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How and Why to use SMART Goals

What is a SMART Goal?

A SMART goal is a goal-setting method that helps you write actionable, achievable goals in an organised and effective manner. The acronym SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant (or Realistic), and Time-bound; each representing a critical aspect of setting and achieving meaningful objectives. In this resource, we address the different aspects of SMART goals and how they can support you in your business and mentoring journey.

Why Setting Goals is Important in the Mentoring Programme

Setting goals is a crucial part of any mentoring programme because it provides both mentors and mentees with a clear vision and purpose. Goals give structure to the mentoring relationship, ensuring that both parties are focused on the desired outcomes. Here's why goal setting is vital in a mentoring context:

Long-term Vision and Short-term Motivation:

Goals provide a roadmap that guides mentoring pairs through their journey. This not only keeps them motivated but also ensures that they remain aligned with the programme's objectives.

Efficient Use of Time and Resources:

With clear goals, mentoring pairs can better organise their time and make more effective use of resources, ensuring that each interaction is productive and focused on achieving specific outcomes.

Clear Roadmap to Success:

Goals offer a step-by-step guide on how to achieve the desired results. Without clear objectives, it becomes challenging to track progress or determine whether the mentoring relationship is effective.

Purpose and Drive:

Knowing that you're working towards a specific goal gives meaning to the mentoring process. It keeps both the mentor and the mentee engaged, as they are aware of what they are striving to achieve together.

How to Set SMART Goals

Each element of the SMART acronym plays a vital role in crafting a goal that is clear, attainable, and motivational. Here's how to approach each component:

Specific:

Your goal should be as precise as possible, focusing on a single outcome. Vague goals can lead to confusion and lack of direction. For example, rather than saying "I want to improve my skills," you could specify "I want to enhance my public speaking skills by attending workshops."

Measurable:

A goal must include criteria for measuring progress. This could be in the form of numbers, deadlines, or specific milestones. For instance, "I will deliver three public speeches over the next six months" is measurable because you can track whether you have met the three-speech target.

Achievable:

While it's important to set challenging goals that push you out of your comfort zone, they should still be realistic. Setting unattainable goals can lead to frustration or overwhelm. For example, "I will become a professional speaker in three months" might be unrealistic, whereas "I will practice public speaking regularly and seek opportunities to speak at three local events this year" is more achievable.

Relevant (or Realistic):

Ensure that the goal matters to you and aligns with your broader objectives. If a goal is not relevant, you might lose motivation. For example, if your long-term goal is to lead a team, a realistic short-term goal could be "I will improve my leadership skills by taking a course on team management."

Time-bound:

Every goal should have a deadline. This creates a sense of urgency and helps prevent procrastination. For example, "I will enhance my public speaking skills by attending three workshops over the next six months" is time-bound because it specifies a six-month period.

Examples of SMART Goals in Business

Regular Goal:

I want to grow my business.

SMART Goal:

I will acquire 10 new clients (measurable) for my custom t-shirts (specific) within two months (time-bound) by launching a social media influencer marketing campaign and offering special discounts (achievable). This will allow me to grow my business and increase my revenue by 10% (realistic).

Regular Goal:

I want to save money.

SMART Goal:

I want to raise \$50,000 (measurable) worth of business capital to start my own custom t-shirt start-up (specific) so that I can quit regular employment (relevant) by saving \$10,000 a year from my salary (achievable) for the next five years (time-bound).

Exercise

Practice writing SMART goals, by writing down any short, medium and long term goals you want to set.

Conclusion

Using SMART goals is an effective way to ensure that your objectives are well-defined, attainable, and aligned with your broader mission. Whether your goals are focussed on your business or your mentoring relationship, SMART goals provide a clear framework for success. By focusing on each component of the SMART acronym, you can create goals that not only motivate but also guide you towards achieving tangible results.

During Phase 2, you can ensure your success on the Mentoring programme by setting SMART goals that align with your objectives and values. As you progress on the programme, regularly revisit and reflect on your goals, and adjust as necessary.