

SMART OBJECTIVES

A common format for writing objectives that helps to ensure that they are easily understood and measurable, and therefore more likely to be achieved.

SPECIFIC – the objective should be written in a way that clearly states what has to be done. The statement should begin with the word “to” followed by a verb. For example:
“To investigate.....”
“To reduce.....”
“To achieve.....”
“To provide.....”

MEASURABLE – The statement should include a form of measurement. This may refer to quantity, quality, or money. It is important that a precise measurement is included because without it it is impossible to judge whether the objective has been met.

ACHIEVABLE – The objective must be within the capabilities of the person who is going to work towards its achievement. It must provide stimulation and challenge without being too difficult to achieve. This helps to ensure that people are motivated and not de-moralised.

REALISTIC – The objective must be realistic. External factors (e.g. market forces, political and economic influences) should be taken into account as well as internal factors such as resources, organisational policies practices and procedures.

TIMEBOUND – All objectives should be time limited. There must be a cut-off date by which the objective should be achieved. If the objective is large or complex, it might be advisable to set milestones, i.e. sub-tasks to be achieved by specified dates with a view to completing the whole project by a set date.

Examples of SMART objectives:

To prepare data for input so that processing is completed accurately, and in accordance with procedure ref. Q4.2, by 12.00pm on the last Friday of every month.

To deal effectively with all customer complaints by acknowledging receipt within 48 hours and providing an initial written report to the customer within seven days.

To reduce the error rate of purchase invoices from 10% to 2% by the end of September 20XX

To achieve a 22% increase in completed sales by the end of the second trading quarter.