Leadership and Management

SMART targets

One of the benefits of using SMART targets is that they help you clarify what you expect from yourself and your team members. By doing so, you can identify staff professional development opportunities, and explore how these opportunities might feed into your setting's quality improvement plans. SMART targets eliminate generalities and guesswork, with a clear set timeline, they allow you to track progress effectively and identify any gaps or areas for development. The SMART target approach will help you plan, prioritise, and focus on your goals. By making your targets:

- **Specific -** you can set a clear target to aspire towards, rather than something that is vague. It is crystal – clear and not open to misinterpretation.

- **Measurable** – you can define the indicators, metrics, and methods of assessment that will show your progress and results.

- **Achievable –** you can set realistic and attainable standards that will motivate and challenge you and your team.

- **Realistic –** you can align them with your vision, mission, and values and ensure they contribute to your quality improvement plan.

- **Timed -** you can establish a deadline that will keep you focussed and accountable.

Each word is a step in the framework. All five steps must be covered to design the objectives so they can be fully achieved.

The five stages of SMART are interlinked, it is important to remember that you cannot discuss one point without considering another. When setting SMART targets you need to ensure that they are clear and structured. By doing so, ask yourself:

- How is the target specific?
- How is the target measurable?
- How is the target achievable?
- How is the target realistic?
- How is the target time-bound?

TASK 1

Read the target below and answer the questions to ensure it is SMART:

"Become more comfortable delegating tasks."

Here is an example to get you thinking:

You have set yourself a goal to build relationships within your team. Let's break this down and make it a SMART target, see below:

Leadership Target – Over the next academic year develop stronger working relationships with your team, developing personal connections with each member, leading to a more positive work environment and increased productivity.

How can you make this target **specific**?

- Through regular one-on-one meetings, supervisions, and appraisals.

How can you make this target **measurable**?

- Measure your progress by the number of meaningful one-on-one meetings, supervisions, and appraisals that take place. Consider seeking feedback from practitioners on their perspective of the process.

How can you make this target **achievable?**

- Schedule supervisions and appraisals in advance with the agreement of the practitioner. Ensure that the agenda is manageable for the time allocated, allowing enough time for meaningful discussions.

How is this target **realistic?**

- Being proportionate in the frequency of supervisions and appraisals and taking into account other commitments and time restraints. Is there a contingency plan should a one to one need to be postponed.

How is this target **time- bound?**

- Set yourself a timeline such as the next academic year for you to take pause and review progress.

TASK 2

Reflect on the target below for a newly qualified level 3 practitioner who has recently joined the team and appears to lack in confidence when talking to parents about their child's learning:

'Sara needs to be more confident when talking to the parents.'

- What makes this target too broad and immeasurable?
- How will you break down Sara's target to make it SMART? (Consider discussions and key points identified during induction and any supervisions that have taken place)
- Can you see the impact that would be had on Sara's professional development and quality of the provision through this approach.

Point to remember!

By inspiring your team with clear objectives and targets, you can improve morale and overall productivity. You can develop a culture of learning enabling continual improvement and growth within your team.

Further reading:

SMART Goals in Education: Importance, Benefits, Limitations (helpfulprofessor.com)