



# **SMARTER Goals:**

Begin with the Change in Mind

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# INTRODUCTION: George T. Doran (Duran): The Rise of SMART in the 1980s



The 1980s brought a wave of innovative concepts and technology. From cassette tapes to the rise of the arcade, a multitude of new ideas electrified the world. The era of Michael Jackson, valley girls, and MTV also gave birth to a new age of open-mindedness around personal and workplace management styles. That's where George T. Doran comes in.

George T. Doran introduced the SMART acronym in the November 1981 issue of *Management Review*, stating that there is a key way to establish management goals that can set the individual up for success. His philosophy of putting goals into specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-based elements allows the individual to see his or her own progress towards the set goal. In the workplace, this can lead to improved productivity; in life, this can lead to much more.

Several years after Doran's breakthrough, a thirst for self-improvement ideas and tips hit the market. By the late 80s and well into the early 90s, Stephen Covey added a new touch of self-help knowledge with the 1989 release of *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Savvy advertising agencies also began focusing on leadership and ambition by targeting those entering and slowly climbing the workforce, ranging in age from mid-20s to early 30s. By the late 90s, it was common for the average person to push themselves to be at the top of Fortune 500 companies well before hitting 40.

However, like most ideas developed and adopted in the 1980s, certain aspects of SMART have become obsolete and need a makeover. They're static and need to incorporate the new knowledge we have gained in the past three decades. Similar to the evolution from Michael Jackson to Bruno Mars and from cassette tapes to streamlined music services like Spotify, SMART has to evolve and adapt to a new generation. The first step in this process is to identify the issues with the current model.

## Curiosity and the (Cheshire) Cat

Most people know the story of *Alice in Wonderland*, the 19th century literary fever dream of mathematician Charles Ludwig Dodgson, aka Lewis Carroll. For the few that are unfamiliar with this tale, it goes something like this: a young girl is bored one day and follows a white rabbit down its rabbit hole, enters a magically curious land, meets quirky characters, combats a tyrannical queen, and eventually finds her way back home. Now, what does this have to do with SMART goals?

In Alice's case, she had one main goal: to cure her boredom. She did this not by creating a to-do list or establishing a list of goals, but by allowing her curiosity to lead her on that quest. Did she go out looking for a magically curious land because of an anthropomorphic rabbit? Of course, the answer is no, but the opportunity was there and she took it.

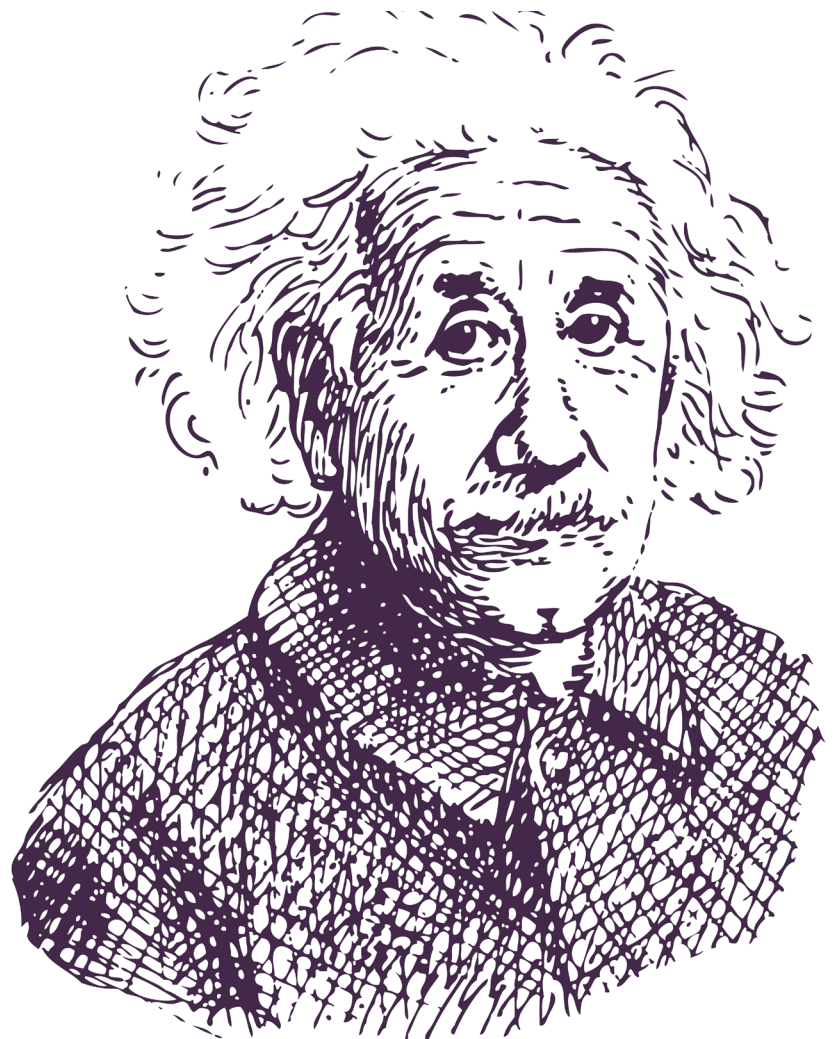
When Alice encounters the Cheshire Cat and asks him for directions in Wonderland, he says, "not knowing where you want to go; it doesn't matter which path you'll take". This simple idea that curiosity and intuition can lead to great discoveries is a critical missing part of business. It is not just choosing a goal (or destination) that is important, but analyzing and understanding what comes after you choose that path and making room for surprises. For Alice, that meant joining the Mad Hatter for a tea party, overthrowing the Queen of Hearts, and learning her own strength. These experiences transformed Alice from the character on page 1 to the protagonist found on the very last page. She had an idea of where she wanted to go, but those changes and lessons learned along the way were just as valuable.



It is very intriguing that a majority of business articles that discuss the merits of the SMART goals model use Alice as an example of what NOT to do. She is adrift and aimless, they say, and you don't want to be anything like Alice. Yet if Alice had started her journey down the rabbit hole with traditional SMART goals like many people suggest, would they still be relevant when she made her way home? This is the journey many successful people take and therein lies a key problem with the current SMART goals model: there is very little room for curiosity.



Climbing out of the rabbit hole and into the real world, there are many examples of historically impactful figures who did not follow the traditional path of success. For example, Martha Stewart had a career on Wall Street and owned a small catering company until she published her first book at age 41. Albert Einstein, a famous physicist (and synonym for genius), was not recognized in global academia until his early 40s. Likewise, Charles Darwin was already half a century old when his still hotly debated theory of evolution was published in *On the Origin of the Species*. In the entertainment world, Samuel Jackson had his first lead role starring in *Pulp Fiction* at age 46, while Julia Child wrote and published her first book at 39 and had to wait another decade before she made her television debut. She was in her early 50s when she starred in *The French Chef*.



Does this mean we should just throw out SMART goals and leap into whatever rabbit hole that comes along? Probably not, since the basic idea of creating tangible and measurable goals is proven to lead to positive results. What this does mean is that having a little room in your planning for intuition and adventure is not bad. In fact, it can lead you to new and exciting ideas and products. After all, this is the system that inspired  $e=mc^2$ , scrapbooking as a commonly accepted hobby, and many a well-tailored dinner party.

## What about Creativity?

Two tragically underrated qualities in both life and business are adaptability and creativity. These two traits not only help us succeed in our goals, but are a key component of figuring out what those goals are in the first place. When we create goals, we're giving life to something that wasn't there before. Like any other child, we nurture and care for our goals and want them to thrive and succeed. Yet the current model stifles adaptability and creativity. So while it is very easy to understand why SMART goals climbed in popularity and their merits, which [research](#) does support, they also force unnatural and counter-productive habits. For example, it encourages people to constantly seek approval and try to fit their goals into models that don't work.

SMART goals do not work for every situation. The best example is a changing situation since, as [Entrepreneur puts it](#), "...SMART goals are better for steady-state situations than for change situations, because the assumptions underlying them are that the goals are worthwhile". In the business world, SMART goals can be used for focusing on something tangible, like a sales quota or a revenue number. But for more complicated or grander goals, the methodology has serious flaws.

Therefore, it is not unwise to conclude that SMART goals aren't always living up to the smart part of the method, especially for those shooting for [a big, hairy audacious goal, or BHAG](#), a phrase coined by Jim Collins and Jerry Porras. Their logic was that it is more important to have a compelling and easily understandable goal rather than a clearly defined one. So what is missing from the SMART system and what is needed to allow creativity and other useful traits into the intangible realm of thinking? One word: emotion.

Emotion and business do not mix outside of advertising, right? Wrong, as when a person is emotionally attached to a goal he or she is more motivated to meet it and therefore, more willing to think creatively or adapt to succeed. In fact, Leadership IQ [studied 4,182 employees from 397 companies](#) and a significant amount of workers did not feel confident that achieving their goals would lead to great success later on. By allowing a motivational disconnect between the goal and the goal setter, SMART hinders the chances of a successful outcome.



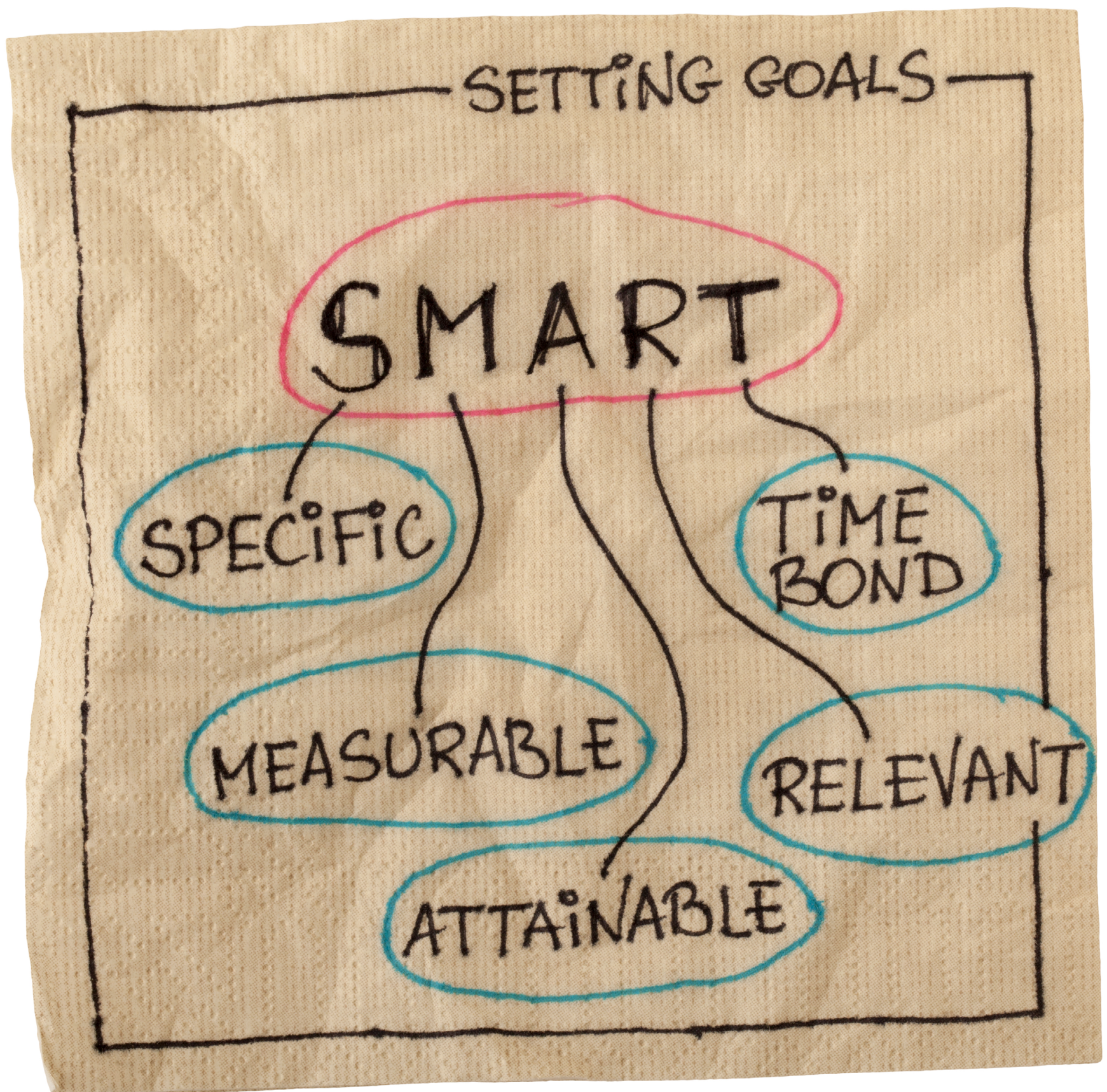


# A New SMARTer Process

Why do people create goals? Some hope to achieve a lifelong dream, others want to push themselves to their limits, some just need motivation to keep going long enough to see tomorrow. Any way you look at it, humans have an innate desire to improve.

Now that the SMART goal model issues have been identified and analyzed, what's next? Well, we assess what we have, what we keep, and what we add in order to move toward something better and more effective.

SMART goals don't fit every situation or every person. They need a remodel. So where does that leave us? That is the main question we will discuss in the following chapters. The central takeaway is that while SMART goals aren't necessarily always smart, much can be taken from the SMART system to help create a new SMARTer process. This book is a practical guide to creating and maintaining each individual's SMARTer goals.





# Goals, What Are They Good For?

Why are goals important, whether classified as 'SMART' or not? How did this entire industry explode around the simple focus of helping people achieve one single idea? It is a complex question, but one that must be addressed before diving into how to improve the process and go from SMART to SMARTer.

It is a known rule that it takes an average of 10,000 hours to become an expert at a craft. So to become truly phenomenal at something, you need to focus consistently and routinely for 8 hours a day, 5 days a week, 44 weeks a year, for 5.5 years. That is both incredibly daunting and reasonable as a time frame. Yet the question again is not how long it will take to get there, but what the best path for you to take is. This is where optimal goals are truly needed.



The goal of any business, organization, or individual endeavor is to be prosperous. However, for any initiative to be successful, there has to be goals that everyone can understand and relate to across the enterprise. For example, a person in sales is going to contribute to the success of the company in a vastly different way than the head of IT or finance. In order to set targets inside goals, there has to be a sense of equality for all participants.

This is why more and more companies are using models that transcend traditional tangible goals for employee positions and departments. In this instance, a company can task Bill and his team--who specialize in production--to reduce waste, increase efficiency through creative problem solving, and learn to communicate effectively across departments. These are also goals that anyone can positively contribute to, no matter the department.

Telling Bill and his production team to simply work faster is not encouraging them to positively add to the company culture or to meet goals. If Bill and his team understand the reasoning behind the set goals, Bill can then explore ways that allow him to personally work towards those goals. Now he is contributing to the overall success and buying in on the individual and team level.

Why is this so hard to achieve in business and in life? Well, the honest answer is that at both the individual level and in organizations, society has an obsession with goal setting. In the current culture, neither an organization nor an individual can be considered successful unless goals are set and then met. The typical incentive used by leaders to achieve these goals is the continual focus on harder and harder work, increased productivity, and overall improvement. The way to measure that success is to measure goal fulfillment.

How often have you seen this goal-setting template?

- *Write down clear and concise goals*
- *Identify how goal success will be measured*
- *Set goal deadlines and state the specific outcomes or results to aim for*
- *Assign rewards for success and punishment for failure*

This template is just one of many that shows the basic way many people set goals, SMART or not. The backing for always setting goals reportedly comes from a variety of sources, including academic research. An example of this academic research that is widely cited is the 1953 Yale study. In this study, researchers reportedly surveyed the graduating seniors from the class of 1953 at Yale University to see who had written goals for their future. The results indicated that 97% had not created long-term goals while only 3% had. Then after two decades of waiting, researchers were said to have gone back to the surviving members of the class and discovered that those who had written life goals had accumulated more wealth than all their classmates put together. However, the only problem with this powerful finding is that there was no such study. Researchers at Yale and members of the class of 1953 all swear there was no such study.

This case of false research to help support the popularity of goal setting is actually compelling evidence of the opposite. It shows that regardless of good intentions and effort, many individuals and groups consistently fall short of achieving their goals. Furthermore, the fault is often put solely on the goal setter. Yet that is clearly not the whole story. What this really shows is that the goal-setting method is much more to blame than the person or group setting them.

## What about Competitive Goal Setting?

So what method is best for setting goals? We have already established that the simple list method used by many companies and centered around positive and negative reinforcement is not great. Similarly, traditional SMART goals don't fit the bill either. We know goals are vital to success, but that choosing the wrong method sets the goal setter up for failure. What about good old-fashioned competition? Is that a sound model for goal setting? Let's look at some examples.

The Center for Disease Control estimates that 34% of Americans are overweight and a further 34% are obese, which means almost 70% of the population is dangerously unhealthy. This highlights that despite the popularity and accessibility of programs that focus on weight-loss goals, a significant portion of these goal-setting models is failing. This high failure rate is much more than just a lack of willpower.

During the early 2000s, two major companies experienced similar goal-related disappointments. One company, General Motors, set a hard goal to capture a 29% market share for American automobile owners. It was so confident in meeting that goal that it even produced and distributed corporate pins for people to wear with the number 29 on them. Instead of focusing on the way it set its goal, GM focused on the success it had not solidified. They never achieved that goal, and without a government bailout, General Motors would likely not be around today. The second company, Sears, gave a sales quota of \$147 per hour to its auto repair staff. Faced with this target, the staff overcharged for work and performed unnecessary repairs. Sears' leadership had to deal with that fallout, and they concluded that this new and powerful incentive provoked employees to deceive customers.



Besides the innate pitfalls of the competitive goal-setting method, another inherent problem with traditional means of goal setting is that they do not take into account how the brain naturally works. Recent neuroscience research explains that the brain works in a protective way and naturally resists change. Therefore, any goals that require substantial behavioral change, or thinking-pattern change, will automatically be resisted. Since human brains are wired to pursue rewards and evade pain or discomfort—including fear--the fear of failure can subtly enter into the mind of the goal setter and become a powerful enemy of motivation. It will then replace the fear with an urgent need to return to more comfortable behavior and thought patterns



Max Bazerman, a Harvard Business School professor and co-author of Goals Gone Wild, argues the following regarding this subject:

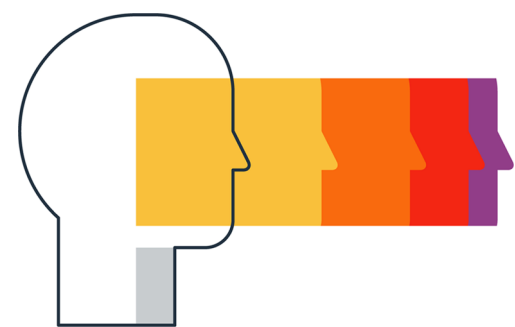
- *People can focus so much on reaching competitive goals that they fail to realize how this has dumped other work on their peers*
- *People narrow their focus only to their own goals and can blind people to important issues that appear unrelated to their goals*
- *Individuals with multiple goals are prone to concentrate on only one goal and ignore the others*
- *Goals that emphasize immediate performance prompt leaders to engage in harmful short-term behavior*
- *People motivated by specific, challenging goals adopt riskier strategies and choose riskier gambles than do those with less challenging or vague goals*
- *When motivated by a goal, people may choose to use unethical methods to reach it*
- *Goal setting can motivate people to misrepresent their performance level*
- *Goals create a culture of competition. Organizations that rely heavily on goal setting may erode the foundation of cooperation that holds groups together*



*As goal setting increases extrinsic motivation, it can harm intrinsic motivation.*

Karl Wieck's article, Small Wins, argues that people easily become overwhelmed and disheartened when confronted with complex and complicated problems. Wieck advocates the idea that instead of focusing on large problems, people instead break them up into smaller challenges that produce visible results, aka small wins. This maintains the goal setter's morale and can often lead to more action towards making slow but steady progress.

However, this method of goal setting requires a willingness to trade in the rapid-fire approach to problem solving that traditional methods advocate. The heavy lifting has to be done at the outset — a deep understanding of the current condition is a prerequisite for true improvement. This approach is a subtle but critical shift from focusing on improving outcomes to refining the process by which those outcomes are achieved and goals set.



## Goals and Psychology

There are also psychological repercussions from not achieving goals that may be more damaging than not having any goals at all. This contributes to the case for using SMARTer goal models to increase the likelihood of success. The usual goal process creates desires that are not necessarily related to everyday life, and whenever this happens, we set our brain's nervous system up to produce negative emotions that can influence how well we meet those goals. In addition, these goals may require the development of new competencies or an evolution of current ones, some of which may be beyond our capabilities. Finally, goal setting creates an either-or polarity of success. This means that the only true measure can be either perfection (100% goal success), or failure (anything less than 100%). This doesn't take into account acts of fate or other random forces of chance, since no one can control all the environmental variables to guarantee 100% perfection. So if the goal is not attained it can create an eternal storm of self-judgment and unworthiness.

It is also important to psychologically distinguish between goals and intentions. A goal is a set ending or outcome while an intention is a direction one wants to pursue. Usually people are often confused regarding these differences and therefore any focus on goals leads to little self-help.

## Practice, Practice, Practice

Okay, we have discussed what is problematic with traditional goals in general, the individual and group culture of goal setting, and the psychological implications of this all. Now, let's examine how to actually achieve these goals. Earlier we discussed the 10,000-hour rule that states a person has to practice something for at least 10,000 hours to achieve perfection.

In order to do this, some basic goal ground rules should be followed. By using this foundation and then practicing as much as possible, you can fulfill your goal-setting needs. First, the goal should be measurable and one that you can easily quantify--either tangibly or subjectively. Another step is to solidify what the goal is and 'set it in stone', at least in the very beginning. Revision and evolution of goals is a large part of SMARTer goal methods, but that is a discussion for later.

Goals ought to be progressive, which implies that if you've got a really formidable goal, there needs to be many smaller goals that progress toward the overarching 'umbrella' goal. For example, if the goal is to run a marathon, I would start with a 5K first. Similarly, goals ought to lead you in a positive direction and should be fulfilling once reached. Don't become so obsessed with the pursuit of a goal that your family or friends suffer during the process. Maintaining balance in your life can result in fewer regrets.

There's a really common pattern that comes with operating towards goals that we're all familiar with: you set your mind to one thing, you get excited and work like hell, and then motivation starts to fade. Having goals that you simply will concentrate on and visualize helps you better connect yourself to your objectives and provides you the psychological energy for whenever your focus inevitably starts to wane. Of course, this doesn't mean you've got to have each and every single moment of your life prepared. Throughout your mission to accomplish your goal(s), you'll realize uncountable things about yourself and experience things you never would have considered before you started.

## The Pomodoro Technique

People have their own models for practice: I do this, you do that. Not everything works for everyone, but one example that I tried is the Pomodoro technique.

The Pomodoro Technique is a time-management methodology created by Francesco Cirilo during the late 1980s and uses a timer to divide work into intervals--typically 25 minutes in length--and uses short breaks as place holders.



Traditionally, there are six steps in the technique:

- *Choose the task to be done*
- *Set the Pomodoro timer (again, usually to 25 minutes)*
- *Grind away at the task until the timer rings. If a distraction pops into your head, write it down, but immediately get back on task.*
- *After the timer rings, put a checkmark on a piece of paper*
- *If you have less than four checkmarks, take a short break (3–5 minutes), then start over*
- *After four checkmarks, take a longer break (15–30 minutes), reset your checkmark count to zero, then start over again*

The stages of designing, tracking, recording, managing, and envisioning are basic to the technique. This allows users to estimate the difficulty that any chosen task needs. As intervals are completed, they're recorded, adding to a way to highlight an accomplishment and providing data for self-observation and improvement. A goal of the technique is to scale back the impact of internal and external interruptions that affect focus.

## A Lesson from Nashville

As we reflect on all the reasons goals are both helpful and harmful to success, I remember lessons I learned while living in Nashville. The main lesson was that practice never makes perfect, but practice does make permanent. I originally went to Nashville to check out the music scene, as I needed a change of pace and wanted a musical challenge. My life was stale and comfortable in Salt Lake City, and I just needed to get out of that comfort zone. It's hard, but doing so forces you to make something on your own.



As a kid, I couldn't stand practicing my music, but was expected to play two hours a day. Eventually, I figured out a short cut and used a tape recorder to "document" my practicing. Then, I would press rewind and off I went to my friend's house. Not long after, my dad called and told me he was in my room but I wasn't. My plan was spoiled. He knew something was wrong when I kept making the same mistakes over and over on the tape. How you practice is how you're going to perform. In Nashville, and eventually Ireland, I practiced for gigs. I had to practice to get the music down, mistakes and all. Practice may not make perfect, but it does make permanent.



# What is SMART and How Does it Work?

SMART goals are the definitive status quo when it comes to goal methodology. Every company in existence has set its share of SMART goals (most commonly defined as Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound).

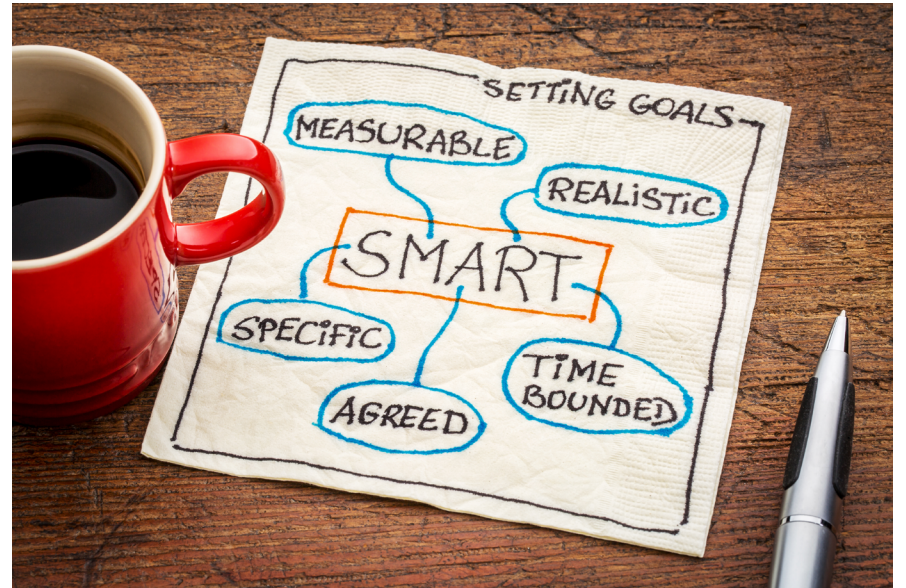


For example, Amazon's CEO [Jeff Bezos](#) wrote a [letter to shareholders](#) explaining how being aggressively customer centric would protect them from the ravages of an unstable economy, allowing them to pursue some very difficult goals. He wrote:

*"If we can identify a customer need and if we can further develop conviction that the need is meaningful and durable, our approach permits us to work patiently for multiple years to deliver a solution. "Working backwards" from customer needs can be contrasted with a "skills-forward" approach where existing skills and competencies are used to drive business opportunities. The skills-forward approach says, "We are really good at X. What else can we do with X?" That's a useful and rewarding business approach. However, if used exclusively, the company employing it will never be driven to develop fresh skills. Eventually the existing skills will become outmoded. Working backwards from customer needs often demands that we acquire new competencies and exercise new muscles, never mind how uncomfortable and awkward-feeling those first steps might be."*

SMARTer CEOs, like Jeff Bezos and the late Steve Jobs, use goal-setting methods that are very different from the SMART goals process most companies force on their employees. The majority of people have the potential to achieve that same kind of greatness, but they need some gutsy, challenging goals to help them get there.

Now, let's break down what SMART actually means.



## Background on the Model

As previously discussed, SMART goals began in the 1980s with George Doran. Since then, not much has changed. The model's purpose and uses are varied since goals are part of every aspect of life. By its very essence, a goal dictates your relationships, your professional career, even your hobbies. Therefore, setting SMART goals comes down to priorities and what you would like to accomplish. The use of SMART goals should be withheld for the most comprehensive targets that include consistent and tangible variables. This allows the model, and thus yourself, to thrive. Speaking of the model, let's do a deep dive into what it includes.

# The Model Explained

## *S is for Specific*

The specific part of the SMART model asks, "What exactly do you want to achieve?" Therefore, the more specific your answer, the better the chance you will achieve it. This goal model clarifies the difference between 'I want to be a rich' and 'I want to make \$5,000 a month for the next ten years by creating a new product'. Questions you may ask yourself when setting your goals and objectives are:

*What exactly do I want to achieve?*

*Where?*

*How?*

*When?*

*With whom?*

*What are the conditions and limitations?*

*Why exactly do I want to reach this goal?*

*Are there alternate ways of doing this?*

## *M is for Measurable*

Within the SMART model, measurable means that there is tangible accountability in regard to your goals. This is because there needs to be a way to measure whether or not you are making progress. You need to identify exactly what it is you will see, have, or experience when you reach your goal, which means breaking your goal down into measurable elements.

You will also need solid verification. For example, simply feeling happier is not verification, but not smoking a cigarette in three months in order to live a healthier life is. This can also go a long way in narrowing down your focus, since defining the milestones of your progress makes it clearer and easier to reach desired goals.

## *A is for Achievable*

If a goal is too difficult, motivation will be lost. This is why making sure your goals are achievable is key. That means investigating whether your goal is possible and accessible. You need to weigh the effort, time and resources your goal will require against the final benefits it will afford you.

If you don't have the time, finances or ambition to reach a certain goal, then you will fail and take a serious hit in self-esteem. Now, this doesn't mean you shouldn't have difficult-to-reach goals, only that you need to make the commitment to fully work towards them.

## *R is for Realistic*

Sometimes a goal is not realistic, but you don't realize it until you have planned for it and invested your effort and resources. You have to decide for yourself whether this goal is realistic for your personality and fit, or if you lack certain skills that would make this highly improbable to meet. This is the part of the SMART model where goals will be divided into actionable items and pipe dreams.

## *T is for Time Bound*

It is important to have a timeline attached to a goal and not just an end date. This means making a flexible, adaptable timeline that logically leads to an end date.

*It is well known that deadlines make most people focus on action, so make sure to install real and specific deadlines for yourself.*

# Why These Attributes Are Not Enough

## *Why Specific Isn't Enough*

Specific for who? This can be an ambiguous term. [Early research](#) found the working memory cut-off to be about seven items. Other research indicates the number of items a brain can retain is [exactly four](#). Yet the average SMART goal can be several sentences or paragraphs long because it is encouraged to be as specific as possible.

I once sat in a meeting with 40 other terminally-degreed professors who were lectured for an hour on how to complete or create a SMART goal. The method took too long, making it difficult to actually complete the task.



So you want to create a goal? Try the Charles Schwab method. When Schwab was in the steel industry, he met with each sales person for 15 minutes free of charge if there weren't any results in 6 months. In order to succeed, don't focus on just six months, but write down what you're going to do each day. That's what led to success here.



### *Why Measurable Isn't Enough*

We have to make sure there is a way to measure whether or not we are making progress, and this is a clear reason why simply saying measurable isn't enough. If you can't measure it, it doesn't exist. This seems to be the most difficult SMART goals concept for people to understand and actually implement.

For instance, it's easy to think about measuring when losing weight and using a scale. But for less tangible goals, like improving active listening, it doesn't help. How do you measure being a better listener? These are useful qualities, but they're not quantitative.

### *Why Achievable Isn't Enough*

We create goals that scare us per the instructions of Eleanor Roosevelt who said, "Do one thing every day that scares you". We design goals that are not just achievable but unbelievable. Mohali Csikszentmihalyi, in his book *Flow*, stated how people get "in the zone" by completing something that isn't too easy, but also not overly difficult. What if circumstances change while going after your intended "END"? Be adaptable.

### *Why Realistic Isn't Enough*

Again, realistic for who? The manager judges, but is this OK? Is it actually realistic for an employee to be fully judged by a superior when it comes to realism? This is also another ambiguous term. Research proves that people are much more likely to complete--and be committed to-- goals when they are written down. When the goal is short, memorable, and adaptable, make sure to review often. Sometimes an objective is too big, but you don't realize it until it's already set in stone.

### *Why Time Bound Isn't Enough*

Since change is inevitable, being time bound can be pretty useless. Take Alice for example. Alice was late, but that kept her moving forward and gave her the opportunity to go on many adventures along the way. If she had an end date, that adventure would have stopped before she learned all her lessons. Having an ending stifles the exploration. Goals that are hard and challenging are full of learning, and it's not practical to put an end date or a time on that process. Timelines need to be flexible.

Many of us often complain about not having enough time for all the things that we need to get done. We are just too busy running errands, ticking off checklists, responding to emails, attending meetings, and putting out fires, while trying to juggle numerous projects and tasks at the same time.



Now, let's look at some steps that will help you make better choices throughout the day.

## Better Choices Every Day

### *Immediately Stop and Think*

It's important to be mindful of your moment-to-moment actions.

### *Question What You Are Doing*

Having recognized the actions you are taking each day, it's critical that you begin questioning the long-term results of the choices you have made.

### *Remind Yourself What's Important*

Take time now to remind yourself what truly matters when you take into consideration your long-term goals and objectives.

### *Avoid Doing Stuff Just to Stay Busy*

Don't just do something for the sake of doing it. It's easy to keep yourself busy throughout the day by focusing all your efforts on the wrong things that will bring about very little long-term value.

## Working HARDer

Statistically, to achieve greatness, a goal also has to be bigger than ourselves. [Leadership IQ, a leadership training and research company, studied 4,182 workers from 397 organizations to see what kind of goal-setting processes actually help employees achieve great things.](#)

The study found that for employees to achieve greatness, their goals must require them to learn new skills and leave their comfort zones. This is quite the opposite of what SMART goals tell us.

What this study identifies is a need for an entirely new process (something beyond SMART objectives). In our latest book, *Hundred Percenters*, we describe a process for setting goals called HARD Goals. HARD stands for:

**Heartfelt** — My goals will enrich the lives of somebody besides me—customers, the community, etc.

**Animated** — I can vividly picture how great it will feel when I achieve my goals.

**Required** — My goals are absolutely necessary to help this company.

**Difficult** — I will have to learn new skills and leave my comfort zone to achieve my assigned goals for this year.

If these criteria sound familiar, they should. [The HARD Goal methodology is statistically validated in this latest study, and according to more than 4,000 people, HARD Goals are a lot more likely to drive great achievements than SMART objectives.](#)





## **The Goals They Are a Changin'**

Now, we need to begin with the change in mind since most changing times and models are missing an adaptability piece. The main reason is that technology is now a driving force behind many goals. Since things change so fast, we can't be locked into a year-long SMART goal that is no longer relevant by the time we achieve it.

We have all heard of begin with the end in mind. Along with the popular business adage of Alice in Wonderland where the Cheshire cat says, "Alice it doesn't matter which road you take if you don't know where you want to go." Alice's choice was irrelevant because she didn't necessarily have the "end" in mind. There were so many changes along the way that eventually led her to an end, and that is what she needed to keep in mind.

Contrary to business models which care about operating with the "end" in mind, we aren't sprinters. We might have an exact beginning but no exact ending. Agile marketing. I feel like we have been in a Stephen Covey era of "beginning with the end I mind," which is a wonderful thought, but it discounts the importance of agility and flexibility in the workplace. I have seen businesses create elaborate business plans and "goals" to go from point A to point B. Just one of the things I see as a flaw in the SMART goal system is the lack of adaptability in the whole process. No business can think like a sprinter, who truly begins a race with the "end in mind"--with an exact path from point A to point B. Businesses are different. There are experiences and factors along the way that might alter their goals or desired "end". Changes in the business market and trends, supply and demand, and customer needs are just a few bumps in the road that businesses may encounter. To integrate this type of "agile" thinking, I thought of taking a different approach to goal setting which might help people to, as per the adage, "work smarter, not harder."

## **Begin with the Change in Mind**

We have all heard of Begin with the END in mind along with the Popular Business Adage of Alice in Wonderland and the Cheshire cat saying, "Alice it doesn't matter which road you take if you don't know where you want to go." Alice eventually took a road but didn't necessarily know the "end" in mind. There were so many changes along the way that eventually lead her to an end.

Contrary to business models who care about operating with the "end" in mind, we aren't sprinters. We might have an exact beginning but not no exact ending unlike a sprinter.

I feel like we have been in a Stephen Covey era of "beginning with the end I mind," which is a great and wonderful thought but it discounts the importance of agility and flexibility in the workplace. I have seen businesses create these elaborate business plans and "goals" to go from point A to point B. Just one of the things I see as a flaw in the whole SMART goal system is the lack of adaptability in the whole process. No business can think like a sprinter, who truly begins a race with the "end in mind" with an exact path from point A to point B. Businesses are different. There are experiences and factors along the way that might change or alter their goals or "end in mind." Changes in the business market and trends, supply and demand, and customers' needs are just a few bumps in the road that businesses may encounter to alter their business plan. To integrate this type of "agile" thinking, I thought of taking a different approach to goal setting which might help people to, as per the adage, "work smarter, not harder."





Why do SMART goals fail to deliver on lofty aspirations? As simple as the SMART method appears to be, it doesn't allow a person to forge an emotional connection to the goals. Without this, a person is less likely to be motivated.

Part of the problem is that SMART goals are too focused on outcomes. So if the SMART method doesn't work for your goals, what does?

## Types of Goal Changes

A fatal flaw some people make is not only ignoring a potential goal change, but not even planning for the possibility. You must first identify the potential changes in goals and analyze how to effectively handle them.. Here we will discuss some examples of potential changes and ways to work around them in planning.

### Relationship Changes

Relationships can come and go and may affect your goals. Handling this change can be as simple or as hard as you make it. If your goal was to work on a friendship, professional connection, or romantic partnership, a change in that relationship will significantly impact your likelihood of success. Whether negative or positive, the fact is not all relationships are static and that is something you need to work into your plans.



### Timeline is Off

If your timeline was incomplete or off to begin with, you might not realize this until you're well into the plan. Perhaps it's just an element within the timeline that needs to be revisited, or maybe you planned your goals at an inopportune time of year. Don't try and change all of your goals if you don't have to, but instead try to figure out how to correct them within the current timeline you're using.

### Your Goals No Longer Apply

What if you're halfway through a goal that involves your current job but you are laid off? What if you need to move to take care of a relative and your goals were location specific? Sometimes the goals you have may not apply to your life when situations change. This is why making sure you have backup plans is very important.



### You Changed Your Mind

How many times has this happened to you? Probably too often. Instead of dealing with changing goals in the middle of a plan, you decide to change them up because your heart or mind is no longer in it. This should be avoided as much as possible since tweaking goals is much simpler and more effective than starting all over again.

## Managing Change in Goals

So the question now is how to evolve an old model of goal setting to include flexibility and creativity. Here are some examples of how that is possible.



*Stay Away from Short-term Goals and Opt for Long-term Commitments*



Goals can be short or long, depending on what you want to achieve. However, when you want to plan out your goal journey, you want to consider it a long-term change in order to accommodate for any unexpected twists or turns. The goals I've made in the past were mainly lifelong endeavors. This includes personal goals like routinely taking care of myself, which I expect to do for my entire life.

What you're really doing is designing your new life post-goal, and therefore are not trying to get some short-term results. However, this still applies to short-term focus.

### *Goals Don't Matter as Much as What You Do Each Day*

Many people think that if you don't have a set of established goals then you are unfocused or altogether lost. However, having studied and experienced a range of goal models and methodologies for some time, I can honestly say that it is not just having goals that matters, but rather what you do each and every day.

What really matters is that you're working constantly throughout the day to progress as far towards your goal as you possibly can. When changes come--and they will come--by focusing on what to do that day or the next, you can stay on track and make small revisions to your plan in order to find continued success.

The goal is the end result, but the end result is not the only focal point. When you focus intently on your day-to-day activity, then the end goal eventually becomes a reality.

When you focus on each moment instead of simply achieving your goal, you can avoid a lot of stress that would diminish your mental and emotional capacity to succeed.

### *Spread Out Your Needed 10,000 Hours of Practice*

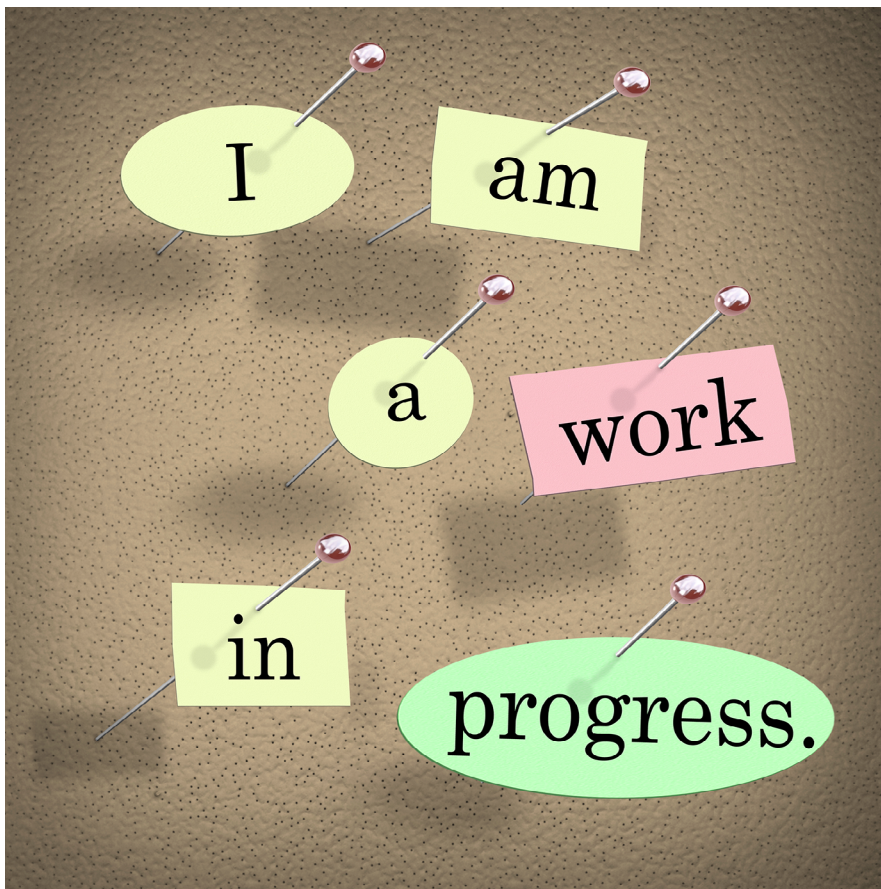
I mentioned before that there is [scientific evidence](#) to back up the claim that it takes roughly 10,000 hours of practice to make a permanent habit, which is closely related to many goals.

The research also suggests spreading out that work over a period of months in order to avoid burn out. This is also important when considering adaptability, since the need to remain flexible is easier when tasks are not close together and can be easily rearranged. Again, some things can be done faster or may take longer, but this is the average. Depending on the goal you have in mind, other variables may also be added.



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However, if you remember to consider these goals as long-term, then you won't have to worry about how long it will take.



### *Goals Aren't about Perfection*

To continue the previous tip about timing, remember that goals shouldn't be tied to the unrealistic idea of perfection. To roll off on this point, the previously discussed research also found that reaching a goal isn't an all-or-nothing process. You can screw up from time to time and it won't affect the process or completely sideline you the way many people feel it will.

I can vouch for this point like nobody's business. I was in no way perfect when working towards many of my goals over the course of my life. Remember my anecdote about fake practicing music? Not exactly the highlight of my life. The most important point to keep in mind is that you haven't failed until you quit trying. This is such an important point to remember because we tend to beat ourselves up, especially when we're first heading towards smaller, more amateur goals. Don't beat yourself up. You don't have to be perfect and you won't ever be. Don't waste valuable time or resources on this.

### *Be Genuine*

Make sure your goals are truly based on what you want. Don't follow inauthentic reasons like what others will think of you, panic over failure, or other limiting beliefs. This negative self-talk strongly influences what we do as humans and cannot be given a chance to thrive within your goals.

Also, by not basing your goals in fear and being genuine, you can adapt to change much better. Adopting a regular practice of self-awareness around the root of your goals can help you identify these fears and bring them to the surface, helping to separate yourself from them.

This can take time, but it is necessary in order for you to be confident that your goals are made with the best intentions.

### *Make Sure You Count All Victories, Big and Small*



At the beginning of establishing a new goal, it can be daunting thinking about how far you have to go. That is why counting all victories, big and small, can help keep you motivated, allowing you to use these as a foundation to make any needed change.

Taking a lot of action in the beginning of your plans will build up a strong momentum to move you towards your goal.

## **The SMARTer Model**

### *S is for Short*

Make goals SHORT and concise. The shorter the better.

### *M is for Memorable*

A goal is measurable if you can actually remember it. What did we just talk about? Shorter is better. Short goals make them more retainable.



## *A is for Adaptable*

Forbes came out with an article with the most important characteristic we can develop today: adaptability. We have to learn to adapt to changes (unlike organizations such as Blockbuster Video and Kodak, which failed to adapt and went out of business).

Today, adaptability is more important than ever due to advancements in technology. There are no changing aspects. In the .com era, things change every day and quickly become obsolete, so adaptability is crucial.



## *R is for Review*

Review your goals and review them often. SMART goals are more an exercise of setting goals rather than completing them.

## *T is for Tentative Timeline*

Make a timeline for the steps leading up to the goal, but remember it could change, so focus on both short-term and long-term goals.

## *E is for Evaluate*

It's important to go back to your goals often to evaluate your progress. It can be a fulfilling exercise to recognize where you have been and where you are now.

## *R is for Revise*

Once you are making some headway with your goals and evaluating the progress (or lack thereof), revise them as needed.

## *So what are we left with? SMARTer Goals!*

Goals shouldn't be that hard. It doesn't make sense to hammer them into a fit system. Instead, let them take form and bend with the ever-changing movements of life.

Goals should be intuitive and we shouldn't have to get approval. We need to make the process simpler. We all need goals to light the road to our ultimate dreams, and to raise a more actionable path to what we want in life. When we write them down and put them into measurable steps, they become more genuine and attainable. This helps us visualize a new future and embrace what we want out of life.





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