S.M.A.R.T Goals

Specific
- Does the objective clearly define expectations in terms of actions and outcomes?
- Does the objective avoid generalities and use action verbs?

Measurable
- Is the objective results based?
- Does the objective define specific metrics (quantity, quality, timeliness, cost, etc.) that can be objectively measured?

Achievable
- Is the objective challenging, but within reason?
- Does the employee have the skills and experiences necessary to achieve the objective?
- Is achievement of the objective within the employee's control?
- Can the employee reasonably be expected to successfully complete the number of objectives assigned?

Relevant
- Is the scope of the objectives appropriate given the employee's job responsibilities and level?
- Does the objective clearly connect to departmental and/or organizational objectives?
- Does the employee understand how his or her objective contributes to the organization's objectives?

Time-Bound
- Does the objective specify a date or elapsed amount of time by when each objective needs to be completed?

Understand the Basics

Who: The direct manager and employee should collaborate to set meaningful objectives.
What: The manager and employee should discuss what the individual’s performance objectives are and how they connect to the organization’s objectives.
Where: The discussion should take place in a private forum, away from disruptions. When: The manager should hold a objective-setting discussion 1–2 weeks after the performance review or when the employee begins a new project.
Why: Setting and committing to specific, challenging objectives can boost employee effort, focus, and performance. In fact, aligning employee objectives with the organization’s objectives can increase employee discretionary effort by as much as 45%. Additionally, clearly set objectives provide an unambiguous basis against which to measure performance.