

# 6 Tips to Set SMART Goals for Lawyers



Goal-setting is a key professional skill that all lawyers need to master in order to achieve client satisfaction, career growth, and meaningful life accomplishments. Every lawyer should take the time to identify ways to improve their professional skills and set achievable goals that will help them reach their fullest potential. While there are many goal-setting techniques available, one of the most effective methods is to establish [SMART \(specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-based.\)](#) Setting SMART goals for lawyers eliminates the guesswork and encourages lawyers to take responsibility for their future in a way that will help them become more effective professionals.

## What Are SMART Goals?

The SMART goal system is a widely accepted method of goal setting. By understanding what the acronym stands for, lawyers can develop a process for setting and achieving their goals in record time.

### Specific

In order to achieve success, every lawyer needs to establish specific goals. This means that they must take a moment to identify what they want to accomplish and create a plan for how to make it happen.

For example, if a lawyer wants to build their client base, they need to set more specific goals. Identifying what type of clients the lawyer would like to attract is an important first step. Is the goal related to increasing business from existing clients? If so, which ones?

## **Measurable**

It is important for lawyers to identify what will be measured to determine how well they are doing in pursuit of their goals.

For example, if a lawyer wants to increase referrals from the existing client base, then the lawyer needs to understand that “more” means different things to different clients. By establishing a goal that states that one or two new clients will be referred each month, the lawyer can easily measure whether or not they have been successful.

## **Achievable**

While it is important to set goals that challenge people, it is also important for lawyers to set goals that are achievable. This means that the lawyer needs to take a realistic look at what they have to offer and who they can attract as clients.

For example, if a client base consists of small businesses and individuals, then the goal of attracting multinational corporations will likely be too difficult for them to achieve.

## **Relevant**

In order to avoid setting goals that are not actually relevant, lawyers must take a moment to evaluate whether or not the goal is likely to help them become more effective in their profession.

For example, if a lawyer’s big vision for their career includes building a robust clientele of big corporations, it’s not relevant for them to set a goal to go after a certain number of small business clients.

## Time-Based

One of the most critical components of setting SMART goals for lawyers is to establish a timeframe in which they should be accomplished. This does not mean that they have to set a specific date by which their goal will be completed, but it does mean that they should identify how much time they will allow themselves to reach the goal.

For example, if a lawyer sets a goal that they will [increase their client base](#) by one new client each month, it is important for their timetable to include what happens after the first month (such as making more of an effort to contact those who did not refer business last month and those who referred possible leads).

This way, the lawyer can identify whether or not the goal was achieved and determine how to move forward.

## Tips for setting SMART Goals for your law firm

Creating goals based on the SMART system is just half the battle. Putting the method into practice means taking a moment to revisit goals periodically, make necessary adjustments, and establish new ones when the time is right.

### Tip #1: Take time to plan

SMART goals drive success. That means that it is important for lawyers to take time to plan what they hope to achieve and develop a strategy for building on previous successes. Don't rush the SMART setting process, and time-block at least an hour for creating new goals. There is [legal technology that allows you to gather data](#) on how much time you spent on matters or areas of improvement to better plan your goals.

### Tip #2: Adjust as necessary

While it is important for lawyers to make time to plan, it is also important to take the time necessary to evaluate what is and isn't working. This means adjusting goals when they no longer feel relevant or productive for where their career is heading or what they want.

### Tip #3: Schedule deadlines

Often it is the act of scheduling deadlines that helps lawyers stay on track. Put the timeline that was identified in the SMART system and put it on the calendar. By blocking out specific times to work on the goal, lawyers can help ensure that they stay organized and focused.

#### **Tip #4: Make the goal public**

Setting SMART goals is a great way to increase their likelihood of success, and making the goal public is another way to help ensure it comes to fruition. When lawyers share them with others in the industry or even friends and family outside of work, they can further motivate themselves by getting others involved.

#### **Tip #5: Use a reward or punishment system**

For some people, setting SMART goals is enough of a challenge. For others, they need to get creative by establishing reward or punishment systems for themselves if they are unable to reach their goal. Whether it means allowing themselves one night off at the end of each month or taking on an additional project if they don't hit the mark, this type of system can be very effective.

#### **Tip #6: Revisit goals every 3 months**

Not all SMART goals will be relevant for a lifetime. In fact, most lawyers will find that their goals will change as they continue to grow in their careers and add new challenges. That's why it is important to revisit goals every three months. If the goal hasn't been reached by then, consider if it still has merit or if it is time to set a new one.

### **SMART goals for lawyers takes consistency**

Goal setting is an important task for lawyers and one that allows them to increase their chances of success. The SMART system can make the process more manageable and help lawyers increase their efficiency in the industry. By creating SMART goals, lawyers are setting themselves up for success at every turn.