

## **SMART Goals**

*Learn how to set SMART goals...*

### **What Does SMART Mean?**

SMART is an acronym that you can use to guide your goal setting.

Its criteria are commonly attributed to Peter Drucker's Management by Objectives concept. The first known use of the term occurs in the November 1981 issue of *Management Review* by George T. Doran. Since then, Professor Robert S. Rubin (Saint Louis University) wrote about SMART in an article for The Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology. He stated that SMART has come to mean different things to different people, as shown below.

### **To make sure your goals are clear and reachable, each one should be:**

- Specific (simple, sensible, significant).
- Measurable (meaningful, motivating).
- Achievable (agreed, attainable).
- Relevant (reasonable, realistic and resourced, results-based).
- Time bound (time-based, time limited, time/cost limited, timely, time-sensitive).
- Evaluated
- Reviewed

## **How to Use SMART Goals**

### **1. Specific**

Your goal should be clear and specific, otherwise you won't be able to focus your efforts or feel truly motivated to achieve it. Is the objective clear to both you and your manager? Is it concise?

When drafting your goal, try to answer the five "W" questions:

- **What** do I want to accomplish?
- **Why** is this goal important?
- **Who** is involved?
- **Where** is it located?
- **Which** resources or limits are involved?

#### ***Example:***

*Imagine that you are currently a marketing executive, and you'd like to become head of marketing. A specific goal could be, "I want to gain the skills and experience necessary to become head of marketing within my organization, so that I can build my career and lead a successful team."*

### **2. Measurable**

It's important to have measurable goals, so that you can track your progress and stay motivated. Do your objectives have a clear path to success? How will you know when the goal has been completed? Assessing progress helps you to stay focused, meet your deadlines, and feel the excitement of getting closer to achieving your goal.

A measurable goal should address questions such as:

- How much?
- How many?
- How will I know when it is accomplished?

#### ***Example:***

*You might measure your goal of acquiring the skills to become head of marketing by determining that you will have completed the necessary training courses and gained the relevant experience within five years' time.*

### 3. Achievable

Are the objectives you are setting attainable? Your goal also needs to be realistic and attainable to be successful. In other words, it should stretch your abilities but remain possible. Do you have the personal and professional capabilities and the right software and tools to complete these goals? When you set an achievable goal, you may be able to identify previously overlooked opportunities or resources that can bring you closer to it.

An achievable goal will usually answer questions such as:

- How can I accomplish this goal?
- How realistic is the goal, based on other constraints, such as financial factors?

**Example:**

*You might need to ask yourself whether developing the skills required to become head of marketing is realistic, based on your existing experience and qualifications. For example, do you have the time to complete the required training effectively? Are the necessary resources available to you? Can you afford to do it?*

**Tip: Beware of setting goals that someone else has power over. For example, “Get that promotion!” depends on who else applies, and on the recruiter’s decision. But “Get the experience and training that I need to be considered for that promotion” is entirely down to you.**

### 4. Relevant

This step is about ensuring that your goal matters to you, and that it also aligns with other relevant goals. We all need support and assistance in achieving our goals, but it's important to retain control over them. So, make sure that your plans drive everyone forward, but that you're still responsible for achieving your own goal. Do your objectives fit into the overall purpose of your role? Do they align with your organization’s goals and help the company reach success?

A relevant goal can answer "yes" to these questions:

- Does this seem worthwhile?
- Is this the right time?
- Does this match our other efforts/needs?
- Am I the right person to reach this goal?
- Is it applicable in the current socio-economic environment?

**Example:**

*You might want to gain the skills to become head of marketing within your organization, but is it the right time to undertake the required training, or work toward additional qualifications? Are you sure that you're the right person for the head of marketing role? Have you considered your partner's goals? For example, if you want to start a family, would completing training in your free time make this more difficult?*

### 5. Time-bound

Every goal needs a target date, so that you have a deadline to focus on and something to work toward. This part of the SMART goal criteria helps to prevent everyday tasks from taking priority over your longer-term goals. When is the deadline and what milestones do you need to hit along the way? Have you given yourself enough time to succeed?

A time-bound goal will usually answer these questions:

- When?
- What can I do six months from now?
- What can I do six weeks from now?
- What can I do today?

**Example**

*Gaining the skills to become head of marketing may require additional training or experience, as we mentioned earlier. How long will it take you to acquire these skills? Do you need further training, so that you're eligible for certain exams or qualifications? It's important to give yourself a realistic time frame for accomplishing the smaller goals that are necessary to achieving your final objective.*

We wear many hats. Promoting our career growth by having SMART goals set can help track our and be intentional about improving our job satisfaction.

We would love to be sure that we're doing the best job we can.

Plus, with goals set in place it is easier to:

- Help the company stay organized and on track toward specific success metrics.
- Assist other staff members as needs arise.
- Improve our skill set and make the most of the responsibilities and tasks we are given.

#### **SMART goal examples for executive assistants:**

- Business-Related
- Skill-Related
- Task-Related

#### **Business-Related**

***A business-related SMART goal could be to improve the onboarding of new employees.***

**S:** The objective of the onboarding process is clearly defined, and it has buy-in from the manager.

**M:** The goal can be measured based on feedback from new hires and based on a survey or direct feedback.

**A:** This is an achievable goal.

**R:** As hiring ramps up, and with a company goal of enhanced company growth, making sure that new employees are onboarded correctly can set everyone up for success, improve employee morale, and reduce turnover.

**T:** The goal is to overhaul and improve the onboarding process before hiring ramps up at the start of the next half.

#### **Skill-Related**

***If you have a skill-related SMART goal, like to “improve your organization and scheduling skills.”***

**S:** The objective of improving organizational skills is clearly defined, and it has buy-in from the manager.

**M:** The goal can be measured based on feedback from other employees and the manager based on how work and small office tasks are being handled.

**A:** This is an achievable goal.

**R:** With so many moving parts to keep organized and things to schedule, ensuring the office is running smoothly and the CEO's calendar is blocked and scheduled accordingly will help everyone's workflow.

**T:** The goal is to get specific feedback regarding organization and whether it has improved by the end of this half.

#### **Task-Related**

***An EA may have a task-related goal, which could be something like “throwing the end-of-year holiday party for the entire organization.”***

**S:** The objective of throwing a holiday party is clearly defined.

**M:** The goal is measured by whether the party is a success, and if employees bonded and felt appreciated for all of their hard work. A company survey could be sent to get specific results.

**A:** This is an achievable goal.

**R:** This goal is relevant, especially as the company nears the end of the year and employees are wondering what the plan may be.

**T:** This goal has a deadline of the end of the year, with various other deadlines as planning is underway.

## Personal

**Finally, a personal goal may be to “read five business management books by popular and well-known CEOs.”**

**S:** The objective of reading five business management books is clearly defined.

**M:** The goal is measured by whether something new is learned and can be applied to the organization’s success.

**A:** This is an achievable goal.

**R:** This goal is relevant, especially as the company looks to learn from other organizations and see what can be worked into its own process or initiatives.

**T:** This goal has a deadline of the end of the fiscal year.

## Reduce purchasing supply costs.

**“To reduce purchasing supply costs by 10% by the end of the 4th quarter, I will audit supply spending, identify and eliminate the purchase of unnecessary supplies, and maintain a supply inventory to reduce the waste of reusable supplies.”**

**S:** This goal lays out a specific plan to reduce spending.

**M:** This goal is measured by the completion of a 10% reduction in supply costs by the end of the fourth quarter.

**A:** This is an achievable goal.

**R:** This goal is relevant to the overall success and profits of the company.

**T:** This goal has a specific deadline of the end of the fourth quarter.

Saving money is always a top priority for companies, which also makes it a big part of an administrative assistant’s job.

This SMART goal may involve some research on new vendors to use for supplies or some education for staff to reduce their waste when it comes to office supplies and other expenses. Either way, this SMART goal will have a direct impact on your company’s bottom line.

## Streamline scheduling processes.

**“To streamline the scheduling processes at work and increase my efficiency, I will look into digital scheduling software, choose one, and digitize the process within the next month.”**

**S:** You’ve stated what you want to do and why.

**M:** This goal is measured by choosing the best software for your company within a month.

**A:** This is an achievable goal.

**R:** Because administrative assistants often do scheduling, this is a relevant goal to help streamline the process and save time.

**T:** This goal has a specific deadline of one month.

Administrative assistants have the opportunity to make small changes in a company that can make a big difference for time-saving & increasing productivity.

Others typically focus on what has always worked in the past, but administrative assistants are able to make improvements to those existing processes.

## Improve creative skills.

**“To improve my skills with creating publications and invitations for our company, I will learn how to use Photoshop or Illustrator by the end of this year. This will be measured by the number of people who RSVP to events or open publication emails.”**

**S:** This goal answers the questions of who, what, when, where, and why.

**M:** This goal is measured by the number of people who are responsive to the communications.

**A:** This is an achievable goal.

**R:** If the company takes the time and money to host an event or create a publication, they need it to have a great first impression—which is where the initial email or invitation comes in.

**T:** This goal has a specific deadline of the end of the year.

Improving this skill can have a great impact on the company's revenue. Administrative assistants are often the "face" of the company because they send communications out to fellow employees as well as clients and people who have some type of interest in the success of the business.

**If these publications look sloppy, there is a good chance that people will see the company as being sloppy as well.** Setting this goal is a good way for you to personally do something that can impact the whole team.

### Improve Microsoft Excel skills!

*"I will take a course in Excel by the end of the second quarter to increase my efficiency in creating weekly updates and reports for the company."*

**S:** This goal demonstrates a specific thing that you want to do to increase your efficiency as an employee.

**M:** This goal is measured by the completion of a course prior to the end of the second quarter.

**A:** This is an achievable goal.

**R:** Seeing as many companies use Excel to create reports and there are a lot of formulas and tools you can use with this program, it would be very relevant to your success as an administrative assistant to know how to use this program.

**T:** This goal has a specific deadline of the end of the second quarter.

Excel can seem intimidating at first, but once you've mastered the basic concepts of this program, it will make your job a lot easier and your work much more efficient.

Being an expert in Excel can greatly boost your employability and future job prospects because it's a popular and very useful tool used to analyze data for companies.

### Plan team-building activities.

*"I will plan team-building activities once per quarter to boost employee morale and keep everyone on board with being an active and integral part of the team."*

**S:** This goal shows a specific task you're going to do and why you plan to do it.

**M:** This goal is measured by planning and carrying out these activities once per quarter.

**A:** This is an achievable goal.

**R:** While other people need to have a part in this also, an administrative assistant is the one who sees everyone on a regular basis, so bringing coworkers together to bond with others who may work in different areas is important for the entire organization to run well as a team.

**T:** This goal has a specific deadline of the end of every quarter.

As the "hub" of the organization, it often falls on you to do things to bring all the employees together. Once you're at these events, you can:

- Interact with others in the company on a more equal playing field.
- Create connections with people in other departments that can lead to future job opportunities.
- Bond with colleagues who may be able to write recommendation letters for you in the future.
- Receive recognition for putting forth the effort to care about company morale.

### Attend professional development seminars.

*"By the beginning of next year, I will have attended at least one professional development seminar related to my position to help expand my knowledge and skills so I can offer the most impactful assistance possible to my team."*

**S:** This goal is specific.

**M:** Finishing a seminar measures your progression toward achieving this goal.

**A:** This is an achievable goal that will benefit you in your position.

**R:** This relevant goal will ensure continuous learning & growth.

**T:** This goal has a deadline of the beginning of next year.

Continuous learning will benefit you in any position so you can stay up to date with current trends, resources, and knowledge. And to continue to be a great administrative assistant, learning about professional development is key so you can be a helpful and resourceful asset to your company.

### **Broaden opportunities for advancement.**

*“To broaden my opportunities for advancement, I will complete my bachelor's degree in business administration by \_\_\_\_\_.”*

**S:** You've stated what you want to accomplish and how it will benefit you.

**M:** This goal is measured by completing all your classes by the identified date.

**A:** This is an achievable goal.

**R:** This goal is relevant to your future career in the field.

**T:** This goal has a deadline of the day that you determine.

While in an administrative assistant position, you're in a great place to continue your education because you're able to see how different departments work and potentially find your niche or passion within the business.

You can then focus on this area when furthering your education, or you can pursue a more general degree that can help you excel in the administrative field you're in.

### **Final Thoughts on SMART Goals for Administrative Assistants**

As an administrative assistant, you're in a unique position within your company to have an overview of so many different sectors of your team.

**Because of this, you can add practical and strategic value to the operation of the business, which can then help boost the success of your long-term career.**

You can personalize the SMART goals laid out in this article to your specific needs.

**But keep in mind, setting too many goals at once is easily overwhelming, so figure out which goals are your top priority and start there.**

*Try selecting two or three diverse goals that cater to different aspects of your career development in order to get the most impact from your work.*