



SWOT for a SMART plan

The beginning of the year is the time when we traditionally set out our New Year's resolutions. For many, these intended resolutions are the result of a contemplated reflection on our weaknesses, strengths and enjoyments from the past year. This process usually involves thoughts of 'doing better'; whether that be to eat less chocolate, complete a marathon, earn more money or to spend more quality time with loved ones. It's an opportunity for a fresh start.

As we reflect and set out our personal goals for the year ahead, it is the perfect time to re-visit and reflect forward on our professional journey too. But with past studies showing that less than one in four will keep their New Year's resolutions, and with one in five breaking them by the end of the first week of the year¹, how can we ensure that our professional intentions and resolutions are kept and our goals are achieved? The answer is to make sure our goals are explicit, well-defined, wholly achievable and have tangible outcomes. But how?

The concept of 'SWOT for a SMART plan' uses three techniques to really focus our goals. The three techniques employed are:

1. A SWOT analysis
2. Setting of SMART goals
3. Use of a personal development plan (PDP)

WHAT IS A SWOT ANALYSIS?

As described in the ABDO Business Support Hub, a SWOT analysis is a strategic planning technique used to help identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. It will help to identify the internal and external factors that are favourable and unfavourable to achieving objectives.

Mind maps are a useful tool to help identify the key areas of focus for your SWOT analysis. There are many free online tools to help you construct a mind map if this concept is new to you. Begin with a mind map of your current scope of practice: remember to include both your professional and role-specific scope. Create another map for your CET requirements and a third for your aspirations and desired development.

It's useful to reflect back on your past and current CET cycle records, and workplace appraisal records if you have them, to help populate your mind maps. Use this information to feed into your SWOT analysis. What are your areas of strength or weakness, and how can you be mindful of opportunities and threats? You can download a SWOT template and find further information on its use

in the ABDO Business Support Hub – see the personal development plan (PDP) toolbox opposite for details.

The SWOT analysis will help to anticipate the key challenges you may encounter and help to inform your decision making. Once you have identified these areas, you are ready to proceed to the next step: setting SMART goals.

WHAT ARE SMART GOALS?

As outlined in the ABDO Business Support Hub, SMART goals are shaped by five objectives:

Specific. A vague, unfocused objective often leads to poor results.

Measurable. Clear targets allow you to measure whether you are making the progress you expect or have anticipated. This could be verbal confirmation of achievement, or the awarding of a certificate of completion.

Agreed, attainable and achievable. Is the goal realistic? Would it be more likely to be attainable if broken down into smaller elements?

Realistic and resourced. Given your resources and the current climate, is your objective realistic? Do you have the resources (the time, money and tools) to make it happen?

Achieve your goals through strategic planning



Time-bound. You must set a clear timeframe for objectives and a clear outline of when the objective has to be achieved. This could be a number of weeks, months, a whole CET cycle or longer. Setting a 'to finish by' date gives a sense of reality to the goal.

Applying SMART objectives to your SWOT outcomes helps you to focus on what's important and what needs to be done, and by when. It makes achieving objectives real and helps you to prioritise learning goals, monitor progress and celebrate achievements.

The next step is to feed your SMART goals into a personal development plan.

WHAT IS A PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN?

A PDP is a facility for outlining and planning personal learning and professional development. By populating your PDP with your SMART goals, it becomes an opportunity to explore where you are, and where you want to be with your career, and offers an opportunity to help carve your own professional identity.

The PDP within the MyGOC CET portal is a free-of-charge platform that enables registrants to set out their SMART learning goals and to record both CET and continuing professional development (CPD) activities.

REFLECTING BACK TO FOCUS FORWARD

During 2019, the MyGOC CET portal required all registrants to complete a scope of practice statement with the aim of asking registrants to think about their broader professional skillsets². In addition, registrants are asked to determine their professional learning goals within their PDP.

For the previous CET cycle (2016-2018) and for all new registrants, a compulsory personal learning goal was predetermined by the GOC: "to better understand the changes to the Standards of Practice". Interestingly, some 80 per cent of registrants created additional learning goals in the last CET period, with 27 per cent creating more than six goals within their PDPs³.

Throughout 2019, ABDO published a series of 12 continuing professional development (CPD) articles in *Dispensing Optics*. The articles offered a narrative to better understand our professional requirements with key skills needed for reflection, audit and goal setting. The articles are available to view online for ABDO members via *Dispensing Optics* back copies, and in the features section of *DO Online*.

Whilst identifying future learning goals for inclusion in your PDP, it is certainly worth revisiting these. Of particular interest as we consider our SMART goals and journey forward are the articles on 'Setting goals for learning and development', by Haydn Dobby (*Dispensing Optics June 2019*) and 'What is a clinical audit?' by Saima Begum Naroo (*Dispensing Optics April 2019*). Online links for both of these articles are provided in the PDP Toolbox below. An online PDP Toolbox has been added to

the ABDO CET pages on the ABDO website, where past CPD articles can be downloaded as PDFs.

The SWOT for a SMART plan concept is a cyclical process, with ongoing reflection and ability for adaptation in response to change. With considered and critical reflection, the PDP can be a fantastic building block for future plans and career enhancement when utilised effectively.

1. Smith M. Six in ten have failed to keep all their 2017 New Year's resolutions. YouGov. 2017 [accessed 21 November 2019]. Available at: <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2017/12/26/six-ten-have-failed-keep-all-their-2017-new-years->
2. General Optical Council. Continuing Education and Training (CET) A guide for registrants in the 2019-21 CET cycle. Available at: <https://www.optical.org/download.cfm?docid=41DD0370-0CD0-4AAE9568715C29CEDCE6>
3. General Optical Council. Evaluation of 2016-2018 CET cycle. Available at: https://www.optical.org/en/news_publications/Publications/policy-and-research-papers.cfm

JOANNE ABBOTT BSc (Hons) FBDO SMC (Tech) is ABDO regional CET coordinator.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN TOOLBOX

SWOT analysis – ABDO Business Support Hub.
Available at: www.abdo.org.uk/dashboard/business-hub/leadership/useful-management-tools-swot-analysis/

SMART analysis – ABDO Business Support Hub.
Available at: www.abdo.org.uk/dashboard/business-hub/teams/smart-objective-setting/

Personal development plan and template – ABDO Business Support Hub. Available at: www.abdo.org.uk/dashboard/business-hub/teams/personal-development-plans-for-all/

GOC publication: A guide for registrants in the 2019-21 CET cycle. Available to download at: www.optical.org/download.cfm?docid=41DD0370-0CD0-4AAE-9568715C29CEDCE6

Setting goals for learning and development by Haydn Dobby. Available at: www.abdo.org.uk/news/cpd-part-6-setting-goals-for-learning-and-development/

What is a clinical audit? by Saima Begum Naroo. Available at: www.abdo.org.uk/news/cpd-part-4-what-is-a-clinical-audit/