

## Be S.M.A.R.T. about Your Health and Fitness

By Robert L. Selders, Jr.

You've made the decision to make health a priority. You've committed to creating a plan. You're keeping it simple and taking practical steps. Now it's time to identify your goals. As a business owner or employee, you're likely very familiar with the concept of goal-setting. You have goals for your company and for your people, all focused around improving your bottom line, growing your business or advancing your career.

But as a business owner, you also know the importance of identifying the right goals to get the results you want. If your goals are too vague, too impractical, or too ambitious, chances are high you'll fail to reach them. Equally important is the timing of your goals. For example, if your goal is to expand your staff during an economic recession, you'll likely see that backfire on you. Instead, you may want to establish goals for lowering costs, reducing waste, increasing productivity and improving efficiencies until you're back on solid financial ground.

Similarly, looking at your health and fitness goals, the same principle applies. Set goals for yourself that are not well defined, that are not reasonable or do-able, that do not support the end-result you want, or that are not well-timed, and you'll probably see little to no results. And without visible progress, you're likely to get discouraged, frustrated and set your health and fitness aside.

So how do you avoid the pitfalls of poor goal-setting? I always recommend the following simple acronym to my training clients to help guide them: Make sure your goals are S.M.A.R.T. Let's break it down letter by letter.

The S stands for *Specific*. You want to lose weight? Great. How much? Ten pounds? Twenty? Fifty? You want to be healthier? Fantastic! What specific health issues are you looking to address? High cholesterol? Blood sugar imbalances? Gut irritation problems? The more specific you are with your goals, the more you can focus your efforts on reaching them and seeing results.

Now for the M, which stands for *Measurable*. How are you going to measure your progress? With a tape measure, a scale, before and after body fat tests? Physicals and blood tests? With a structured strength and conditioning program that allows you to track your gains and personal records? If you're not measuring your progress, you may not see how much you're actually improving, and that your plan is working.

Then there's the A: *Achievable*. This is key. If you're 50 pounds overweight and haven't exercised in a while, then running a marathon in under 3 hours is likely not an achievable goal for you at this point in your journey. Why not go for a 5K first? Set yourself up for success by establishing realistic goals you can achieve in the near-future.

The R stands for *Relevant*. Are you establishing goals that are going to get you to the end-result you want? If you're looking to get stronger, then maybe improving your cardio gets put on the back burner for a while. Make sure the goals you set support the results you desire.

Last but not least is T, for *Time-based*. Similar to your business, you may want to establish quarterly goals. What do you want to accomplish in the next three months? At the end of each quarter, assess those goals and the progress you've made so you can make the necessary adjustments for the next quarter. Giving a time frame for your goals will make them seem less daunting and more do-able, will let you see results that reinforce your commitment, and will allow you to adjust your training as you get fitter, healthier, and start checking goals off your list.

Setting SMART goals doesn't automatically mean you'll never experience failure or setbacks. However, it *does* provide a solid framework; and it gives you something tangible to work towards which can increase your chances of being successful both in business and in reaching your health and fitness goals.

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