



## **SETTING OBJECTIVES**

One of the most important activities you will perform as a manager is developing co-authored performance objectives with your employees.

Objectives are specific statements that describe **outputs or results to be achieved**. They are quantifiable, observable achievements that can be measured. Objectives do not tell what activities are needed to implement the objectives.

Effective objectives should answer the question “What do I want to have happen as a result?” The answer to this question should not be a list of activities that may not produce the desired end result. Avoid the activity trap. They should also:

- Focus on and describe the desired outcome.
- Support the Company’s vision and business strategy and your employee’s performance plan and career objectives.
- Stretch the employee, but are realistic and achievable within a specific time frame.
- Are capable of being measured or observed.

An easy way of developing objectives is to use the SMART criteria:

1. **SPECIFIC** – The objective should be easily understood and targeted. It should be concrete, not vague or abstract. It should create a clear picture of the end result. Avoid the use of adverbs – e.g. more, less, quickly - since they are not specific. Always start with an action verb.
2. **MEASURABLE** – The objective should be measurable in terms of evaluating progress in meeting strategic business and professional development objectives. “How will my results be measured?”

Measurements taken over a period of time reveal trends in the business, representing progress toward improvement or a drop in profitability and productivity. Measurement provides information to maintain a correct course of action. The end result helps us manage the quality improvement process in a more effective manner.



Some typical measures include direct counts – e.g. dollar volume, overtime costs, number of units, number of defects or ratios – e.g. percentage of schedules met on time, cycle time reduction.

3. **ATTAINABLE** – Although objectives should stretch and challenge your employee’s capabilities, they must be within reach. Your employees can become frustrated if expectations are beyond their reach. In fact, if an objective is too high, they might give up and ask, “What’s the use?” Objectives shouldn’t be too low either. They need to be challenging.

Objectives should also be within the employee’s influence. They need to include expectations that the employee has control over. For example, any revenue objectives should reflect how much influence a person has on sales. Or, if a team commits to accomplishing a project or segment of a project that requires data or support from other partners, the objective should be stated as such.

4. **RESULTS ORIENTED** – The objective should be worth doing. For example, there should be benefits to internal or external customers. It should also align with each of the objectives that have been established by your work unit or business (vertical alignment) and/or aligned with your customer’s expectations (horizontal alignment).
5. **TIME DATED** – Objectives should be realistic and achievable within a specific time frame. There should be a deadline for completion of the objective.

Writing SMART objectives is the first step in achieving success. In next month’s newsletter, I’ll provide you with some practical tips on how you can accomplish your objectives.