Creating S.M.A.R.T. Goals

**SET S.M.A.R.T. GOALS:**

S.M.A.R.T. goals, as defined in the figure below, ensure that the manager and employee have a mutual understanding of what the expectations are, and that the employee can see how his/her goals align with the organization's objectives. Create goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely by using the checklist below:

- Does the goal clearly define expectations in terms of actions and outcomes?
- Does the goal avoid generalities and use action verbs?
- Is the goal results-based?
- Does the goal define specific metrics (quantity, quality, timeliness, cost, etc.) that can be objectively measured?
- Is the goal challenging, but within reason?
- Does the employee have the skills and experiences necessary to achieve the goal?
- Is achievement of the goal within the employee's control?
- Can the employee reasonably be expected to successfully complete the number of goals assigned to him/her?
- Is the scope of the goals appropriate given the employee's job responsibilities and level?
- Does the goal clearly connect to departmental and/or organizational goals?
- Does the employee understand how his/her goal contributes to the organization's objectives?
- Does the goal specify a date or elapsed amount of time by when each goal needs to be completed?

**UNDERSTAND THE BASICS:**

- **Who:** The direct manager and employee should collaborate to set meaningful goals.
- **What:** The manager and employee should discuss what the individual's performance goals are and how they connect to the organization's objectives.
- **Where:** The discussion should take place in a private forum, away from disruptions.
- **When:** The manager should hold a goal-setting discussion 1–2 weeks after the performance review or when the employee begins a new project.
- **Why:** Setting and committing to specific, challenging goals can boost employee effort, focus, and performance. In fact, aligning employee goals with the organization's objectives can increase employee discretionary effort by as much as 45%. Additionally, clearly set goals provide an objective, unambiguous basis against which to measure performance.

Source:
CLC Human Resources. Conducting a Goal Setting Discussion, Arlington, VA: Corporate Executive Board, 2009, CLC4471309PRO.