

SMART GOALS: Case Study

Scenario

Office Green, LLC, is a commercial landscaping company that specializes in plant decor for offices and other businesses. The company is getting ready to introduce its new Plant Pals service, which will provide high-volume customers with small, low-maintenance plants for their desks. You are the project manager assigned to manage the Plant Pals launch.

Office Green's main goal for this project is: *"Increase revenue by 5% by the end of the year by rolling out a new service that provides office plants to high-volume clients."*

You recently met with the project sponsor (the Director of Product) to discuss two additional goals for Plant Pals:

1. *"Increase brand awareness"*
2. *"Raise Office Green's customer retention rate"*

In order to help your team achieve these goals, you need to turn them into SMART goals. The notes from your meeting with the Director of Product are below. You can use this information to create SMART goals:

- Office Green's customer retention rate was 80% last year, but the CEO wants that number to increase by at least 10% this year.
- Last year, 70% of customers who left Office Green for competitors said they did so because they wanted more extensive services. When surveyed, 85% of existing customers expressed an interest in Plant Pals.
- The Vice President of Customer Success expects Office Green to achieve a customer satisfaction rating of over 90% this year—a slight increase over last year. The rating has stayed between 85%-90% for the last five years.
- The company plans to create an Operations and Training plan for Plant Pals to improve on existing customer service standards and boost efficiency.
- Office Green will promote the new service with a new marketing and sales strategy, a redesigned website with a new Plant Pals landing page, and a print catalog.
- With the publicity around the launch, Office Green projects that their customer base will grow by at least 15%.
- Website traffic has dipped slightly over the past three years, from 175K to 155K. The Marketing Manager wants unique page visits to increase by at least 15K each month.
- The project is scheduled to launch by the end of the third quarter. The project team will continue to collect data on the project's progress through the rest of the year and assess how well it has met its goals at the end of the fourth quarter. (It is currently the start of Q1.)

Step 1: Revise the goals to be SMART

Step 2: Explain what makes each goal SMART



Goal One: “Office Green wants to increase brand awareness.”

Revise Goal One to be SMART: “Office Green wants...”

“To increase brand awareness, Office Green wants to create a new marketing and sales strategy, redesign a website with a new Plant Pals landing page, develop a print catalogue by the end of Q3. Within Q4, the redesigned website will increase unique page visits by at least 15K each month, and the publicity of the new Plant Pals service will grow the customer base by at least 15%.

During Q1-Q4, the Office Green project team will collect data on the project’s progress and assess how well it has met its goals at the end of Q4.”

What makes this goal specific? Does it provide enough detail to avoid ambiguity?

Response: The following deliverables make this goal specific: a new marketing and sales strategy, a website, a print catalogue.

What makes this goal measurable? Does it include metrics to gauge success?

Response: There are some specific details “from” and “to”, there are a few measures like unique page visits increase by at least 15K each month and 15% of the customer base growth.

What makes this goal attainable? Is it realistic given available time and resources?

Response: It is said that “the redesigned website will increase unique page visits by at least 15K each month”. It is ok in general, because I do not know benchmarks of the Office Green’s competitors. But at the same time 15K do not sound realistic to me, because the decline was 20K over the past three YEARS, and the Marketing Manager wants its increase by at least 15K each MONTH. This figures are incompatible. The answer does depend on the industry benchmarks.
The customer base growth by at least 15% looks attainable.

What makes this goal relevant? Does it support project or business objectives?

Response: Yes, the key business objective is to introduce the new Plant Pals service. Aiming to cover a bigger target audience, the company wants to increase its brand awareness by virtue of two communication channels: a redesigned website (online channel) and a catalogue (a printed one).

What makes this goal time-bound? Does it include a timeline or deadline?

Response: The project has some timeframes indicated: “by the end of Q3”, “by the end of Q4”, “during Q1-Q4”. But I would suggest to get more information from the stakeholders to clarify deadlines for each smaller deliverable. We may break down the goals into smaller parts and timeframes, and see how they are interrelated in time to bring more motivation to the team.

For example:

“Office Green will:

- create a new marketing and sales strategy by March 31,
- redesign a website with a new Plant Pals landing page, namely: approve a website wireframe by March 31, a website mock-up – by May 31, an actual website – by July 31, test it via a user feedback survey and usability tests – by August 31, implement improvements – by September 15;
- develop a print catalogue, namely: approve an Excel database of new Plant Pals products by April 30, approve product images by May 31, present five catalogue layouts and approve a prototype catalogue by July 31, bulk catalogue print (10000 catalogue copies) by August 31.”

Goal Two: “Office Green wants to raise the customer retention rate.”

Revise Goal Two to be SMART: “Office Green wants...”

“To raise the customer retention rate, Office Green will provide the new service Plant Pals in response to interests of its customers surveyed. The company will create an Operations and Training plan for Plant Pals to improve on existing customer service standards and boost a customer retention rate by at least 10% and achieve a customer satisfaction rating of over 90% this year.”

What makes this goal specific? Does it provide enough detail to avoid ambiguity?

Response: This goal – to create an Operations and Training plan – is specific. But I would suggest to get more clear vision from the stakeholders to translate what this plan implies in terms of tangible outcomes:
e.g. to revise (incl. creating a customer feedback survey and implementing it via email) and improve Customer Support process, Customer Experience, to ensure less efforts from the customers’ side during interaction with the Plant Pals App, etc.

What makes this goal measurable? Does it include metrics to gauge success?

Response: The scenario includes Customer Satisfaction rating and Customer Retention Rate.
But from marketing point of view, we should consider the following:
Improvement of Customer Satisfaction and Retention should include specific applicable metrics: Net Promoter Score (NPS) and Customer Satisfaction (CSAT). They are simple and easily understood by everyone. Alone they are not enough to give an organization a real picture of customer experience and how to improve it continually. Three additional metrics— Customer Effort, Customer Retention Cost (CRC) and Customer Lifetime Value (CLV)— should be used.
As our scenario includes Customer Satisfaction rating and Customer Retention Rate only, I would suggest to add the remaining metrics as well: NPS, CER, CRC, CLV.

What makes this goal attainable? Is it realistic given available time and resources?

Response: This goal is realistic given available time and resources.
(A) “a customer retention rate growth by at least 10% this year” sounds attainable.

(B) “a customer satisfaction rating of over 90% this year—a slight increase over last year.” It is also realistic. But it is not ambitious. This is just a slight increase which will unlikely lead to actionable decisions on where to invest for greater loyalty and customer satisfaction. Anyway it is realistic.

What makes this goal relevant? Does it support project or business objectives?

Response: Yes, it is relevant. To increase loyalty and customer satisfaction, it is important to create an Operations and Training plan for Plant Pals service. The plan will ensure improvements of existing customer service standards, Customer Support process, Customer Experience, for instance.

What makes this goal time-bound? Does it include a timeline or deadline?

Response: The project has one timeframe indicated as follows: “this year”, “over this year”. For avoiding any misinterpretation, it may be reasonable to document as “by the end of the year” for instance. But both versions are applicable.