



## SETTING GOALS AND MEASUREMENT

### WHAT ARE “GOALS” AND “MEASUREMENT”?

Goals are the specific, measurable standards of performance or the activities in which a person commits him/herself and their efforts. Simply stated, a goal is the purpose towards which an endeavor is directed. It is an objective.

Measurement is the act or process of measuring to compare actual performance to expected performance.

### WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

Defining goals and measures ensures that there is a clear understanding of the direction that an individual or team is headed in relation to the rest of the institution. They identify definitively what the employee must do during each evaluation period to contribute to the accomplishment of institutional and departmental objectives. Goals provide managers and employees with the standards for discussing performance outcomes objectively. Additionally, clear goals and measures prevent surprises during the on-going coaching and performance review phases of the performance management program.

In short, goals and measures:

- provide an objective, mutually understood and agreed upon basis for measuring and discussing performance;
- clarify between managers and employees what performance is expected; and
- outline the employee's role in accomplishing key departmental goals.

Most importantly, the time spent in clarifying goals at the beginning of the evaluation period will result in less time spent in resolving problems and misunderstanding.

### DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE GOALS

It is important that goals be stated in the most effective possible form. Vague or unrealistic goals can undermine the performance management program. Additionally, collaboration during the process of goal setting for the evaluation is critical. When individuals and teams are involved in goal setting and measurement they feel more ownership of and commitment to the goals they have helped create.

Work outcome statements should be:

- clear and concise
- quantifiable
- challenging but realistic

- applicable
- time-bound

Using “SMART” approach to goal development helps to ensure that the final goal meets the aforementioned criteria.

**SPECIFIC**  
**MEASURABLE**  
**ATTAINABLE**  
**RELEVANT**  
**TIME-BOUND**

**Specific**

Outcome statements lose value as clarity diminishes. Avoid vague phrases like “as soon as possible”, “kept to a minimum”, and “most of the time”. Concisely written outcomes are easier to communicate and remember.

Consider the following statements.

Poorly stated outcome:

Complete the annual report “as soon as possible”.

vs.

Better stated outcome:

Complete the annual report “by January 31, 2006”.

**Measurable**

Outcome statements should include specific measurements. Measurements may be stated as rates (85% accuracy), ranges (+/- 5%), or absolute quantities (3 surveys). Three types of measures to consider when writing outcome statements are:

- *Quality* – how well the result is produced/performed.
- *Quantity* – how much/many of the results are produced or performed
- *Cost* – at what expense the result is produced/performed.

For example:

A secretary is consistently abrupt on the phone, and her goal is to increase her friendliness. Can this be measured? One way to measure this would be the number of complaints received. A reduction in the number of complaints would indicate that the secretary has improved in this area.

**Attainable**

Outcome statements are meant to motivate employees toward enhanced performance. If outcomes are set too high, frustration and discouragement will ensue. If outcomes are set too low, employees may

not be sufficiently challenged. Additionally, actions should be set within the scope of the employee's position.

**Relevant**

There should be a clearly understood link between the action(s) of an employee and the expected results.

**Time-bound**

Clear outcome statements provide the employee with set time frames and/or deadlines. These time frames could require that a goal be accomplished "per quarter" or "per year". Deadlines may identify a specific date for completion, such as "by March 30" or "by the end of the fiscal year". Conditional timeframes should include how or where it will be stated, e.g. "according to the schedule developed during the compensation planning meeting to be held on July 31".

**IS THE FOLLOWING OUTCOME STATEMENT WRITTEN IN SMART FORMAT?**

*Recruit two entry-level technicians for Office X by April 1, 2006. The qualifying candidates will possess specialized skills in Y and Z.*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Meets?</b>	<b>Why/Why Not</b>
<b>Specific</b>	Yes	Outcome is specific
<b>Measurable</b>	Yes	Successful candidates must possess specialized skills Y and Z
<b>Attainable</b>	Yes	Employee is trained in the appropriate selection methods. Outcome is reasonable given candidate pool
<b>Relevant</b>	Yes	Employee will make final selection decisions
<b>Time-Bound</b>	Yes	"by May 1, 2006"

The final step of goal development is gaining commitment. Employees must contribute to this process. Unless the employee is committed to the standard, performance is unlikely to change. Managers can explain, provide support, and ask questions to motivate employee participation in the goal setting process.

### **Other SMART Goal examples:**

Complete training module X with a minimum score of 85% by January 31, 2006.

Perform X number of audits with 100% accuracy by March 17, 2006

Increase patient contacts by 25% by the second quarter of the fiscal year.

## **SETTING TEAM MEASURES AS A TEAM**

When a team has established its mission, it is ready to translate that mission into specific goals and objectives. Defining goals makes certain that team members are moving in the same direction and in step with the rest of the organization.

When you begin talking to team members of a new team about goals, you will probably discover that each member has personal goals of their own, as well as individual ideas about them and organizational goals. Time spent at the beginning will minimize time spent later resolving problems and misunderstandings. These are the advantages of setting goals in a group:

- Team members feel more ownership of goals they have helped define.
- The team sees how team goals relate to organizational goals.
- When team members have divided a major undertaking into smaller short-term goals, the task seems more achievable.
- The team is aware of the concurrent activities necessary to attain each goal.
- The team sees more clearly the competing priorities it must deal with to effectively allocate resources.
- The team identifies milestones it can recognize, evaluate and celebrate.

A group goal setting exercise should be scheduled soon after forming a new team-after the team has developed its mission and/or vision statements.

### **At the meeting**

#### **1. State the purpose and desired outcomes of the goal-setting discussion.**

“The purpose of this discussion is to set goals for the next quarter. We need to generate a list of goals that we can all commit to”

#### **2. Review or establish ground rules for the discussion.**

Examples of ground rules are: “All ideas are good ideas, please don’t offer evaluative comments of others ideas.” Or “Listen with an open mind.”

#### **3. Provide key information related to the subject.**

Examples of key information:

- The goals, standards and measures set by the organization

- The organization's mission statement and/or vision
- The team's mission statement and/or vision
- Goals met during the previous time period
- Baseline data on the team's current performance
- Data on the expectations of internal and external customers
- Benchmark data on the performance of other teams like yours

Note: some of this information may be readily available. Other information, such as data on customer expectations and benchmark data on other organizations, may not be. It is possible that the team will need to do some data collections before it can effectively set goals.

#### **4. Discuss and agree on goals.**

To aid the discussion, post the team's mission statement, vision statement and any other key information. Use the mission statement to set must-do baseline goals and the vision statement to set goals that will stretch the team's capabilities.

“Based on our team's purpose and vision and the other data we have, let's establish some goals for ourselves: both baseline goals and “stretch” goals.”

Use questions like these to stimulate discussion:

“What specifically must the team accomplish in the next (timeframe) in order to fulfill its purpose?”

“What specifically could we as a team accomplish in the next (timeframe) to move us closer to our vision?”

Have team members brainstorm goals. You might want to give everyone a few minutes to write down ideas. Then write everyone's suggestions on a flipchart. Often it's a good idea to generate a large list and then type it up and distribute it, this gives team members time to think about which goals the team should focus on.

Once the team has narrowed down the list, ask a few team members to work together outside the meeting to come up with the specific wording for the goals. Make sure that each goal satisfies the SMART criteria for goals. Ask for the whole team's agreement on the goals. Be sure to have a manageable number of goals that everyone feels committed to accomplishing.

#### **5. Make a plan to accomplish the goals.**

Use whatever planning chart is appropriate to plan, track, and measure progress toward these goals. Decide as a team what process; you will use to track and monitor progress: for example, who will collect data and how will it be handled. Schedule regular status meetings.

#### **6. Set a time to discuss how you will reward yourselves for meeting your goals.**

It is important to plan how the team will celebrate its success in meeting or surpassing its goals.