

TEETCH

The Real 'smArt' Objective

Often misquoted, mistaught or misunderstood, the **smArt** acronym for considering the variables associated with any given performance objective in the corporate world is indeed incredibly useful. However, it is not widely or accurately understood. Here is our humble take on the concept and how we teach it at senior levels in the Banking industry.

S is for **Specific** – this is the 'what' question, or the 'output' that is expected. The job of the manager is to clearly describe what the task is in terms of 'exactly' what needs to be done or achieved. Here, the manager gets the opportunity to be explicit and engage the employee in a discussion to understand their current knowledge of the topic and where they may need support or education to complete the task. It's where the interactive part of the conversation begins. The manager should describe a finished product or activity almost as if it were already done. The **smart** manager points toward examples (where available) so that they are not just telling or describing to the employee, rather they are 'showing' or providing an example for the employee to emulate.

M is for **Measurable** – this is the 'How will we know we're progressing?' question, or the 'How will we know we're done?' question, or perhaps most importantly, the 'How can I measure my own progress whilst you (my manager) is not around?' question. Here, the manager has an opportunity to create ownership in the employee engaged in the task. By taking the time to help the employee understand how they can measure their own progress, they are in fact giving the employee the authority to do a great job and the encouragement to take ownership for doing a great job. Here we find the difference between the average manager and the excellent manager.

The **excellent manager** delivers performance through their people AND develops them simultaneously toward high quality delivery. The **average manager** simply meets the schedule or plan and lets the employee know whether they're on track or not. Some managers do not even do this! Important here is to understand that the manager is creating the conditions or environment for initiative to be shown by the employee by giving the employee the ability to measure their own performance. The alternative is where the manager measures performance by their own undisclosed metric that 'looks' to the employee like 'I like you' or 'I don't like you' rather than 'you're doing a good job' or 'you're not doing a good job'.

A is for **Achievable** - this is for the **employee to understand and estimate**. Where we talk about **M for measurable** sometimes we've found discussions about how much work should be done. Actually, it's more productive to have the employee take away their understanding of the task and then come back to the manager with an ESTIMATE of 'how much' is achievable. Usually we find this part of the **SMART** acronym is the most misunderstood.

In order for an employee to hit a target it is of the most use to have them contribute to what the target is. This ensures a feedback loop between the employee and the manager is in place to enable understanding. So, here is where the manager acts as a guide, helping the employee to understand roughly how much they should be aiming for but gives them the information that helps the employee build their own estimate based upon their experience and current skills.

R is for **Results Oriented** - not relevant or realistic. Both the latter words (and others we've heard) are useful but not complementary or truly valuable. 'Realistic' is too close to 'Achievable' to warrant a different angle, and 'Relevant' is covered more helpfully by 'Results Oriented'.

Why does this task need to be done? What is the outcome intended? How does this task connect to the value / supply chain? Where an employee is given a clear description of 'why' it needs to be done they have the opportunity of exceeding expectations rather than just meeting them with the output (S) description alone.

T is for **Time Bound** - **When does the task need to be completed and what is the schedule for reporting progress of the task?** It is absolutely essential that both the manager and employee have regular expectation management dialogue early on in the task lifecycle to ensure quality is built into the work early on and that the employee is on the right track.

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