

A Tale of Two Chapters

Scenario One--Beta Lambda Tau, better known as the BLTs, had ambitious dreams for the year. At their officers' retreat, they envisioned a cancer society benefit gala involving music, dancing, and formal wear for all. However, as the year went by, the gala did not go off as planned. Since no one was really placed in charge of the event, the room was not reserved on time. Therefore, instead of the college ballroom, all that was available was one half of the gym. Susie thought John was working on the budget, but John thought Susie was responsible for money. So, when Tammy ordered \$2,000.00 worth of food for the event, there was no money to pay the caterer! What's more, the first-choice band was already booked for the evening; so the only musicians available were Larry's uncle Mo and his accordion orchestra. The evening was not a success.

Scenario Two—Phi Delta Alpha, also known as the PDAs, planned a more modest event. They wanted to host a hoe-down and barbeque to benefit the American Cancer Society. Though their plan was not as large in scope as the infamous BLTs, they had a secret weapon—goal setting. The PDAs chose a time and location for their event and set a goal for their fundraising. They chose an officer to head up the event, who in turn delegated specific jobs—food, music, ticket sales, etc.—to other officers and members. They also wrote out a plan detailing when each task should be completed. While the PDAs had never taken on such an ambitious project, they were excited about the challenge they had set for themselves.

Question: Which chapter was more successful? Why?

Your Assignment: Rescue the BLTs!!! In your group, use SMARTER goals to reformulate a plan for this chapter. Be prepared to share your plan with others.

Alternate Assignment: If you are with your chapter, consider using the SMARTER goals system to begin planning an upcoming event! Be prepared to share your plan with others.

SMARTER GOALS

Everyone knows that a successful person or chapter uses goals. However, not all goals are created equal. Have you ever thought about what constitutes a really good goal? In today's workshop, we will think through goals using the **SMARTER** philosophy. **SMARTER** stands for: **Specific, Measurable, Accountable, Realistic, and Time-Specific.**

Specific

A goal needs to be very specific. Think of the goal "Our chapter needs to improve this year." In what ways do you need to improve? What is your plan for improving? A vague goal is frustrating because it leaves members with no sense of how to meet the goal.

Measurable

Okay—let's improve our goal by making it measurable. We will change "Our chapter needs to improve this year" to "Our chapter needs a strategy for increasing its level of communications with chapter members. To accomplish this goal, we will launch a chapter website accessible to all members." Do you see how chapters could take this goal and make a plan? Because the goal is measurable in that the chapter can access whether or not it met this goal, the chapter now has direction.

Accountable

Now we are really cooking! Let's work on the goal even more. We know we want to increase communication, and we know we want to do it by launching a website for members. But, who is responsible for this website? Will one overachiever do all of the work? (Type A personality, anyone?) Or, will Bill work on the content, Daisy on the graphics, and John on publicizing the website to the members? Accountability lightens the load for everyone. And, accountability decreases confusion and the hurt feelings that come from misunderstandings as to who was supposed to do certain tasks.

Realistic

The goal must be realistic, and the participants must have the resources they need to accomplish the goal. For example, the goal of launching the website and getting information about the website to all members is realistic. The goal of 50,000 hits per month is not realistic. I know the example is extreme in that *no* Phi Theta Kappan would make such an unrealistic goal, but you get the picture! Another aspect of achievable goals is "pitching" the goal at the right level. Do not pitch too low as you want a project to challenge you; however, pitching too high will simply set you up for failure.

Time-Specific

To really make the goal work, build in time-specific sub-goals into your plans. When will Bill finish writing the content? When will Bill and Daisy meet to begin integrating their work? When will John begin his publicity campaign? Set very specific dates: "Friday, April 11 by noon" will be much more effective than "sometime next week." Think of how you work when you have deadlines for class; I'll bet specific deadlines allow you to produce better work than vague deadlines. Finally, don't forget the time-specific outcome of celebrating like crazy when you meet your fantastic goal! Keep the in game in mind and you will succeed!

*This handout is adapted from materials presented by the Management Assistance Program for Nonprofits, located in St. Paul, Minnesota.

