a great start, but sometimes we're too comfortable letting ourselves down. It's too easy to make excuses (and yes, they are typically excuses) as to why we couldn't or didn't accomplish our goal. Look, having a great idea and setting a goal will get you to success about 40% of the time. When you tell another person about your goal and you've got a plan to follow to make it happen, you can celebrate about two-thirds of the time. But take a look at what happens when you not only identify a goal, decide to pursue it, develop a plan of attack, tell another person about your goal, and then set up regularly scheduled appointments to discuss your progress. Your odds of success shoot all the way up to 95%! That means there's only a 5% probability that you'll fail. That's amazing!

Ever wonder why there are guidance counselors, student mentors, or academic coaches at every level of education? It's because those who struggle, for whatever reason, often benefit greatly by having someone to walk with them and be an encouragement as they progress toward their goals.

Yes, your goals need to be SMART ones. But if you really want to be successful, set SMART goals and then engage someone you can trust to hold your feet to the fire. Find someone you can trust who will encourage you and offer the occasional 'atta boy' when you've reached past your comfort zone. Success is a beautiful thing – especially when it can be shared – and accountability could be the key to your success!

Use this worksheet to identify SMART goals and outline specific steps you need to take to achieve your goals.

Your goal:

SMART goal checklist:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Realistic
- Time-based

Action Steps: (What needs to be done?) _____

Deadline: (When should this step be completed?)

Necessary Resources: (What resources can I use to complete this step?)

Potential Challenges: (Are there any potential challenges that may impede completion?

How will I overcome them?) _____

Potential Support: (What people in my life can support me to complete this action step?

What can they do to support me? Do I need a third-party?) _____

Result: (Was this step successfully completed? Were any new steps identified in the

process?) _____

Duplicate this worksheet for each step identified in accomplishing your overall goal. Note: It may be beneficial to put this in chart form – see below.

GOAL:

ACTION STEPS	DEADLINE	RESOURCES	CHALLENGES	SUPPORT	RESULT
Step 1					
Step 2					
Step 3					
Step 4					
Step 5					
Step 6					
Step 7 (etc.)					