

Why **SMART** Goals Fail



and How to **Fix** Them

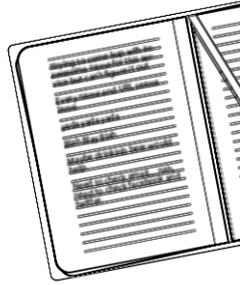
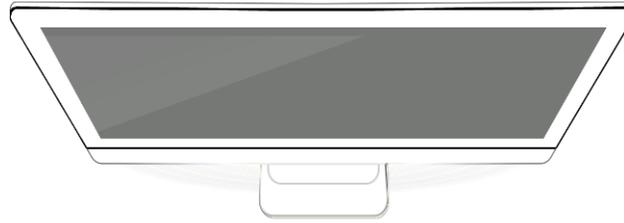
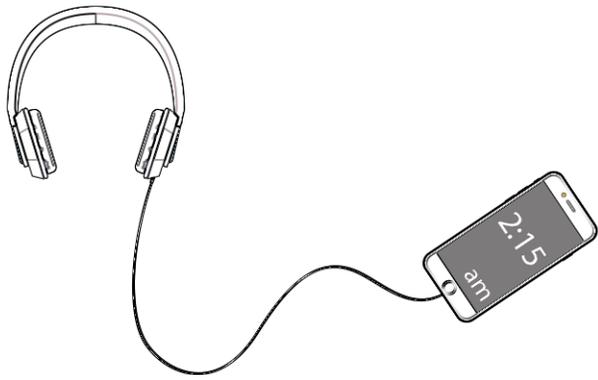
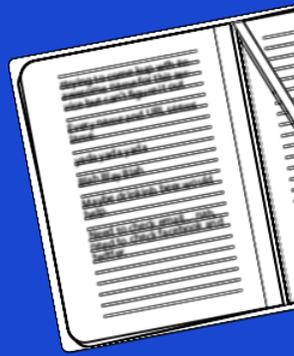


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Introduction & Background

The SMART process of goal setting has become very popular, often seen as the secret to achieving massive success.

This methodology traces its roots to the 1950's and the Management by Objectives concepts of Peter Drucker. G. T. Doran actually coined the SMART term.

It spread quickly in corporations looking for a competitive advantage and better results.

Now, it's used by companies of all sizes, including solopreneurs and individuals simply wanting to get more done.

In case you're not familiar with the terms of the acronym, here's a quick review.

SMART

S: Specific
M: Measurable
A: Achievable
R: Relevant
T: Time-Based

Different organizations may tweak the definition, but the variances are slight.

When you set a goal or objective, it should be written out and contain each of the SMART elements.

If these seem rather obvious, I agree.

In a corporation, SMART defines part of your official “Performance Objectives.”

If you’re a solopreneur, it’s basically a contract with yourself.

The BIG IDEA is this:

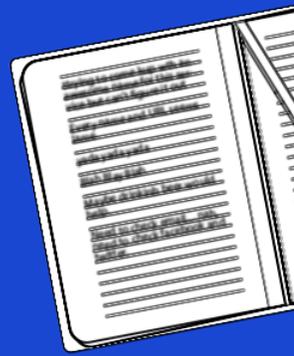
Defining SMART objectives will dramatically boost success.

I have decades of SMART experience in corporations, small business and solopreneurship.

Studies have verified the improved results.

However, in most cases:

The plans are still failing!



Why SMART Fails

Let's assume you've described your goal and included metrics.

It's achievable, relevant and time-bound. What went wrong?

Facts vs Fiction

4 of the **5** SMART elements are fact based. These are

S (Specific)	M (Measurable)
R (Relevant)	T (Time-Based)

But the **5th** element **A** (Achievable)

Well . . . that's just your opinion.

And **9** times out of **10** you're wrong!

Why?

It Starts with . . .

Lies We Tell about:

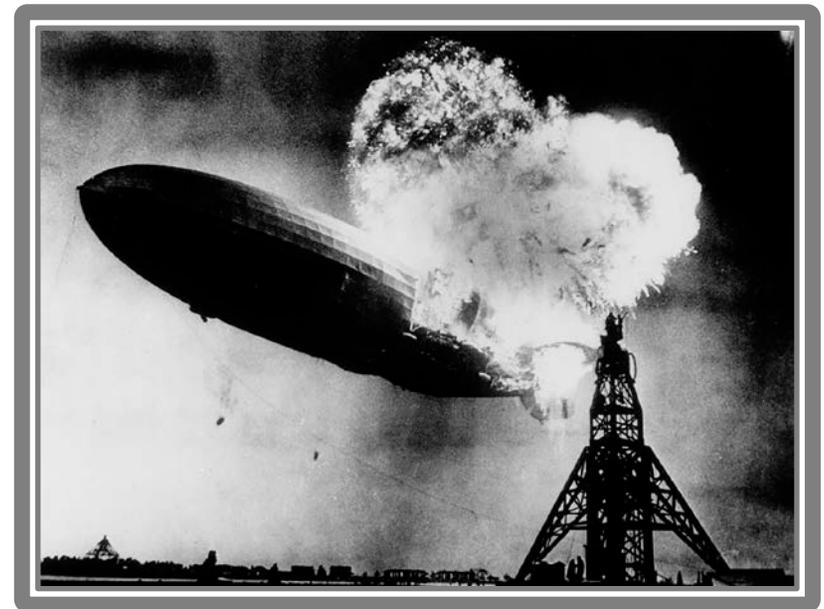
- > Underlying Risks
- > Our Own Ability
- > Scope & Effort Required

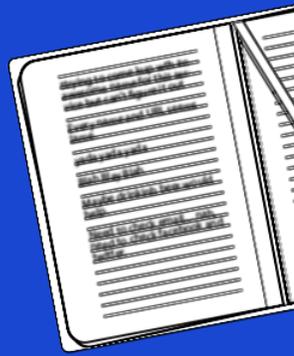


And Finishes with . . .

Poor Execution on:

- > Prioritization
- > Time Management
- > Adjustments to Change





“PLUS” A Better Way

If the problem starts with **lies we tell ourselves** and **poor execution**, what's the answer.

Simply doing the same thing over and over again isn't going to help.



How do you break the pattern?

You'll need new tools, new skills and a new perspective.

Don't start searching the net just yet.

I've got a 4 Step Process to guide you beyond the basic SMART method.

The 4 Steps are called **PLUS**.

Yes, it's another goofy acronym. But, it's a lot easier to remember than recalling the definitions of Step 1, 2, 3 and 4.

PLUS

P: Plan

L: Launch

U: Update

S: Scrutinize

P = Plan

The root of our problem starts with poor planning. Does that mean we should you correct this by obsessively planning every last detail of a project.

No!

Detailed planning is essential at the start. But, trying to itemize details that occur 6 months in the future is a waste of time.

The most important aspect of planning is honesty. Make a bet with yourself.

*"If this milestone isn't met,
I'll give up coffee for a month."*

Are you confident and committed enough to make that bet?

If not, how do you get there?

L = Launch

Every project has deliverables to complete. But, the definition of “complete” can be illusive.

You need to strike the right balance between perfection and half-baked.

That last 1% of perfection can be a schedule killer. Is there really going to be a payback?

At the other extreme is a Minimum Viable Product—you only provide basic functionality while continuing to iterate.

This can be taken too far as well and you might complete a deliverable that’s pointless.

Do you know how to strike a balance between the extremes?

U = Update

Any plan that takes more than 60 days to complete is going to change.

Changes come in many forms, your audience, the market, competition, shifting resources, or perhaps your own goals or financial needs.

The plan must be updated.

This may require establishing new Objectives and a new SMART review.

It may eliminate Objectives that are no longer relevant.

The entire project may be in doubt or a pivot might make sense.

How do you make the decision?

S = Scrutinize

Eventually the plan will end and you'll feel one of the following.

- > *Elated from the success*
- > *Relieved it's dead*
- > *Simply numb*

Regardless of the outcome, now isn't the time to jump into the next project or go to bed for a week.

Now is the time to learn.

Review the plan with a critical eye and identify what worked well and why, what was a flop and why.

Creating a structure for this process is essential.

Summary

When you apply PLUS concepts . . .

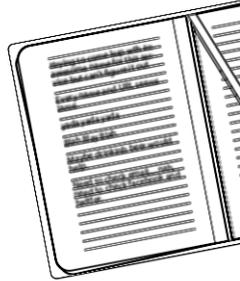
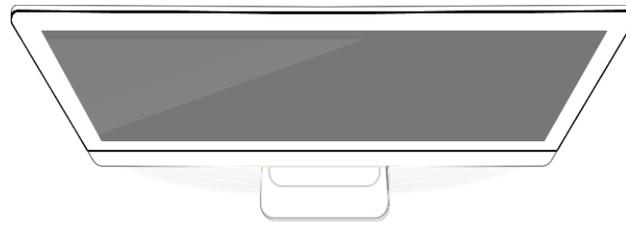
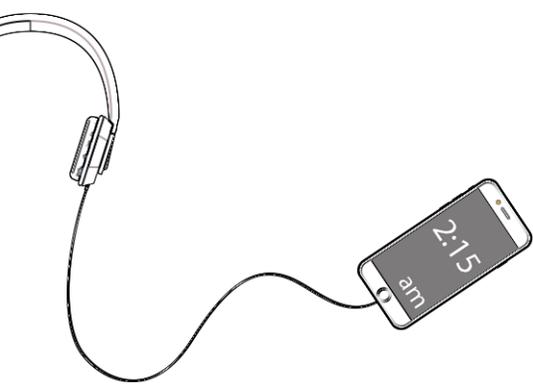
Your goals will have a realistic **Plan**.

You'll learn the right time to **Launch**.

You'll **Update** your plan continually to keep it honest.

And, you'll **Scrutinize** the plan to ensure continuous improvement.

Combined, these are a great start to more effective goal setting and management!



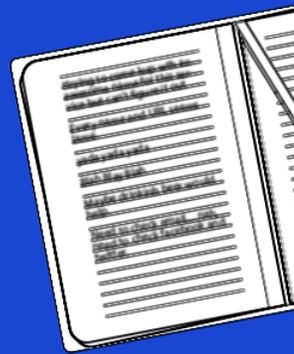
Need More?

Free SMART Forms

Use my forms to complete a SMART sheet for your project:

- > Print and Digital PDF Formats
- > Sizes: 6 x 9 and 8.5 x 11 inches
- > Tip Sheet Included

[**Get The Forms**](#)



About the Author

I've managed projects using SMART methods for over 30 years in a variety of roles.

*Engineer - Project Manager
Entrepreneur - Inventor
Business Founder - IT Manager
and more*

Working for a global telecom company and also co-founding a small business has given me a broad perspective.

I've been at both ends of the process: being held accountable for SMART goals of a group and also establishing SMART goals for subordinates.

Now that I've gone solo—I set SMART goals strictly for myself. Ironically, that might be the most challenging.

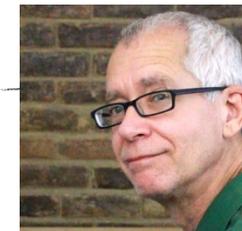
Hopefully this brief guide has been beneficial.

If you would like more, I'm developing a short course on SMART that goes into more detail, provides examples, projects, and I'll even give you feedback on your personal sheets.

Sign-up for the free PDF forms to learn more.

SMART is just one component of a larger system I'm developing to transform the way we manage our days, weeks and months. It's call A Cleaner Desk and will launch summer 2017.

Cheers,



Ed Stanfield