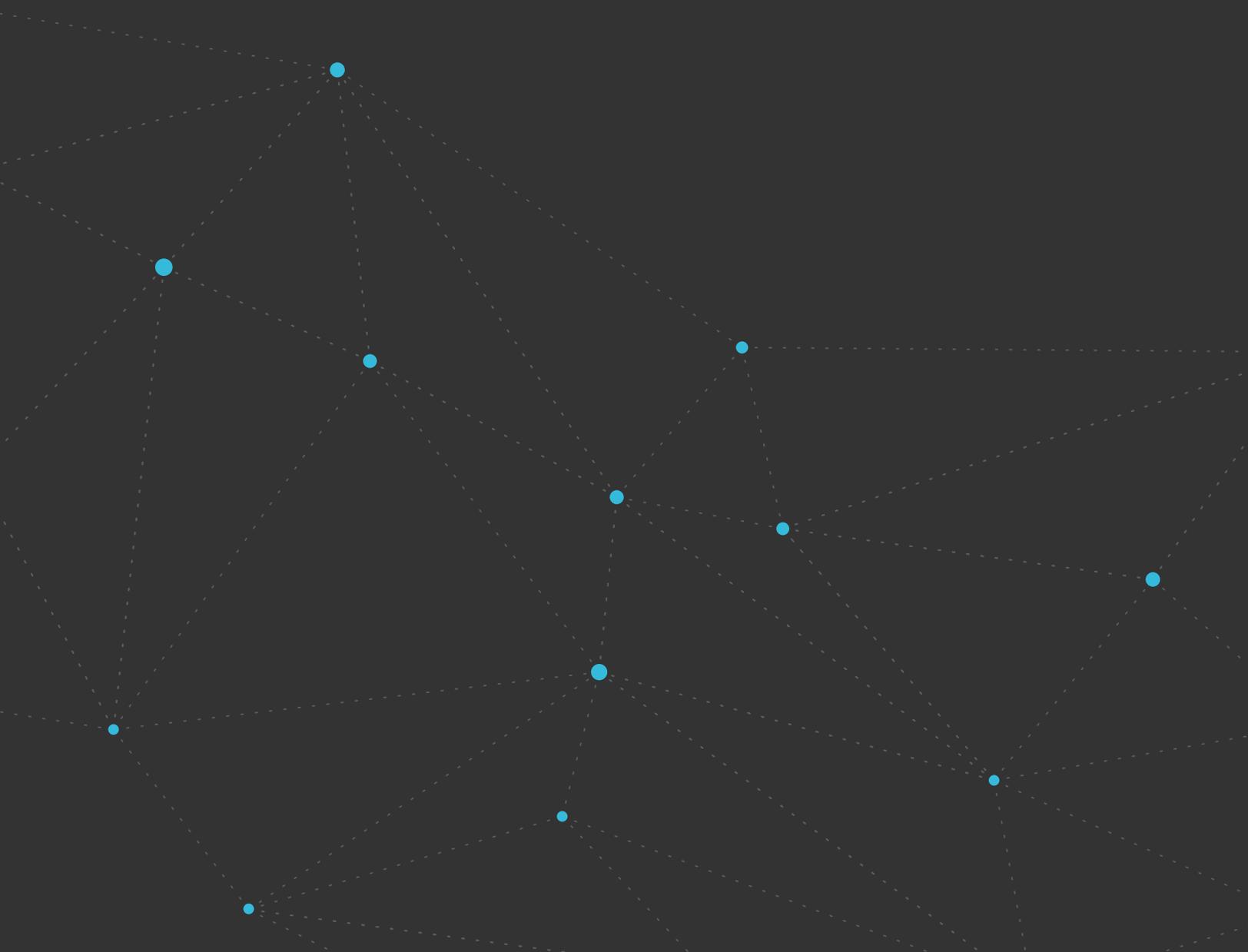


To Create S.M.A.R.T. Business Goals, Think Goal Science

How to set more strategic individual and enterprise goals



What Are S.M.A.R.T. Goals?

S.M.A.R.T. goals were introduced in 1981 by George T. Doran in a Management Review paper as a way to write management’s goals and objectives. The acronym is easy to remember, but structuring S.M.A.R.T. goals can be challenging because they must be:

		Example 1	Example 2	Example 3
S	Specific	Meet monthly sales quota	Implement new business intelligence tool	Raise NPS score
M	Measurable	Book a minimum of \$2000/month	Train entire analytics team	Increase current score (10) by at least 5 points
A	Attainable	Launched new marketing campaigns to increase leads	Created a project plan to ensure a successful implementation	Developed new program designed to improve this score
R	Relevant	Important financial metric for the company	Core operations requirement for analytics team	Revenue increases when customers are loyal so need to continually raise NPS score
T	Time-bound	Before August 31, 2015	Before December 15, 2015	By the end of Q2 2015

Why Businesses Use S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Goal setting increases productivity and engagement. When employees set goals (e.g., to sell 50 products in Q1 or test a new online shopping feature by the holidays), research shows they are more likely to achieve them. Individuals that write down goals, share them, and send regular updates about their progress also boost their chances of succeeding.

How Specific Serves as a Solid Foundation

There is little debate that getting the “S” right is critical to goal setting. Specific is terrific and every goal should be clearly defined. Anyone using the [Objectives and Key Results \(OKRs\)](#) process knows without a specific objective, it’s

impossible to write key results. Specific is an ideal foundation for enterprise goals. Measurable is specificity quantified, helpful but not always necessary. Read more about [S.M.A.R.T. goals](#).

The Importance of Relevance and Time

Relevance is correlated to alignment. Goals that are aligned—up and down the organization, and across teams—are better enterprise goals. Bounding goals in timeframes is also productive because deadlines hold people accountable and prevent procrastination, which boosts individual performance.

Where S.M.A.R.T. Goals Fall Short

S.M.A.R.T. goals used to make the most business sense. Now we know better. Setting S.M.A.R.T. goals is an improvement over not setting goals. That said, if you begin and end with S.M.A.R.T., you limit achievement because they:

- **Exclusively focus on goal setting and ignore goal pursuit** - Managers and employees document goals and often forget about them until annual performance review time.
- **Work best for rote tasks** - While good for holding people accountable to algorithmic tasks, S.M.A.R.T. goal setting stifles creative thinking in knowledge workers.
- **Restrict innovation** - Research has proven that setting challenging goals is better for business than setting attainable goals. Attainable goals aren't correlated with hyper success, instead they can encourage employees to keep performing rote tasks, achieving the minimum, and "gaming the system."

What is Goal Science Thinking?

Goal Science™ is a set of principles, just like S.M.A.R.T is, that helps individuals achieve goals by improving the way they set and pursue them. It's not a process or methodology like OKRs or management by objectives (MBOs). Goal Science thinking, based on leading academic research, consumer engagement techniques, and data from the BetterWorks platform, enhances S.M.A.R.T.

Goal Science thinking includes the following five key pillars:

-  **Connected** – Goals are aligned vertically, cross-functionally, and with the company mission.
-  **Supported** – Employees regularly engage with peers' goals by providing relevant praise and feedback about them.
-  **Adaptable** – Individuals refine and focus goals as business priorities shift, ensuring the right work is always getting done.
-  **Progress-based** – Employees frequently update goals to continually capture small wins.
-  **Aspirational** – Individuals remain challenged and motivated by setting meaningful stretch goals.

How Goal Science Builds on S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Every goal begins with a specific objective, and the more specific the better. If the goal is measurable from the start, that specificity is added; yet, it's not imperative because every stage in every goal may not have clearly defined metrics. Relevance ensures that goals are connected (from the bottom up, top down, and across the organization) and that goals are adaptable as business requirements change. Time-bound also augments adaptability, and can even foster greater aspirational goal setting. By regularly supporting peers' goals in public ways, teams recognize progress which increases the likelihood that goals are achieved. Attainable is replaced by aspirational to ensure goals drive innovation. Read more about [Goal Science thinking](#).

Next-Generation Goal Setting Example

Goals informed by Goal Science thinking would look something like this for a product organization:

- VP of Products sets a goal: Ship new product by the last day of Q2.
- Engineer #1 sets an individual goal that flows back into the VP's goal: Include one new feature in the product shipping by the last day of Q2.

- Engineer #1 completes goal. Engineer #1 assigns testing goal to the Manager of Quality Assurance (QA)—a cross-functional team member.
- QA Manager adjusts goal from engineer to ensure new feature meets established testing plan requirements.
- After a week, Engineer #1 notices testing goal is incomplete. Engineer #1 “nudges” the QA manager to complete the testing.
- QA manager completes the testing. Feature is approved.
- Engineer #1 “cheers” the result and notifies the VP of Products. The new feature is included in Q2 shipping product.

Managing Your Enterprise Goals

Start with S.M.A.R.T., then evolve to Goal Science thinking. The BetterWorks enterprise goals platform efficiently applies the five pillars of Goal Science to evolve the way you create and manage goals. With BetterWorks, your enterprise cross-functionally aligns employees, driving higher performance and greater operational efficiency.



About BetterWorks

BetterWorks is an enterprise goals platform trusted by high performing companies to easily set, measure and cross-functionally align goals. Rooted in the Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) method for goal setting, BetterWorks uses Goal Science™ principles to inspire employees to reach their full potential with better clarity, direction and visibility on work that matters.

For more information visit www.BetterWorks.com