GOAL SETTING WITH SMART GOALS

An employee cannot hit the bulls-eye unless she or he can see the target. The establishment of clear expectations helps guide and influence performance.

To do something well, an employee must know the definition of good performance, have the knowledge and skills to perform properly, and understand the importance of doing the task accurately. Goals need to be as specific and concrete as necessary without being overly restrictive.

Goal setting can clarify the duties and responsibilities associated with a particular job or work group. It can also identify the kinds of organizational and personal outcomes required for work success. Finally, it can specify the kinds of feedback and support needed to monitor and achieve those goals.

Goal setting affects performance in at least three ways:
1. The setting of goals affects what people think and do. It focuses behavior in the direction of the goals rather than elsewhere.
2. Goals energize behavior, motivating people to put forth effort to reach difficult goals that are accepted.
3. Goal setting leads to persistence in effort over time when goals are difficult yet achievable.

Setting goals is an important part of the management function. Managers need to be able to set effective goals for themselves, and to coach their employees through their own goal setting process. Employees will be more committed to organizational and departmental goals when they have participated in setting these goals. This gives structure and direction to both business and people development.

SMART Goals

The following method is an effective goal setting model available to assist you in the process.

- **Specific** – *What should be achieved?*
  When employees are given specific goals, they tend to perform higher than when they are told to do their best or when they receive no guidance at all. Increasing goal specificity reduces ambiguity about what is expected and focuses the search for appropriate behaviors. Specificity helps employees focus on important tasks.

- **Measurable** – *How will you know if the goal has been reached?*
  What criteria will be used to ascertain whether the goal has been reached? Having measurable goals means that the employee will be able to evaluate his/her own progress.

- **Action Plan** – *Which actions will you take to achieve the goals?*
  How will the goal be accomplished? Will the manager list the steps of the action plan, or will the employee do that? How might the employee's developmental level affect this step?

- **Realistic** – *Are they achievable?*
  If goals are set too high, employees may lose their motivation, and will give up when they fail to achieve these unrealistic goals.

  Are the expected results within the employee's control?

  Although goals should be attainable, they should also be challenging. Increasing the difficulty of employees' goals can increase their perceived challenge and enhance the amount of effort expended to achieve them. Thus, more difficult goals tend to lead to increased effort and performance, as long as they are seen as feasible.

- **Time Frames** – *By when?*
  When will the actions be completed/the goal achieved? Will there be intermittent progress reviews?

SMART Goals Template

When setting goals for yourself or with an employee it is always best to create SMART goals. These are goals that are:

Specific – *What should be achieved?*

Measurable - *How will you know if the goal has been reached?*

Action Plan- *Which actions will you take to achieve the goals*

Realistic - *Are they achievable?*

Time Frame - *By when?*