

# Really being smart about SMART goals

 By [Leigh Andrews](#)

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Any business dealing with external consumers or internal customers like staff and stakeholders needs to perform a few 'mindreading' skills in order to best meet its own goals and improve overall customer experience. Here's how honing your powers of influence can help you to do so.

On 23 November 2016 I attended the first day of the highly interactive influencer change training course at the Protea Hotel North Wharf, run by HumanEdge. Facilitator Chantelle Solomon explained that HumanEdge owns the SA licence for the influencer training programme.



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Starting with an icebreaker in which all 20 attendees shared something personal about themselves and why we need better influence skills in all aspects of life, it became clear that as a group overall, we wanted to become more receptive to change, to be proactive not reactive, and learn new ways to best get buy-in from the rest of our companies. Solomon said to first make sure the business problem you're tackling is an influencer challenge and not just one of persuasion and needing buy-in for a specific idea.

## **"That's not our cockroach" – good customer experience?**

While most of the human race already has the capacity to influence behaviour, most of us don't have a structured way to think about doing so. The solution is to understand and apply the most scholarly, proven and powerful approach to exerting influence, which is the ability to change our own behaviour or that of others. We all face these challenges in various aspects of our lives, yet there are three things influencers do better than anyone else:

First, you need clear, measureable results, then you need to watch your consumers' behaviour to discern what they really want and need, as well as their mood. Next, you need to know the vital behaviours to match those customer needs – whether the customer has expressed them or not – and lastly, you need to use six specific sources of influence to create the habits you need to get the results you want most. These include: personal motivation (values), personal ability (skill), social motivation (norms), social ability (help), structural motivation (incentive) and structural ability (environment).

We were presented with two contrasting stories to show how this can be put into action. In the first, a family sat down to a meal only to find the daughter's rice moving in her bowl and a cockroach leaping into her lap. Staff reacted with defensiveness and accusations, effectively shifting blame by stating: "That's not our cockroach". In the second example, a scared female entered famed restaurateur Danny Meyer's establishment and explained her taxi had just driven off with her purse and phone inside, and she had a table of guests to entertain. Calming her down, the staff said not to worry about payment for now.

They then asked for her phone number, and called her phone while she entertained her guests, tracked down the taxi and had the customer's phone and purse returned to her. Is that a case of exceptional customer experience, or just the restaurant chain's belief that 'food and wine are the service, the experience is what we focus on'?

This boils down to unpacking the true nature of SMART goals.

## **"Some is not a number and soon is not a time".**

Most businesses today will assert that they implement SMART goals, but they tend to skip a few aspects of making the goals Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound. If the goal you've set is just pie-in-the-sky, it's unrealistic and not fair to impose on your team as you're effectively setting them up for failure. Instead of agreeing: "We want more profit", you'll need to say "We want to increase overall revenue by 10% in the next quarter." That's specific, measurable (not just trackable), (hopefully) attainable, relevant and time-bound, making it more likely to be stuck to and met.

The next step is to find the vital behaviours to leverage the results you're looking for and cover the six sources mentioned above from a strategic point of view.

It was an interactive, practical session and quite emotional too, as we found ourselves unpacking what we really care about, what frustrates us most among the myriad influencer problems we face daily and the basics of how to influence the required change to get things on track.

Read [Influencer: The new science of leading change](#) for more or contact HumanEdge to book your spot at the next [Influencer: Power to change](#) workshop!

## **ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS**

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