A SMART Career-Building Goal Plan Designed to Guarantee Success

By Rebecca Matter



Do you make New Year's Resolutions?

I used to make them every year. But, like most people, I made them unrealistic and immeasurable, and often tried to achieve too much, too fast. Then, a few months into the New Year, I'd realize I'd already missed at least one of my Resolutions, and shortly thereafter, would simply forget the rest.

But, when I first started working with AWAI, I learned a lesson from Mark Ford that changed everything. And I'm no longer an "oh well, maybe next year" kind of gal.

Instead of making New Year's Resolutions … I now set goals.

Rather than making empty general Resolutions like I'm going to make more money, drink less, and exercise more; I've learned to develop an actual plan that's designed to ensure I succeed. And you can, too.

Instead of banking your success as a well-paid writer on a New Year's Resolution, I'd like you to set a career-building goal to get you to that next level — whatever that "next level" is for you …

If you're just starting out, maybe your goal will be to land your first paying client …

If you've successfully launched your writing business, maybe your goal will be to land five new clients …

Or, maybe it will be to clear a specific income level, so you can quit your full-time job.

Whatever it is, I want you to set a goal. And not just any goal — I want to make sure you set a SMART goal.

SMART is an acronym for the five elements of a strong goal: Specific, Measurable, Action-Oriented, Realistic, and Time-bound.

SMART goals help you clarify your ideas and focus your efforts so you're more likely to achieve what you set out to do and get what you want to out of life.

Make sure your SMART goal meets the following five criteria:

It must be Specific … Your goal must be clear and unambiguous. Instead of setting a goal to make a lot of money from your copywriting, set a goal to land five clients worth at least $20K each.

It must be Measurable … Your goal should be measurable by an explicit quantity — either in dollar amounts, percentages, number of clients, etc. Our example includes a specific number of clients (five) and the corresponding fees we want to earn from each ($20K).

It must be Action-Oriented … It must be achievable, realistic, and not overly ambitious. Winning $100K in Vegas is not an attainable, actionable goal. But winning enough projects to bill $100K in fees is.

It must be Realistic … Landing five clients worth $20K each by October 31st may be an aggressive goal, but it's possible. Landing those same five clients by January 31st is not.

It must be Time-bound … Have a fixed starting and ending date, or something done over a specific period of time, like 30, 60, 90, or 180 days. While landing five clients worth $20K each is a good goal … landing five clients worth $20K each by October 31st is a SMART one. **Once you have a goal that meets all five criteria, write it down.**

According to successful people like Mark Ford and Brian Tracy, this one simple step of recording your SMART goal can spell the difference between achieving your goal, and failing completely.

Next, break that goal down into small objectives that each take you one step closer to your goal. Write the objectives in the order they need to be completed, and assign a deadline to each one.

Let's say your goal was to land five paying clients by October 31st. Your first couple of objectives may look like this:

Objective 1: Complete phase one of my copywriting training by February 28th.

Objective 2: Send out 150 warm-prospecting emails for prospective clients by March 31st.

Objective 3: By April 15th, write three samples for each project type I want to get paid to write.

So on and so forth.

Then, break each of these objectives down into even smaller, measurable tasks. Make sure you specify exactly what needs to be done, and once again assign a time frame.

Using the same example, let's say you plan to specialize in writing website content and SEO (Search Engine Optimization) copy, and are about halfway through Nick Usborne's ***Copywriting 2.0: Your Complete Guide to Writing Web Copy that Converts*****.** You may break the first objectives down like this:

January 1-11, Read pages 171-239 of the *Web 2.0* program and complete the exercises.

January 12–18, Finish Nick's *Web 2.0* program. Read pages 241-273 and complete the exercises.

January 19-31, Start researching potential web clients, and collect all relevant contact data. Write my self-promotion letter selling my website copy services, and practice my new web skills on spec assignments offered by AWAI, and on my own copywriting website.

February 1-17, Learn how to write SEO copy by watching Heather Lloyd-Martin's ***SEO Copywriting Success*** program, and practice writing SEO copy on my copywriting website.

February 18-21, attend the ***Web Copy Intensive*** in Austin, learn how to be a working web copy specialist, train with Nick and Heather in person, and ask them any remaining questions.

February 22-28, Review everything I learned at *Web Copy Intensive* and do the hands-on assignments.

March 1-31, Tweak my website and self-promotion letter so I'm confident when contacting potential clients. Contact 150 potential clients and offer my web copy services.

You'll want to create a tracking system so you can easily keep track of these tasks. I personally now like to use an online system called Trello, but for most of my career, I've used a simple 8½ x 11 calendar that when opened, lays flat on my desk and shows me a month at a time.

Whatever you choose, make sure you can access it easily. Then check your tasks daily, and your objectives monthly to make sure you are staying on track. If you need to adjust any deadlines, go ahead. But don't let yourself make excuses for not sticking to your plan.

So, what's a SMART goal you will achieve in 2018?

Take some time today to write it down, along with the objectives it will take to achieve it. Remember to make your goal Specific, Measurable, Action-Oriented, Realistic, and Time-bound.

One last hint: I spend the first week of every New Year taking at least one big action towards achieving my goals for the year.

I find it helps jump-start the year, and then time doesn't slip away from me as easily from one month to the next.

What's one thing you can do next week to jump-start your year?

Here's to an incredible 2018!

Do you have any questions about setting SMART goals? Do you need any help to achieve them? Let us know in the comments below so we can help.

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