

# ***Aiming high and being SMART: getting inside aims and objectives***

## ***Aims are all about what's important to YOU***

When we run our Taking Care of the Business courses for artists and other creative freelancers, our number 1 message is that your business plan should reflect what you want for your career or business and for your life. We spend a lot of time talking about values because we think that's super valuable, but we also really encourage people to think about what their professional or business aims are.

Put simply an aim is simply an expression of what you want to go in the future. It's a goal that you hope to achieve, an ambition you have. As creatives with a strong sense of purpose, many of us in the creative sector are led by your ambitions for our creative practice or our values as much as – or more than – by more financially-orientated goals. And that's fine. It's your career, your business, so your aims should reflect what's important to you.

When you're thinking about your aims, it's worth thinking about all aspects of your career – from your creative practice to marketing and finance.

Here are some examples, just to help inspire you to identify your own aim:

- To grow my design studio
- To design costumes for some of biggest theatre companies in the country
- To do more work internationally
- To do more touring

## ***Zoom out – what do you want for your life more generally?***

What's more, as an artist, creative freelancer or someone running their own small creative organisation, you need to make sure that your professional or business aims are consistent with the wider ambitions you have for your life in general. There's probably no sense in aiming to become the biggest Design agency in the creative sector if more generally, you're also looking right now to spend more time with your family or want to work part time.





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## ***Some things to think about***

Here are some key things it can help to do when you are trying to identify some aims are:

- Reflecting on your vision (check out our **What Are Your For?** and **Postcard From The Future** exercise for help with this)
- Reminding yourself of your values (See our **V is For Values** exercise to get inside your values)
- Thinking in general terms about what success means for you
- Identifying some tangible outcomes you want to achieve
- Asking yourself where you want to get to
- Reflecting on what you want to spend your time on
- Interrogating how you want to earn a living and what kind of living you want that to be (check out our **Hello I'm Special** module)

## ***Location, location, location***

This is big stuff right, so another tip is to make sure you're doing this thinking and imagining in an environment that works for you. Think about where you do your most creative work and thinking, and head there. It's rare for that to be sat in front of a laptop in the room where you do your admin. Remember this is your career, your business, and your life! So make your own rules too...!





## ***What are objectives then? And why are they SMART?***

Objectives sit underneath each aim. Whereas your aims are about where you want to get to, your objectives are more specific targets you set yourself, or milestone you need to hit, in order to get there. You might have heard people talk about ‘smart objectives’, and thinking about objectives in these terms can be really helpful.

**S M A R T**

SMART objectives are...

**SPECIFIC:** Each objective should state as specifically as possible what you want to achieve. Really try and nail what it is in terms of numbers, dates, specific changes you want to see.

**MEASURABLE:** They should be measurable and have clear targets attached to them. So as you work up your objectives, think about how you’ll measure them. Otherwise, how will you know if you’ve succeeded?

**ACHIEVABLE:** You’re looking to set objectives that stretch you but that are achievable. You don’t want to knowingly set yourself up to fail, do you?! And you want to be a good employer of yourself too!

**RELEVANT:** Make sure that your objectives take into account the resources you have – the skills, time, people needed to make it achievable. Otherwise, what’s the point?

**TIMED:** The last bit is to set yourself some deadlines. Again make sure they’re realistic – and crucially, that you won’t have to work all hours to achieve them. Remember you are your own employer, and set the rules!



Here are some example objectives linked to the aims we've already outlined. The chances are that you will have a number of objectives for each aim, but hopefully these will give you the right idea...

**AIM: To grow my design studio**

OBJECTIVE: To double our turnover in the next 2 years

**AIM: To design costumes for some of biggest theatre companies in the country**

OBJECTIVE: To develop relationships with 5 key theatre directors who regularly with these companies, by the end of the year

**AIM: To do more producing work internationally**

OBJECTIVE: By the end of the year, to secure funding to develop 3 new partnerships in South Africa

**AIM: To do more touring**

OBJECTIVE: To put together a 6 date national tour and secure funding for it in the next 18 months

## ***The power of a good story***

When we're thinking about setting our aims for the next phase of the hub, we find it really useful to kick the process off by thinking about what we want to come next as a story. So we often start with something like this...

*Xxxxx [insert Year 1 of plan] is all about xxxxxxxxxxxx. During this year we'll probably need to xxxxxxxxxxxx. It's likely to feel xxxxx and be xxxxxx. If that happens xxxx [insert Year 2 of plan] then the next year will be all about xxxxxxxxxxxx. So that's about xxxxx.*

Taking that approach works for us because we're driven by stories, as lots of creatives are. We find it hard to get straight to aims and objectives, but if we can tell ourselves a story first of all, it gives us something to build on. Try it yourself if you're finding all this talk of aims and objectives a bit alien. We hope it will help!

