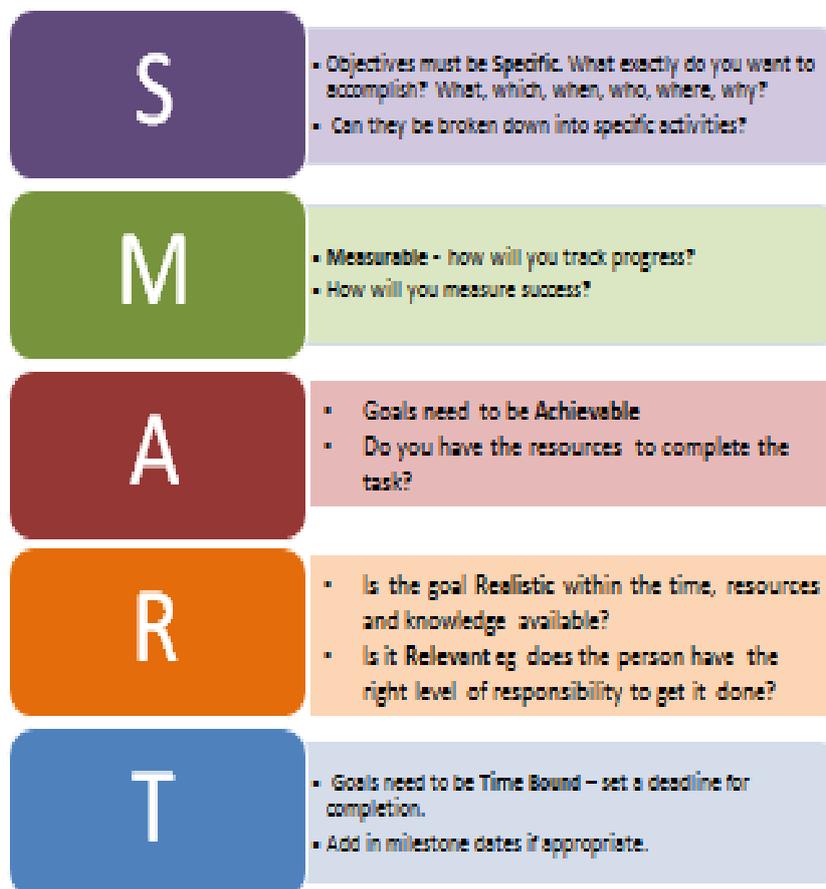# WRITING EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

If you have ever read literature on the subject of performance appraisal or attended training courses on the subject, you will be familiar with the concept of setting SMART objectives for our employees. We all agree that it is important for people to have goals and objectives to work towards and it allows us to measure how well our people, and ultimately, our business is doing.

The SMART acronym is familiar to many people, and it has been taken up in other facets of our lives, from fitness to life coaching.

Smart Objectives

S
- Objectives must be Specific. What exactly do you want to accomplish? What, which, when, who, where, why?
- Can they be broken down into specific activities?

M
- **Measurable** - how will you track progress?
- How will you measure success?

A
- Goals need to be Achievable
- Do you have the resources to complete the task?

R
- Is the goal Realistic within the time, resources and knowledge available?
- Is it Relevant eg does the person have the right level of responsibility to get it done?

T
- Goals need to be Time Bound – set a deadline for completion.
- Add in milestone dates if appropriate.

If you have ever tried to write up objectives for yourself or for your staff, you will have soon realised that it is actually a difficult task. How do you ensure that your objectives have all the elements above and, most importantly, where do you find the content for them?

Standard Form of Objectives

There are three main functions of a performance management objective. It should communicate the following:

- o the nature of the work to be performed – a verb-object component
- o guidelines for determining if the performance is satisfactory - a standards component.
- o A deadline for completion – a time component

By following this simple format, it is likely that the objective will meet the **SMART** criteria naturally.

Examples:

By end March **(Time)**, develop and publish a company guide **(verb-object)** to financial SOC hat all staff are entering the correct codes onto the accounting system and system errors are less than 5% **(Standard)**.

Increase sales of xx product by 20% **(Standard)** by 1st September **(Time)** by improving customer ability to customise orders on the web sales platform **(verb–object).**

Addressing the content issue

In most cases, performance management objectives will include an element of project or stretch activity. A person's job description or role profile describes the everyday tasks associated with the role so there is no need to repeat this, although it may be useful to reinforce a major element of the key tasks and include updated targets for the coming year.

The following topics are good sources of content:

- **Problems/ Projects**
  - o What business problems or projects have already been identified that need to be tackled?
- **Processes**
  - o The continuous improvement of work processes are fruitful areas for performance management targets.
- **Practices**
  - o How can current work practices or procedures be updated, streamlined, improved to provide better value for the business?
- **People**
  - o People can be a source of objectives. The development needs of others could be linked to your objectives along with relationship building and client management type activities. For example, setting out some tangible targets on improving communication and feedback with clients, your team or an important group of colleagues.