



# SMART

# Goals

# and

# Action Plans



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## Personal Mission Statements

### Defining Your Goals

One of the most important things that corporate leaders do is define their organization's purpose, and identify what they ultimately want it to accomplish. They communicate this information in [corporate mission and vision statements](#). These set a clear course for the organization, tell employees how they should focus their efforts, and prevent people going "off mission".

If mission and vision statements are so important to organizations, why don't we spend any time creating them for ourselves?



You can achieve your goals in a focused way by writing a personal mission statement.

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In this article, we'll look the benefits of creating personal mission and vision statements. We'll show you how to create them, and highlight how you can use them to bring clarity to your own objectives and goals.

### Why Create Mission and Vision Statements?

All of us have very different ideas about success. What's important, however, is that you spend time defining **your** version of success. Otherwise, how will you understand what you should be working toward, and how will you know if your decisions are helping you move toward your goals?

Used as part of your personal approach to [goal setting](#), mission and vision statements are useful for bringing sharp focus to your most important goal, and for helping you to quickly identify which opportunities you should pursue.

Shaping this goal into a mission statement helps you keep it at the front of your mind, and helps you focus your energy and resources upon it. Without this focus, you can be distracted, or you can spread your effort too thinly across multiple competing goals.

**Tip:**

By creating a personal mission statement, you make one of your personal goals supremely important. This gives you the best possible chance of achieving it, which is essential for some types of goal. However, if you focus exclusively on one goal, you'll inevitably have to de-emphasize others. Make sure that you're happy to do this, and make sure that people who

are important to you don't suffer as a consequence.

## Mission Versus Vision

So, what's the difference between a mission statement and a vision statement?

- **Mission statement** – This defines your purpose. It's what you ultimately want to achieve in your life or career, expressed in a specific, measurable way.
- **Vision statement** – This is a bit more emotional. Here, you define your core values, and how you'll apply those values to your mission.

### Tip:

As your career develops, your goals and objectives are likely to change too. So make sure you revisit your mission and vision statements regularly, and update them as required.

## Creating Mission Statements

Follow these steps to create your mission statement:

1. **Identify what you do best** – Your unique strengths will likely point to what you would like to do most with your life and career. Our Bite-Sized Training session [Finding Your Unique Strengths](#) will help you discover your strengths.
2. **Think about what success means to you** – If you get stuck, make a list of past accomplishments that really made you feel as if you did something worthwhile. Your aim is to create a short list of measurements to help you track your progress.
3. **Identify your personal goals** – Take the time to explore what you might want to do with your life and career, and then narrow down to the goals you most want to pursue, across the full range of life areas. Our article on [Goal Setting](#) will help you do this.
4. **Combine the first three steps** – Look at your goals, your unique strengths and your idea of success, and then identify the one goal that you most want to achieve. Make sure that the goal is expressed in [SMART](#) format, and that it's expressed in as powerful and motivating a way as possible.
5. **Keep refining** – Edit and perfect the words until you have a clear, concise statement that identifies your ideas, and how you'll measure the results.

## Mission Statement Example

Using her USP Analysis, Kara has identified several unique strengths. She's creative, a great problem solver, and always maintains a positive outlook that helps inspire her team, even on difficult projects. To her, success means working in a challenging, creative role, and receiving a salary that she feels is fair and based on her accomplishments. Her most important goal is to become a member of her company's senior management team within the next seven years.

Kara's mission statement is this:

"My mission is to become a member of the company's senior executive team by December 31, 2017, by empowering internal teams, and helping them solve challenging problems in a creative and successful way. In this role, I want to feel that I'm valued, and my salary and benefits will show this."

## Creating Vision Statements

Now that you've created your mission statement, move on to your vision statement:

1. **Identify the humanistic side of your mission** – Look carefully at the mission statement that you just created. What is most fulfilling about what you're going to do? What really impacts your emotions? And what will help other people?
2. **Make a list of your core values** – Our article [What Are Your Values?](#) will help with this.
3. **Visualize who you'd like to become** – Picture your "best self." Are you a strong leader? A compassionate friend? A mentor? Make a list of words that describe how you would like others to see you.
4. **Combine the first three steps** – Bring these steps together, and write your vision statement. This should be energizing and motivating, and it should fill you with energy and excitement when you read it.

## Vision Statement Example

When Kara looks at writing her vision statement, she realizes that she loves solving problems because this helps people. She's very fulfilled and uplifted when she's able to solve a problem that no one else can. This isn't because she receives praise, but because she's able to help reduce stress and frustration for someone else.

She identifies her core values as integrity, compassion, creativity, and helping people.

When she defines her "best self," she pictures herself as a strong leader, who lifts her team and helps push them toward their own achievements.

Kara's vision statement is this:

"I want to help others grow and succeed in their careers. I'll use my talent for problem solving to help my people grow as individuals and become more successful as a team. I'll set an example for my team by sticking to my values and maintaining my integrity, even under difficult circumstances."

### Note:

There isn't a specific formula for writing your own mission and vision statements, and you can

make them as specific, or as broad, as you want. Just ensure that they're punchy and motivational statements that describe what you want to achieve.

### Key Points

Spending time creating personal mission and vision statements is well worth the effort. These tools can help you make important career decisions, and remind you of the direction you want to take in life.

Make sure you allow yourself enough time to think deeply about each step in the process. Identify the right words, goals, and core values. Then create clear, concise statements that are motivational and fill you with purpose.

Keep refining the statements until they're exciting and meaningful, and remember to revisit your mission and vision statements as your career develops.

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## Locke's Goal Setting Theory

### Understanding SMART Goal Setting

Goal setting is a powerful way of motivating people, and of motivating yourself. The value of goal setting is so well recognized that entire management systems, like [Management by Objectives](#), have goal setting basics incorporated within them.

In fact, goal setting theory is generally accepted as among the most valid and useful motivation theories in industrial and organizational psychology, human resource management, and organizational behavior.

Many of us have learned – from bosses, seminars, and business articles – to set [SMART](#) goals. It seems natural to assume that by setting a goal that's Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound, we will be well on our way to accomplishing it.

But is this really the best way of setting goals?

To answer this, we look to Dr Edwin Locke's pioneering research on goal setting and motivation in the late 1960s. In his 1968 article "Toward a Theory of Task Motivation and Incentives," he stated that employees were motivated by clear goals and appropriate feedback. Locke went on to say that working toward a goal provided a major source of motivation to actually reach the goal – which, in turn, improved performance.

This information does not seem revolutionary to us some 40 years later. This shows the impact his theory has had on professional and personal performance.

In this article, we look at what Locke had to say about goal setting, and how we can apply his theory to our own performance goals.

### Goal Setting Theory

Locke's research showed that there was a relationship between how difficult and specific a goal was and people's performance of a task. He found that specific and difficult goals led to better task performance than vague or easy goals.

Telling someone to "Try hard" or "Do your best" is less effective than "Try to get more than 80% correct" or "Concentrate on beating your best time." Likewise, having a goal that's too easy is not a motivating force. Hard goals are more motivating than easy goals, because it's much more of an accomplishment to achieve something that you have to work for.

A few years after Locke published his article, another researcher, Dr Gary Latham, studied the effect of goal setting in the workplace. His results supported exactly what Locke had found, and the inseparable link between goal setting and workplace performance was formed.

In 1990, Locke and Latham published their seminal work, “A Theory of Goal Setting and Task Performance.” In this book, they reinforced the need to set specific and difficult goals, and they outlined three other characteristics of successful goal setting.

## Five Principles of Goal Setting

To motivate, goals must have:

1. Clarity.
2. Challenge.
3. Commitment.
4. Feedback.
5. Task complexity.

Let's look at each of these in detail.

### 1. Clarity

Clear goals are measurable and unambiguous. When a goal is clear and specific, with a definite time set for completion, there is less misunderstanding about what behaviors will be rewarded. You know what's expected, and you can use the specific result as a source of motivation. When a goal is vague – or when it's expressed as a general instruction, like “Take initiative” – it has limited motivational value.

To improve your or your team's performance, set clear goals that use specific and measurable standards. “Reduce job turnover by 15%” or “Respond to employee suggestions within 48 hours” are examples of clear goals.

When you use the SMART acronym to help you set goals, you ensure the clarity of the goal by making it Specific, Measurable and Time-bound.

### 2. Challenge

One of the most important characteristics of goals is the level of challenge. People are often motivated by achievement, and they'll judge a goal based on the significance of the anticipated accomplishment. When you know that what you do will be well received, there's a natural motivation to do a good job.

Rewards typically increase for more difficult goals. If you believe you'll be well compensated or otherwise rewarded for achieving a challenging goal, that will boost your enthusiasm and your drive to get it done.

Setting SMART goals that are Relevant links them closely to the rewards given for achieving challenging goals. Relevant goals will further the aims of your organization, and these are the kinds of goals that most employers will be happy to reward.

When setting goals, make each goal a challenge. If an assignment is easy and not viewed as very important – and if you or your employee doesn't expect the accomplishment to be significant – then the effort may not be impressive.

#### Note:

It's important to strike an appropriate balance between a challenging goal and a realistic goal. Setting a goal that you'll fail to achieve is possibly more de-motivating than setting a goal that's too easy. The need for success and achievement is strong, therefore people are best motivated by challenging, but realistic, goals. Ensuring that goals are Achievable or Attainable is one of the elements of SMART.

### 3. **Commitment**

Goals must be understood and agreed upon if they are to be effective. Employees are more likely to “buy into” a goal if they feel they were part of creating that goal. The notion of participative management rests on this idea of involving employees in setting goals and making decisions.

One version of SMART – for use when you are working with someone else to set their goals – has A and R stand for Agreed and Realistic instead of Attainable and Relevant. Agreed goals lead to commitment.

This doesn't mean that every goal has to be negotiated with and approved by employees. It does mean that goals should be consistent and in line with previous expectations and organizational concerns. As long as the employee believes the goal is consistent with the goals of the company, and believes that the person assigning the goal is credible, then the commitment should be there.

Interestingly, goal commitment and difficulty often work together. The harder the goal, the more commitment is required. If you have an easy goal, you don't need a lot of motivation to get it done. When you're working on a difficult assignment, you will likely encounter challenges that require a deeper source of inspiration and incentive.

As you use goal setting in your workplace, make an appropriate effort to include people in their own goal setting. Encourage employees to develop their own goals, and keep them informed about what's happening elsewhere in the organization. This way, they can be sure that their goals are consistent with the overall vision and purpose that the company seeks.

### 4. **Feedback**

In addition to selecting the right type of goal, an effective goal program must also include [feedback](#). Feedback provides opportunities to clarify expectations, adjust goal difficulty, and gain recognition. It's important to provide benchmark opportunities or targets, so individuals can determine for themselves how they're doing.

These regular progress reports, which measure specific success along the way, are particularly important where it's going to take a long time to reach a goal. In these cases, break down the goals into smaller chunks, and link feedback to these intermediate milestones.

SMART goals are Measurable, and this ensures that clear feedback can be provided.

With all your goal setting efforts, make sure that you build in time for providing formal feedback. Certainly, informal check-ins are important, and they provide a means of giving regular encouragement and recognition. However, taking the time to sit down and discuss goal performance is a necessary factor in long-term performance improvement. See our article on [Delegation](#) for more on this.

### 5. **Task Complexity**

The last factor in goal setting theory introduces two more requirements for success. For goals or assignments that are highly complex, take special care to ensure that the work doesn't become too overwhelming.

People who work in complicated and demanding roles probably have a high level of

motivation already. However, they can often push themselves too hard if measures aren't built into the goal expectations to account for the complexity of the task. It's therefore important to do the following:

- Give the person sufficient time to meet the goal or improve performance.
- Provide enough time for the person to practice or learn what is expected and required for success.

The whole point of goal setting is to facilitate success. Therefore, you want to make sure that the conditions surrounding the goals don't frustrate or inhibit people from accomplishing their objectives. This reinforces the “Attainable” part of SMART.

### **Key points:**

Goal setting is something most of us recognize as necessary for our success.

By understanding goal setting theory, you can effectively apply the principles to goals that you or your team members set. Locke and Latham's research confirms the usefulness of SMART goal setting, and their theory continues to influence the way we measure performance today.

Use clear, challenging goals, and commit yourself to achieving them. Provide feedback on goal performance. Take into consideration the complexity of the task. If you follow these simple rules, your goal setting process will be much more successful, and your overall performance will improve.

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## What Are Your Values?

### Deciding What's Most Important In Life

How would you define your values?

Before you answer this question, you need to know what, in general, values are.

Your values are the things that you believe are important in the way you live and work. They (should) determine your priorities, and, deep down, they're probably the measures you use to tell if your life is turning out the way you want it to.



Acting in alignment with your values

When the things that you do and the way you behave match your values, life is usually good – you're satisfied and content. But when these don't align with your values, that's when things feel... wrong. This can be a real source of unhappiness.

This is why making a conscious effort to identify your values is so important.

### How Values Help You

Values exist, whether you recognize them or not. Life can be much easier when you acknowledge your values – and when you make plans and decisions that honor them.

If you value family, but you have to work 70-hour weeks in your job, will you feel internal stress and conflict? And if you don't value competition, and you work in a highly competitive sales environment, are you likely to be satisfied with your job?

In these types of situations, understanding your values can really help. When you know your own values, you can use them to make decisions about how to live your life, and you can answer questions like these:

- What job should I pursue?
- Should I accept this promotion?
- Should I start my own business?
- Should I compromise, or be firm with my position?
- Should I follow tradition, or travel down a new path?

So, take the time to understand the real priorities in your life, and you'll be able to determine the best direction for you and your life goals!

**Tip:**

Values are usually fairly stable, yet they don't have strict limits or boundaries. Also, as you move through life, your values may change. For example, when you start your career, success – measured by money and status – might be a top priority. But after you have a family, work-life balance may be what you value more.

As your definition of success changes, so do your values. This is why keeping in touch with your values is a lifelong exercise. You should continuously revisit this, especially if you start to feel unbalanced... and you can't quite figure out why.

As you go through the exercise below, bear in mind that values that were important in the past may not be relevant now.

## Defining Your Values

When you define your values, you discover what's truly important to you. A good way of starting to do this is to look back on your life – to identify when you felt really good, and really confident that you were making good choices.

- **Step 1: Identify the times when you were happiest**

Find examples from both your career and personal life. This will ensure some balance in your answers.

- What were you doing?
- Were you with other people? Who?
- What other factors contributed to your happiness?

- **Step 2: Identify the times when you were most proud**

Use examples from your career and personal life.

- Why were you proud?
- Did other people share your pride? Who?
- What other factors contributed to your feelings of pride?

- **Step 3: Identify the times when you were most fulfilled and satisfied**

Again, use both work and personal examples.

- What need or desire was fulfilled?
- How and why did the experience give your life meaning?
- What other factors contributed to your feelings of fulfillment?

- **Step 4: Determine your top values, based on your experiences of happiness, pride, and fulfillment**

- Why is each experience truly important and memorable? Use the following list of common personal values to help you get started – and aim for about 10 top values.

(As you work through, you may find that some of these naturally combine. For instance, if you value philanthropy, community, and generosity, you might say that service to others is one of your top values.)

Accountability	Excitement	Piety
Accuracy	Expertise	Positivity
Achievement	Exploration	Practicality
Adventurousness	Expressiveness	Preparedness
Altruism	Fairness	Professionalism
Ambition	Faith	Prudence
Assertiveness	Family-orientedness	Quality-orientation
Balance	Fidelity	Reliability
Being the best	Fitness	Resourcefulness
Belonging	Fluency	Restraint
Boldness	Focus	Results-oriented
Calmness	Freedom	Rigor
Carefulness	Fun	Security
Challenge	Generosity	Self-actualization
Cheerfulness	Goodness	Self-control
Clear-mindedness	Grace	Selflessness
Commitment	Growth	Self-reliance
Community	Happiness	Sensitivity
Compassion	Hard Work	Serenity
Competitiveness	Health	Service
Consistency	Helping Society	Shrewdness
Contentment	Holiness	Simplicity
Continuous Improvement	Honesty	Soundness
Contribution	Honor	Speed
Control	Humility	Spontaneity
Cooperation	Independence	Stability
Correctness	Ingenuity	Strategic
Courtesy	Inner Harmony	Strength
Creativity	Inquisitiveness	Structure
Curiosity	Insightfulness	Success
Decisiveness	Intelligence	Support
Democraticness	Intellectual Status	Teamwork
Dependability	Intuition	Temperance
Determination	Irreverence	Thankfulness
Devoutness	Joy	Thoroughness
Diligence	Justice	Thoughtfulness
Discipline	Leadership	Timeliness
Discretion	Legacy	Tolerance
Diversity	Love	Traditionalism
Dynamism	Loyalty	Trustworthiness
Economy	Making a difference	Truth-seeking
Effectiveness	Mastery	Understanding
Efficiency	Merit	Uniqueness
Elegance	Obedience	Unity
Empathy	Openness	Usefulness
Enjoyment	Order	Vision
Enthusiasm	Originality	Vitality
Equality	Patriotism	

Excellence

Perfection

- **Step 5: Prioritize your top values**

This step is probably the most difficult, because you'll have to look deep inside yourself. It's also the most important step, because, when making a decision, you'll have to choose between solutions that may satisfy different values. This is when you must know which value is more important to you.

- Write down your top values, not in any particular order.
- Look at the first two values and ask yourself, "If I could satisfy only one of these, which would I choose?" It might help to visualize a situation in which you would have to make that choice. For example, if you compare the values of service and stability, imagine that you must decide whether to sell your house and move to another country to do valuable foreign aid work, or keep your house and volunteer to do charity work closer to home.
- Keep working through the list, by comparing each value with each other value, until your list is in the correct order.

**Tip:**

If you have a tough time doing this, consider using [Paired Comparison Analysis](#) to help you. With this method, you decide which of two options is most important, and then assign a score to show how much more important it is. Since it's so important to identify and prioritize your values, investing your time in this step is definitely worth it.

- **Step 6: Reaffirm your values**

Check your top-priority values, and make sure they fit with your life and your vision for yourself.

- Do these values make you feel good about yourself?
- Are you proud of your top three values?
- Would you be comfortable and proud to tell your values to people you respect and admire?
- Do these values represent things you would support, even if your choice isn't popular, and it puts you in the minority?

When you consider your values in decision making, you can be sure to keep your sense of integrity and what you know is right, and approach decisions with confidence and clarity. You'll also know that what you're doing is best for your current and future happiness and satisfaction.

Making value-based choices may not always be easy. However, making a choice that you know is right is a lot less difficult in the long run.

**Key Points**

Identifying and understanding your values is a challenging and important exercise. Your values are a central part of who you are – and who you want to be. By becoming more aware of these important factors in your life, you can use them as a guide to make the best choice in any situation.

Some of life's decisions are really about determining what you value most. When many options seem reasonable, it's helpful and comforting to rely on your values – and use them as a strong guiding force to point you in the right direction.

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## Treasure Mapping

### Visualizing your goal for greater achievement

When you want to achieve something really badly, have you ever tried closing your eyes and imagining yourself “there”? You touch it, feel it and see it clearly. You scan every detail in your mind's eye.

This is a powerful and important technique for motivating yourself and building the self-confidence needed to achieve your goals. Yet when you open your eyes, the vivid image start fades, and it can take real concentration to recreate your visualization each time you want some inspiration.

What if you could keep hold of that vivid image and refer to it when ever you need a little motivation, or a reminder of what you are working towards?

Treasure mapping is a simple tool to help you do just that. Visualization itself is a very powerful technique. And Treasure Mapping can be the icing on the visualization cake!

It's a very simple but effective idea: Treasure Mapping involves creating a physical representation or collage of what you want to achieve. It acts as a constant reminder and representation of your goals. And so it intensifies the effects of visualization, which acts on your subconscious mind to motivate and encourage you towards achieving those goals.

Let's say you have the ambition to get fitter and run a marathon: Your "treasure map" could include pictures of runners, people crossing the marathon finishing line, and athletes training hard; perhaps it could also include pictures of the foods that you need to eat (and those you need to avoid).

If you are a salesperson with the ambition to beat sales records in your company, your treasure map could include a representation of the sales chart you hope to achieve, pictures of people signing deals with customers, pictures of your product standing proud; and perhaps a picture of someone receiving a prize.

### Using the Tool

Your treasure map will represent how you visualize the achievement of your goals and your journey toward that achievement.

The first step towards creating your treasure map is to clarify your goals and then visualize what will happen, or what you will have, once you have achieved the goal. (For further help on clarifying your goals, please refer to Mind Tools article on [goal setting](#)).

Once you have are clear about what you want to achieve, write it down in detail and start to visualize your achievement: Ask yourself questions such as:

- What will I see when I have achieved my goal?
- What will I have? What will I be?
- How will I celebrate the achievement?
- How will other people see me and what I have achieved?

Now enjoy collecting images that represent this visualization and arrange these images on paper as a collage. These image of the ultimate achievement go in the most prominent position of you treasure map – at the top or in the middle.

The next step is to visualize the journey towards achieving the goals. What will you have to do? What will you have to stop doing to achieve your goals? There may be important milestones or necessary sacrifices to achieving your goals. Visualize these too, and find images that represent them. Now arrange these on the collage too.

Finally, paste the pictures of your goals, your journey towards them, and sacrifices on your collage. Make sure you arrange them in a way that helps imprint upon you the desire to achieve your goals.

Hang your chart in a prominent place so that you see it daily: There it will help motivate and inspire you towards achieving your goals.

### **Key Points**

Treasure mapping helps bring you goals to life and gives you a clear image of what you want to achieve and how you will achieve it.

First clarify you goals and what you need to do to achieve them. Then visualize these. Choose images to represent how you see your achievement and make a collage; and use this as a constant reminder of what you want to achieve.

