Tip Sheet: Setting SMART Goals

SMART Goals

There is a skill to setting and prioritizing goals. When done properly, goal setting forces you to think about not only what you want to achieve, but how to achieve it. The SMART system is one way of setting effective goals. SMART goals are specific, measurable, attainable, rewarding and time-based.

Be Specific: In general, goals starting with “to be better …” are too vague. Unless you describe your goals in exact terms, it’s difficult to develop an action plan. For example: I wish to stabilize my weight at 130 pounds.

They should be Measurable: Determine your criteria for evaluating performance. Unless you assess your progress with hard data, it is difficult to determine when you reach your goals. Example: I will exercise by walking 30 minutes each day, 5 days a week.

They should be Attainable: You must be careful not to set your goals so high that they are unreachable. You can check this by asking yourself, “Can I walk 30 minutes a day?” If the answer is yes, then the goal is attainable.

Goals should be Rewarding: Unless you feel that your goals are worth the effort, you may have difficulty starting and staying motivated. Ask yourself, “Is weighing 130 pounds something that I value? What will I enjoy by stabilizing my weight?”

And your goals should be Time-based: You need to assign realistic deadlines to each of your goals. Deadlines should be far enough in advance that you can accomplish the goal comfortably – even with unexpected delays. However, the deadlines should be near enough that you feel compelled to take action. The length of your commitment should also be assigned. Will it be an ongoing effort or just for a specific period of time?

Remember, the underlying reason you are setting SMART goals is to stay focused and to allocate your time efficiently. For more information on setting SMART goals, or tips for success in the workplace, contact SupportLinc, your employee assistance program.