

“S-M-A-R-T CRITERIA”

QUALITY TOOLS

Description of S-M-A-R-T

S-M-A-R-T is an acronym for **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable/Attainable/Assignable, **R**elevant/Realistic, and **T**ime-Bound/Time-Related. S and M are usually defined as Specific and Measurable with the last three letters defined depending on the author or application.

When to use the S-M-A-R-T

SMART criteria are commonly used for problem and goal statements such as in six sigma projects, in setting personal objectives during the annual performance review, in defining milestones in project management, in stating target/goals for problem solving activities such as A3 (refer to separate tool description).

How to use the S-M-A-R-T

Specific – this involves answering the five “W” questions (Who, What, When, Why, Which) to eliminate the vagueness or ambiguity of the goal or problem. The problem statement, “Customers are not satisfied with the company’s products.”, can be improved by specifying if there are any particular group of customers who are not satisfied and identifying the particular products in question.

Measurable – in order to determine progress against the goal, there should be a way to measure performance. This refers to something quantifiable and objective that can be the basis of evaluation. In the example above, the measurable component can be added by restating the statement as “The Net Promoter Score (NPS) of US Customers are at 6.0...”

Achievable – this refers to setting goals/objectives that moves the person from his/her comfort zone to the stretched zone. Stretched goals involve creating sufficient challenge without creating anxiety or frustration. If the goal is very achievable then it is considered meaningless and the person/teams are not developed in the process.

Relevant – Selecting a goal that is important is the key of this criterion. Relevance can be with respect to the business, to the team, or to the organization. In most cases, aligning goals to the overall business objectives creates the relevance of the goal or objective.

Time-Bound – this criterion stresses the importance of attaching a target date to the goal/objective to create focus and urgency. Without a date to look forward to, the activity can be derailed by daily activities.

Tips on use of S-M-A-R-T

1. When choosing the definitions of each letter, ensure that the criterion selected are not similar. For example, Realistic and Achievable can mean the same thing. Another example of similar criteria are Relevant and Appropriate.
2. The combination of A SMART objective and a good action plan should be the focus and not just on the objective.

Application of S-M-A-R-T

Examples of SMART goals in different applications are:

Six Sigma - To increase First-Time Quality at the Moulding Department from 75% to 80% by 3rd Quarter of 2014

Personal Objectives – Train 100 personnel in the corporate office in Advanced Excel Application from July to Dec. 2014

Project Milestone – Secure three major sponsorships for ABC Festival worth \$250K by October 2014

References

1. Wikipedia.org
2. Lean Six Sigma and Minitab