

Goal Setting

TRAIN yourself to set SMART goals

Goal setting is a fundamental activity for personal development, helping to maintain a sense of direction and purpose. This article outlines two goal setting tools.

The tool most often cited is SMART, standing for:

Specific	The goal is clearly stated so that you know exactly what the intended outcome is.
Measurable	The result has clear attributes that can be measured rather than judged.
Agreed	Consensual agreement: have you ever had an imposed goal that you really believe in and strive to achieve?
Recorded	That it's written down as a reminder, helping your commitment and review.
Time based	You can set a date in the diary to achieve it by.

SMART lends itself to readily-definable, outcome-based, achievement which is why it is often used in planning projects. It can be used to plan preparation for Professional Review (see the ICE's Professional Review Guidance for additional information). It also works well with trainees who have fallen behind with Development Reports: "I will write a 1400-word Development Report by 22 December and give it to my Delegated Engineer as a Christmas present".

SMART goals can be made SMARTER by adding Exciting and Reviewed.

A risk of the SMART tool is that it can prompt a narrow focus on outcomes, drawing learners away from the process. In my experience it can contribute to "safe" goal statements in order to avoid "failure", or self-limiting beliefs can inadvertently emerge.

Learning often involves looking at the horizon *and* the immediately surrounding environment. The process, or journey, can be more important than the outcome. The first person to break the 4-minute mile, Sir Roger Bannister, wrote: "...what is important is the profoundly satisfying effort in thought, feeling and hard work necessary to achieve success".

Unfortunately reality television programmes have made the word “journey” something that sends shudders through me! But I do like the image of learning being just that, a journey: and journeys can have all manner of interesting facets that enrich. So next time you have a learning goal, why not try my TRAIN metaphor:

Targeted	What is the objective that sets the direction are you heading in? Look towards the horizon.
Reflective	Regularly review what you have got from the experiences. What stations have you passed and at which did you pause. What exploring did you do? Why?
Adopted	That you are committed-to and own the process. After all, it’s your life.
Intentional	You set about it with impetus and intent, creating and maintaining appropriate momentum to keep travelling.
Nurtured	Use interventions that support the direction of your journey. Embracing and evaluate unexpected events.

TRAIN can be useful in the initial briefing meeting between Supervising Civil Engineer and trainee. Part of this discussion will be about the overall objectives, learner contract and training scheme processes: “Over the next 3-4 years I will work towards completing my Initial Professional Development. I’ll be open to new experiences and learning which I will regularly review and record. I’ll meet with my mentors to monitor my achievement of the Attributes”.

The ICE’s Continuing Professional Development guidance provides tools for planning and recording learning using a Development Action Plan (DAP) and Continuing Professional Development (learning) records. So when you are reviewing your own DAP ask yourself “how SMART is this?” or “how should I TRAIN?”

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