SMARTer Entrepreneurs

FREE QUICK CARD

DIRECTION I QUICK CARD DL-01

Goals that actually get done

Fifteen minutes, one goal, and the questions a good coach would ask you.



The practice

Most owners have goals. They are usually in their head, and almost never written so that anyone could tell whether they had been met. "Grow the business" is a direction. It is not something you can finish.

Over 35 years of research, specific, stretching goals have beaten "do your best" again and again. Add a simple "if, then" plan for the first step and you become markedly more likely to follow through. The plan needs a when and a where, which is roughly the difference between "I must go to the gym more" and the gym.

Your goal on one page

What I want for myself, not just the business
What the business needs to achieve
How I will know, and by when
How stretching is it? (1 to 5)
How committed am I? (1 to 5)
If... then I will...
When I will review progress

A goal with commitment below 4 is worth rethinking before it is worth starting.

Try this this week

Write one goal on a single line, with a date. Then write one "if, then" sentence for the first step ("If it is Tuesday at 9, then I...") and put the "if" in your diary as an appointment.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CARD

Coach yourself

Fill in the front first. Then take fifteen minutes with these, in writing. An answer looks surprisingly different once it is on paper.

1. Read your goal back. Would someone else know, on the date, whether you had hit it?
2. Whose goal is this really: yours, a partner's, the bank's, last year's?
3. What goals have you set before, and what happened to them?
4. What would you have to do every month, not just once, for this to happen?
5. What would you have to stop doing to make room for it?
6. Who else will know about this goal, and who would notice if you stopped checking it?

If you catch yourself saying...

You hear yourself say	Try asking instead
"I'll get to it when things calm down"	When did things last calm down?
"I can't commit to a number, too much is uncertain"	What would you need to find out first? Make that the goal.
"We set these every year at the away day"	What happens to them after the away day?

ONE HARDER QUESTION

Which goal have you had for more than a year without starting, and what is that really about?

Keep it going

Goals fade quietly. Decide now who will check progress each month and which existing meeting it belongs in. Then put three dates in the diary: 3, 6 and 12 months from today.

When to get help

If your goal involves selling the business, bringing in investors or changing ownership, involve your accountant or a corporate finance adviser once you know what you want. If the future brings more dread than energy, talk to someone you trust first.

What a coach adds

This card gives you the questions. What it cannot do is notice which one you avoided. It is one of the SMARTer practice cards, covering the ten key areas of a business that sells expertise.

> Talk yours through with your SMARTer coach and mentor: book a Discovery Call at smarterentrepreneurs.co.uk

Quick card DL-01 v2, October 2026. Sources: Locke and Latham, American Psychologist (2002); Gollwitzer and Sheeran, Advances in Experimental Social Psychology (2006). © 2026 SMARTer Entrepreneurs. Free to share with other business owners, unchanged and with this notice.