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Smart Goals and Intrinsic Motivation

“SMART” is the most widely-known technique for setting effective goals. SMART stands for **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ction-oriented, **R**ealistic, and **T**imely.

| | Questions to ask yourself | Goal that needs to be improved | Improved goal |
|--|--|--|---|
| S M A R T | Specific Do you know exactly what you want to accomplish? | I am going to connect with various community members to raise money for our festival. | I will call Mel's Music Shop and visit Danforth Design School to encourage them to co-sponsor our festival. |
| | Measurable Can you quantify your progress so you can track it? How will you know when you reach your goal? | I will exercise more often each week. | I will perform a half hour of cardio and half hour of strength training per day, 5 times a week. |
| | Action-oriented Does your goal describe something that you will actually need to do? | I would like the residence dining halls to sell more locally grown food. | I will collect 1,000 petition signatures, and discuss vending possibilities with local farmers. |
| | Realistic Is your goal a challenge but still possible to achieve? | This will depend on your individual circumstances. Be aware of your capabilities, your emotional make-up, your schedule, and your other commitments. | |
| | Timely Does your goal have a deadline? | I will graduate. | I will graduate in three years by taking one extra course each semester. |



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Intrinsic Motivation vs. Extrinsic Motivation

| Type | Description | Examples |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Intrinsic Motivation | Engaging in behavior because it is personally rewarding; essentially, performing an activity for its own sake rather than the desire for some external reward. | -Participating in a sport because you find the activity enjoyable. -Solving a word puzzle because you find the challenge fun and interesting. -Playing a game because you find it exciting. |
| Extrinsic Motivation | Occurs when we are motivated to perform a behavior or engage in an activity in order to earn a reward or avoid a punishment. | -Studying because you want to get a good grade. -Cleaning your room to avoid being reprimanded by your parents. -Participating in a sport in order to win awards. -Competing in a contest in order to win a scholarship. |

Questions to ask yourself:

- What is motivating you to achieve your goal?
- Does it come from an external source? (e.g. your manager, expectations from society.)
- Does it come from an internal source? (e.g. you're passionate about music or want to help animals.)
- Does it come from multiple sources?
- If your goal is primarily extrinsically motivated, how can you find a way to become intrinsically motivated in it as well?

Which is the "better" motivator?

Most people suggest intrinsic motivation is best BUT it is not always possible in each and every situation.

DON'Ts of Motivation

- Offering excessive external rewards for an already internally rewarding behavior can actually lead to a reduction in intrinsic motivation
- Excessive extrinsic rewards can be problematic.
- Extrinsic motivators should be avoided in situations where you already find the activity intrinsically rewarding.

DO's of Motivation

- Extrinsic motivation can be used to motivate people to complete a work task or school assignment in which they have no internal interest.
- External rewards can also be a source of feedback, allowing people to know when their performance has achieved a standard deserving of reinforcement.



Setting Goals for Maximum Effectiveness

| Goal | Description | Why does this work? |
|--|--|---|
| Set approach goals rather than avoidance goals. | Approach goals are ones in which the stated objective is to move towards a desired outcome, such as, "I will be more talkative in social situations." By contrast, avoidance goals, are goals in which the stated objective is to move away from an undesired state. e.g. "I will not eat snacks before going to bed." | Avoidance motivation makes a negative object the center of your attention. This may be unpleasant, and may prompt you to drop your goal altogether, so you can stop having to think about it. For example, even if avoidance motivation allows air traffic controllers to effectively keep airplanes from crashing, the constant monitoring of negative possibilities is draining and leads to high turnover rates. |
| Use the Minimum-Target-Outrageous "MTO" method. | When you set a goal, try setting three different levels of that goal. If your goal is measurable, this should be easy. Your Target goal is the most realistic goal; it is the one you actively trying to accomplish. Your Minimum goal is the minimum achievement that you deem to be acceptable within the given time frame. Finally, your Outrageous goal is the best results you could accomplish if everything goes perfectly. | The MTO method helps you maintain a high level of morale, no matter how far you progress with your goal. The Minimum goal ensures that if you fall way behind your target, you do not fall into despair and get at least something accomplished. The Outrageous goal discourages you from becoming complacent if you achieve your target, and to go above and beyond. |
| Create goals that you care about. | Many people have formal goal-setting systems to develop and track their goals. But a big part of the problem as to why those goals are not being realized is that people neglect to answer one of the most important questions: Is this goal even worth it? HARD* goals is a way of thinking about the value that you attribute to achieving your goal. It is a way of going above and beyond setting SMART goals. A good way to ensure that you set a HARD is by setting a goal is that is closely related to your personal vision. | Essentially this works because you create goals that you care about! They are intrinsically and/or extrinsically motivating have an urgency to them. *HARD goals are: Heartfelt, Animated, Required and Difficult - see next page for more info |



Setting Goals for Maximum Effectiveness

(cont'd)

***HARD** goals are:

| | |
|----------|--|
| H | Heartfelt: you've got to have an emotional attachment to your goal; it has to scratch an existential itch. |
| A | Animated: goals need to be motivated by a vision, picture or movie that plays over and over in your mind. |
| R | Required: it needs to feel so urgently necessary that you have no other choice but to start acting on them right here, right now. |
| D | Difficult: goals need to drag you out of your comfort zone, activating your senses and attention. |



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Achieving Your Goals

| Steps | Description |
|---|--|
| 1. First Step | People often fail at achieving a goal simply because they didn't even start working at it. Just starting, in some tiny way, is sometimes all that is needed. Identify your First Step: the first concrete, physical action that you can accomplish right now, that will progress you forward in the pursuit of your goal. |
| 2. Create Implementation Intentions | There are many factors which can thwart your efforts to achieve your goals, such as decisions made by other people, temptations, injuries, or even just bad weather! Create a plan in which you link a situational cue with a response that will bring you closer to fulfilling your goal. To do this, all you have to do is reframe your goals as "if-then" statements. The "if" part is the situational cue; the "then" part is your planned response to that cue. |
| 3. Re-examine your goals | Look back to your SMART variables to see if new circumstances have made your current goal "less SMART." Is your goal still realistic? Is your goal still timely? If need be, modify your goal accordingly. |
| 4. Break up your goal into parts | The goal will appear less daunting this way. |
| 5. Track your progress | Find ways to track your progress -usually this involves you plotting out each step in your goal in a list or a chart of some sort. |
| 6. Find social support | Find a friend, loved one, or group of people who can continue to support you as you progress through your goal. |
| 7. Think of other ways to stay motivated as you achieve your goals | Empower yourself and come up with ways to stay motivated! |



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Achieving Your Goals

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Additional details for Achieving Your Goals # 1, 2 and 5

1. The First Step.

What to do: Identify your First Step: the first concrete, physical action that you can accomplish right now, that will progress you forward in the pursuit of your goal. This action must be doable in no more than 2 minutes. If you want to read a book and you have procrastinated getting started, then the First Step could be to move the book from the shelf to your desk, or to open the cover, or to read the first paragraph. Just a small step. But, it gets you started. It greases the wheel. It gets the balls rolling.

Many people believe that what they have written on a to-do list represents their first step, but seldom is that true. Even if you have included on a list a task like "set meeting with Bob," there is still a gap between your commitment and what it means in reality. How, exactly, are you going to set that meeting with Bob? Delegate it to your assistant? Send an e-mail? If you haven't moved it to that level of physical specificity, you have not finished your thinking about the situation, and a part of you will still continue to wonder, Should I call? How should I arrange this? In order to silence that monkey in your mind, you must complete the thinking process: okay, I'll e-mail Bob to request the meeting. Only then will your brain will be satisfied.

2. Create Implementation Intentions.

There are many factors which can thwart your efforts to achieve your goals, such as decisions made by other people, temptations, injuries, or even just bad weather!

The way to counter this by creating **implementation intentions**: a plan in which you link a situational cue with a response that will bring you closer to fulfilling your goal. To do this, all you have to do is reframe your goals as "if-then" statements. The "if" part is the situational cue; the "then" part is your planned response to that cue.

Examples:

"If I run out of time, and can't go to the gym on Monday, or Wednesday, I will wake up at 7AM on Friday and work out then."

"When I get a craving for coffee, then I will drink a glass of water."

Implementation intentions are structured as follows:

If situation Y arises, **Then** I will initiate goal-directed behavior x.

5. Track your progress.

There are many ways to do this. They usually involve you plotting out each step in your goal in a list or a chart of some sort. An example could be a university student who has a goal to finish reading a specific textbook. The textbook is 500 pages long and the course is 14 weeks long. The student decides to read 34 pages or more per week and creates an Excel document to set and keep track of their progress.