SMART and compelling objectives

It is a great idea to review your objectives to check they are inspiring and well-expressed:

First, check that your objectives link closely to what your team is **passionate** about. That they pick up on what drives team members to do the job they are doing and that they stretch the team. If not, re-write them to harness the enthusiasm of the team. If you can't change the objectives themselves, at least you can express them in language that motivates you. Remember the story of the two bricklayers – the first, de-motivated, one who described his objective as laying 80 bricks an hour, and the second, motivated, one who described his objective as laying 80 bricks of the cathedral wall every hour. (Bit cheesy, but you get the idea). Objectives that fire people's enthusiasm produce better results.

Recent work on "flow"[1] has shown the value, for a rewarding life, of stretching our talents to the very limits.

SMART is an acronym standing for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound. This acronym has been around for 30 years[2] and there is evidence that SMART objectives produce better results than vaguer objectives such as "Get the best results you can".

Taking each objective in turn check and re-write your objectives so that they are:

Specific: Check that the objective describes precisely what is needed as the outcome, both in terms of the quantity of work done (calls made, data inputted etc.) and the quality or standard to which it is done. (information gained, accuracy etc.)

Measurable: Does it tell you what evidence will you need to tell you that the objectives are fulfilled? In concrete terms, what will you see, hear or feel? (eg percentage increase in a performance figure)

Achievable: Are enough resources available to achieve the result? Will you get the right co-operation from the right people?

Relevant: Is the goal relevant to achieving business priorities/their personal goals/helping them to achieve their development and career goals?

Time Bound: What are the deadline dates for achieving the task?

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[1] Flow: the classic work on how to achieve happiness, Csikszentmihalyi, Rider, 2002
[2] Doran, G. T. (1981). There's a S.M.A.R.T. way to write management's goals and objectives. Management Review, Volume 70, Issue 11(AMA FORUM), pp. 35-36