

TIP SHEET: SMART Goals

How to set SMART goals for a successful job search

Using the SMART method allows you to identify five key elements for your goals to make them achievable. Here is a step-by-step process you can use to set SMART goals:

1. Make each goal clear and detailed

For example, instead of "I want to expand my network," you can say, "I want to meet five new people within my profession each week." This may seem overly specific, but by setting firm and clear standards for your goals, you set yourself up for the second step. Everything you can do along your journey to make your goals more traceable is a benefit to your job search.

2. Decide how you will measure success

If you want to switch from a sales job to a job in marketing, you may set a goal to address how you can develop the skills you need to make this transition. To measure this, you might aim to complete one class per month that helps you become better qualified for a marketing position. Using this method, you can see tangible evidence of whether you are moving toward your goal.

3. Make sure your goals are achievable

Setting an accomplishable goal is a key part of achieving them. Reasonable timeframes keep you motivated and focused, and an understanding of the full scope of your goals helps you plan those timeframes. For example, if you are in your first job as a developer, your long-term goal might be to become a senior-level developer. Create smaller, short-term goals to help you reach the greater goal. If you feel that a goal is unachievable because you lack experience, one of your new, short-term goals can be to gain more relevant experience.

4. Ask yourself if the goal is relevant

Goals that align with your values and contribute to your long-term goals are relevant. Each checkpoint you set should have relevance for you and to move you closer to where you want to be in your job search. To make sure you are setting relevant goals, ask yourself these questions:

- How does this goal help me?
- Does accomplishing this goal contribute to my long-term goal?
- Why does this goal matter to me?

5. Set a start and finish date

Setting a timetable for your goals helps keep you motivated and on-schedule. Research all the milestones and potential obstacles before you set your start- and end-dates. For example, if your goal is to find an internship, you might want to give yourself four to six months to accomplish that goal. If in six months you have yet to achieve your goal, reevaluate the goal and how you spend your time, then reconsider if this is a realistic goal.