

SMART Goals and when to ignore them

So here they are - so loved by consultants everywhere.

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Relevant

Time specific, bound, limited

They are OK for management consultants. And they are OK if you want to be OK.

I have a problem with the word Achievable. This means that all SMART goals are based on given knowledge and circumstances and perceptions and as a result are appropriately dream free. So not great for leaders, dreamers, world changers. And dull stuff for speech writers too.

Would Microsoft have become Microsoft by following smart goals? Surely we should be aiming for the skies, for dreams deemed fanciful like those dreamers Wilberforce, Churchill and Martin Luther King and Kennedy?

At a more modest level why can't that bridge be built, that sales team hired, that production line changed or that council tax increase binned?

Or if you insist on planning, why not set the dream so stupidly high (Kennedy and his call for space exploration within 10 years) that it drags you kicking and screaming with it.

Plans are good for monitoring but they can limit you too.

Visions are just that - they are things they do not yet exist. And they need chasing. Try is a weak word - do it or don't do it, but don't try.

You see things; and you say "Why?" But I dream things that never were; and I say "Why not?" George Bernard Shaw