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WQED’s history of experimentation, innovation and community relevance places it in a unique position to launch its next strategic plan.

WQED began in 1954 as an experiment – the nation’s first community-sponsored educational television station. The dream was to provide the community with educational instruction, fine arts and local programming to elevate public discourse and to stimulate ideas free from commercial influence.

In its early years, WQED pioneered children’s television, classroom television instruction, live play readings and concerts. WQED provided teacher training certification and built initiatives around the best use of educational media. The 1960s led to the creation of PBS and the member station model and WQED began production of national television documentaries like The National Geographic specials and Wonderworks.

WQED-FM went on the air in 1973 as the region’s only full-time classical music station. WQED-FM is committed to providing classical music and other fine arts programming to entertain, inform and enrich the community. As the “Voice of the Arts” in the region, WQED-FM is critical to local artists, ensembles and organizations for assistance, support and publicity. The station produces and distributes Pittsburgh Symphony Radio series to public radio stations across the country. In 1997, WQED-FM expanded its reach into the Johnstown market with WQEJ-FM.

For a period in the late 1980s and early 1990s, WQED was in danger of going off the air. WQED persevered, led by forward-thinking boards and new management, and a staff dedicated to the ideals of non-commercial public media with a community focus.

WQED was a catalyst for the new Pittsburgh when the region was emerging from the collapse of the steel industry. On Q was a nightly local program that showcased the local burgeoning technology and innovation community, the beginnings of the millennial generation, and civic solutions needed to make Pittsburgh more attractive to a new population. Producer Rick Sebak’s local documentaries about Pittsburgh increased community pride and aired around the country to increase awareness of a new Pittsburgh. Program Director and “foodie” Chris Fennimore’s local cooking shows welcomed neighbors into the studio for QED Cooks, where recipes and family heritage were shared with the entire community.

Throughout its history, WQED has partnered with hundreds of local community organizations toward improvements in education; arts and culture; community health; economics; and important local issues through its unique form of community engagement. These partnerships are a hallmark of WQED’s mission and are an important part of its daily activities. As the only community-owned multi-platform public media in the region, WQED is a convener, a central gathering place, and a conduit for other local non-profit organizations.
Today, WQED is WQED-TV (PBS); WQED World; WQED Create; WQED Showcase; WQED PBS KIDS Channel; Classical WQED-FM 89.3/Pittsburgh; Classical WQEJ-FM 89.7/Johnstown; the Pittsburgh Concert Channel at WQED-HD2 (89.3-2FM) and online at www.wqed.org/fm; local and national television and radio productions; WQED Interactive (www.wqed.org) and iQ: smartmedia, WQED's Educational initiative (www.wqed.org/edu).

As WQED moves into a more financially stable future, it is shifting its focus from operations to innovation. This refocus towards innovation will usher in a new era of enhanced service to meet the changing needs of the community.
CONTENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Since content of outstanding quality serves as “the coin of the realm” in public media, WQED will build on PBS content, collaborate with regional partners, and pursue a “community engagement first” process for creating compelling new local content.

Strategic initiatives:

1. Increase community engagement in the development of original content that distinguishes WQED from other sources of information and entertainment.

   1.1. Organize content into “strands” to create opportunity for collaboration and to name and recognize partners, potential partners, funders, and members. For any new content answer the strategic questions: Why? How? How Much? Who? How to fund? Does it contribute to our sustainability?

   Examples of strands:
   - Education
   - Classical Music
   - Music and Performing Arts
   - Food
   - Local Stories/The Region
   - History
   - Civic Journalism
   - Science and Nature
   - Future Fund
   - Health

1.2. Capitalize and expand upon successful “Rickstarter” campaign by exploring additional opportunities for crowd funding.

1.3. Include the Community Advisory Board in efforts to create and strengthen partnerships and to evaluate content for its community impact.

1.4. Use messaging and marketing to increase awareness, usage and financial support of content.

1.5. Grow and promote WQED Digital Guide.

1.6. Promote PASSPORT portal and provide training for ease of use.

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1 The WQED Digital Guide is an online, monthly publication that highlights WQED programming. The WQED Digital Guide is one part of the Membership Benefit package for those who give $40 or more annually, and is distributed via email. In addition to premier dates and program features, the WQED Digital Guide includes exclusive stories that only appear in the Guide. For example, Classical FM has featured exclusive interviews with Manfred Honeck and Christopher Hahn, and the Do-It-Yourself section has included exclusive recipes from QED Cooks. The WQED Digital Guide is a cost-effective membership benefit and marketing tool that helps WQED and our membership stay better connected.

2 PBS Passport is a new member benefit that gives eligible donors and supporters extended access to an on-demand library of quality public television programming online. The PBS Passport library currently offers members more than 1,000 episodes to watch, with new PBS programs being added weekly. The library features episodes from popular programs like American Experience, American Masters, Antiques Roadshow, Nature, NOVA, and Masterpiece. In addition to these signature series, the library is full of public television’s acclaimed arts, science, history, and lifestyle programs; including How We Got To Now, Earth a New Wild, Austin City Limits, and a rotating selection of films from Ken Burns. Passport is now offered at a crucial membership threshold ($60) that encourages upgrading from lower levels and promotes sustaining membership ($5/month).
1.7. Leverage the Next Generation Fellows\(^3\) program.

1.8. Become better acquainted and engaged with the community and serve as a convener for community
groups to get know each other.

Example:

- WQED could, for example, host regular gatherings at which attendees will spend ‘timed’ get-to-know-
you chats before moving on to repeat the timed chat with another partner allowing participants to
share common interests, forge new relationships and deepen WQED’s connection with prospective
partners.

2. Initiate a Fund for Innovation and Collaboration in Public Media”.\(^4\)

3. In a media environment dominated by un-curated content, take full advantage of PBS’s superb
programming, embracing every opportunity to increase the uptake and leverage the impact of that programming
in this region.

Past Examples:

- Children’s programming events in local schools, libraries and community centers
- Ken Burns’ Vietnam community engagement project
- Opioid crisis programming and events
- PBS Kids Carnival for families, to celebrate the 24/7 Kids multicast channel
- Making of Hamilton event at Wigle Whiskey
- High Tea and Birthday Celebration for Victoria/Masterpiece

4. Collaborate with other nonprofit organizations in the region, and particularly with other public media, to
create and deliver high quality, compelling, multi-format/platform-agnostic content.

4.1. Establish dynamic partnerships within our region in an effort to create efficiencies, to reach new
audiences—particularly younger audiences—and to connect content more deeply with community interests.

4.2. Work with partners to determine mutually beneficial ways to share production assets, content and back-
end services, including fundraising activities.

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\(^3\) WQED’s Next Generation Fellows training program seeks to enhance the skill set of college students and community media makers by providing actual working experience for emerging creators. Four individuals per year will participate in the training program. Fellows will learn about the editorial process by developing, researching, writing, shooting and editing their own productions. Fellows are mentored by WQED senior producers and are given the opportunity to learn the finer points of editing, sound mixing, videography and post production by WQED’s award-winning production and media team. Each year, WQED will focus on one city of Pittsburgh neighborhood. In 2017, WQED and its Fellows will focus on Pittsburgh’s Hazelwood neighborhood. Past Fellows projects have concentrated on the neighborhoods of Garfield and the North Side. Each new Fellow is encouraged to find facets of the neighborhood that “speak” to them, and develop a documentary (and often more than one) that is featured on the WQED web page and on PCTV. These profiles help illuminate the community and its people while helping the Fellows hone their skills as they work toward becoming documentary filmmakers.

\(^4\) With proceeds from the FCC Spectrum Auction, WQED will create, oversee and administer an investment fund to facilitate collaboration with regional and national media outlets. In addition to foundation grants, the Fund will seek to include new investments from stakeholders, donors, and decision makers with these funders helping to determine proper use of the investment funds. Possible collaborators include: WQED, WESA, WYEP, Public Source, Pittsburgh Filmmakers as well academic and education partners and independent community content creators. Content created by the Fund will be distributed via all of the partners’ platforms.
EDUCATION

WQED went on the air sixty-three years ago as the nation’s first community-sponsored educational television station. In 1955, it was the first station to broadcast classes to elementary schools. In every era since those beginnings, WQED has had education at the core of its mission and at the top of its institutional mind.

Strategic Initiatives:

1. WQED will provide the active downlink—“boots on the ground”—to disseminate and supplement PBS’s unrivaled educational content throughout the Pittsburgh region.

   1.1. WQED will expand its partnerships with local, regional, and national organizations involved or interested in education to ensure that the Pittsburgh region gets maximum benefit from PBS programming.

   Examples:
   • Inquire Within
   • Design Lives Here
   • Remake Learning – national scale
   • PBS Kids Carnival

2. WQED will continue to produce excellent educational content of its own, leveraging the proven success of iQ: smartmedia.

   2.1. Fund and create additional seasons of iQ: smartparent for local and national distribution.

   2.2. Explore expansion of Education/iQ: smartmedia strategy for radio.

   2.3. Explore the opportunity to create and program the City of Pittsburgh’s dormant Education Channel on Comcast and FIOS.

3. WQED will expand/extend its educational mission by collaborating with partners to serve adults through both formal and informal education.

   3.1. Create and enhance economic impact and workforce development.

   3.2. Assess the expansion of its Education Department service range to include middle, high school and adult initiatives.

   3.3. Consult with other (already funded) workforce development entities in the region to explore collaboration and/or partnerships.

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5 Inquire Within is a program in partnership between two key community institutions - WQED and local libraries in southwestern Pennsylvania, eastern Ohio and northern West Virginia. Inquire Within aspires to re-imagine media-first partnerships that create impactful educational experiences in learning for children and families. Partnering with local libraries allows parents and their children to interact together with beloved PBS characters and programs that they have been watching for generations.

6 Design Lives Here is a semester-long engineering initiative that equips teachers and students to participate in engineering activities within their school or afterschool program. Professional engineers serve as mentors to students throughout the year. Schools who participate are diverse – public, parochial and private – and have the option of making this part of their school day or an extended program. Each spring, all participants come together at WQED for a day of engineering challenges in teams to compete for prizes.

7 WQED’s involvement includes leadership in the formation and launch of a multi-year awareness campaign in collaboration with other media organizations. Included is the production of several broadcasts to explore the evolving nature of education and the creation of a 4 year series of interstitials highlighting examples of RML in our region.

8 iQ: smartparent is WQED’s national television series geared toward parents raising kids in the digital age, and is airing in more than 50 markets across the country. The series was honored with a Mid-Atlantic Emmy Award in September 2015. iQ: smartparent equips parents and caregivers with tools and resources to aid their understanding and use of digital media and technologies for learning.

9 iQ Kids Radio is heard every Saturday at www.iqkidsradio.org with engaging programming for children and families. Developed as a collaboration between WQED and Saturday Light Brigade (SLB) Radio Productions, Inc., iQ Kids Radio is designed to meet the need for an all-education, trusted radio service for children and families. iQ Kids Radio is a family-friendly commercial-free streaming radio service that provides a safe, entertaining, and fun way to learn, listen, laugh and much more.
**WQED-FM/CLASSICAL MUSIC**

WQED will sustain, financially strengthen, and rebrand WQED-FM as the region’s classical music “headquarters.”

**Strategic Initiatives:**

1. **Build on WQED-FM’s strong community connections, its on-air personalities, and its passionate listener base to create a distinctive, valuable brand.**
   
   1.1. Use data from Classical Music Rising\(^{10}\) and from WQED’s own audience information to customize the hours (morning/afternoon drive) and content of local programming.

   1.2. Capitalize on the profile and popularity of Jim Cunningham and Anna Singer in a manner similar to the successful “Rickstarter” campaign for Rick Sebak.

   1.3. Investigate possibilities for more simulcast/cooperative work between the audio and visual (radio and television) parts of WQED through simulcasts and live-streaming.

   1.4. Explore a Performance-in-Pittsburgh series that includes video as well as audio broadcast (via internet if not broadcast television and radio) as a means of increasing local programming and supporting smaller arts groups.

   1.5. Partner with small local groups that give away CDs during FM pledge to help them produce, for appropriate fees, podcasts or ways to stream that would be less expensive for them than producing on their own and would provide them a much broader distribution network.

   1.6. Target and distribute programming over multiple platforms (traditional radio, HD radio, simulcasts, live-streaming, and live events, such as Sessions) to appeal to diverse audiences across all age groups.

2. **Create or expand WQED-FM’s opportunities to generate revenue.**

   2.1. Monetize portions of WQED-FM’s broadcasts and distribution of performances by Pittsburgh’s many classical music producers. WQED is uniquely positioned to capitalize on its role as “the voice of the [musical] arts in Pittsburgh.”

   2.2. Investigate models for monetizing PSO and Pittsburgh Opera broadcasts, from those organizations but also from WQED-FM donors who would benefit.

   2.3. Rethink the value of broadcasting (and paying to distribute) PSO, Pittsburgh Opera, RCBB, and other broadcasts without financial support from those groups.

   2.4. Consider subscriptions for live broadcasts in real time (if PSO’s collective bargaining agreement would permit).

   2.5. Explore better use and revenue opportunities to support the HD Pittsburgh Concert Channel\(^{11}\).

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\(^{10}\) Classical Music Rising is a collaborative project of leading classical stations to shape the future of classical music radio in these fast-changing times. WQED-FM is one of 23 stations that are part of Classical Music Rising.

\(^{11}\) The Pittsburgh Concert Channel is at WQED-HD2 (89.3-2FM) and is the 24/7 home for archived Pittsburgh Symphony Radio broadcasts.
2.6. For appropriate fees, provide studio and technological space/support for recording and broadcasting to university music schools/departments or to well-funded high-school music programs (for example, Mt. Lebanon) to record and broadcast (video as well as audio).

2.7. Research foundation or other donor support to partner with Carnegie Library’s Music Dept. to make their collection available on-air or via on-demand podcasts or downloads.

2.8. If and when other stations in Pennsylvania consider dropping their classical music programming to go all NPR, consider whether they (or their listeners) would pay for a statewide classical music service from WQED-FM, featuring Pennsylvania musical groups and/or via a subcontracting deal with C24, a national service that provides classical music content for public radio stations.
CORPORATE AND FINANCIAL

WQED will sustain and improve WQED’s financial position and thereby secure its future as Pittsburgh’s most significant public media organization.

Strategic Initiatives:

1. Wisely allocate the proceeds of the Spectrum Auction among:
   - Retirement of Debt
   - Transaction and conversion costs
   - Immediate needs (payables, cash reserve, employees)
   - Seed dollars for new Fund for Innovation and Collaboration in Public Media
   - Endowment

2. Create and grow Fund for Innovation and Collaboration in Public Media.

3. Consider alternatives to WQED’s current headquarters and studio facilities.
   3.1. Assess current building and its associated lease to determine suitability for WQED’s purposes, with emphases on technological needs and community presence.
   3.2. Vet possible donation of low power television stations/licenses from commercial broadcaster – to use as “repeaters” to extend our over-the-air broadcast signal.

4. Conclude current $10 million Campaign for WQED with $2.2 million raised in quiet phase plus proceeds of Spectrum Auction. Communicate appropriately with staff, foundations, and donors.

5. Continue to budget and plan with three-year time horizon to demonstrate a sustainable budget that includes revenue growth and expense management.
   5.1. Continue to strengthen our relationships with funders, lenders, vendors and other financial partners.
   5.2. Continue benchmarking, classical radio format improvement and promotion of best-practices work with Classical Music Rising cohort.
   5.3. Explore alternate revenue streams and entrepreneurial opportunities.
   5.4. Hire an additional salesperson with an emphasis on selling digital assets and education projects.
   5.5. Improve use of available data, identify and fill information gaps.
   5.6. Study CPB’s five “playbooks” for successful station models and adopt as appropriate.
   5.7. Pursue new initiatives with regional and national foundations to determine funding opportunities that meet their guidelines and WQED’s mission.

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12 CPB retained PwC Strategy& to complete a comprehensive project over 20 weeks to identify successful future business strategies focused on identifying replicable business strategies both within the public broadcasting system and externally that can help stations adapt to the evolving media environment. They used a collaborative process to agree on priority “playbooks” across 5 areas: Community Engagement and Relevance, Content Strategies, Distribution Strategies, Organizational Capacity and Improved Economics (Revenues and Operating Model Cost).
6. Develop communications and public relations plans, with customized plan for radio.

6.1. Invest in targeted media buys and other opportunities to “tell our story.”

6.2. Collaborate with other public media and content creators in the region on operational efficiencies. Use Collaboration fund to spark interest.

6.3. Research, pursue and as appropriate invest in new business models, new content delivery platforms, new technology opportunities and new digital content.

7. With the goal of establishing Human Resources and Management Practices that link to each other and to the organization’s broader strategy and desired culture, and in order to make WQED an employer of choice, we will evaluate WQED’s current employment practices in light of current HR trends, best practices, and state-of-the-art thinking, and work to close any identified gaps as appropriate. Evaluate employee compensation and benefit plan.

7.1. Create employee skills assessment process and needed training programs.

7.2. Assess personnel to determine if there is the quantity and quality of staffing to support the Strategic Plan.

7.3. Augment staff in alignment with Strategic Plan with clear focus on budget and cash flow.

GOVERNANCE

WQED will continue to develop a board made up of engaged, enthusiastic, and well-connected individuals who will help steward WQED to be a financially stable, innovative and trusted media and education organization for Western Pennsylvania.

Strategic Initiatives:

1. Establish a subcommittee of Board members to foster collaboration with other Western Pennsylvania media, education and arts organizations; seek opportunities to collaborate with other organizations on content; share resources and leverage media distribution channels; and offer direction to the Fund for Innovation and Collaboration in Public Media.

2. Build out the WQED Board to deliver on the Strategic Plan.

2.1. Have current Board Chair and WQED President and CEO converse with C-level executives to seek engagement/advice on developing a strategy to attract qualified board candidates.

2.2. Increase number of C-level executives and other Board members who can help maintain the organization’s financial strength and health through donations, corporate sponsorships, and corporate partnerships.

2.3. Increase Board diversity.

2.4. Increase Board members’ personal financial contributions while ensuring that Board members understand and are willing to commit to fundraising and donation expectations.

3. Increase input from, and participation by, CAB members in new initiatives – including programming and community events.
4. Continue to consider benchmarks for term renewals.

5. Consider amendments to the WQED bylaws to expand Board member term limits, while also setting specific benchmarks for term renewals (especially third term renewals).

  5.1. Consider creating a board seat for Immediate Past Chair.

COMMUNICATIONS

WQED will refresh and reinvigorate its brand, building on its legacy as a trusted and respected television and radio provider while positioning itself as a dynamic content provider across platforms and on demand.

Strategic Initiatives:

1. Create a public awareness campaign across multiple distribution platforms (broadcast, web, social media, events) that reflects results and recommendations from the Messaging and Marketing initiative already underway, utilizing the Campos research, Mizrahi rebranding guidance, professional public relations expertise (provider TBA), and paid media placements (Hoffman/Murtaugh).

   1.1. Utilize combination of pro-bono, trade, and a consultant on retainer to reach external audiences including non-members and non-users. Plan will include ways to reach users who receive WQED owned content on different platforms (Hulu, Netflix) and may be unaware that the source of the content is WQED. Learning that content they like comes from WQED could help to build appreciation and affinity.

   1.2. Invest in targeted media buys (off our own air) and other opportunities (e.g., billboards, targeted electronic or paper flyers) to tell our story, while also using WQED’s own distribution platforms to reach existing audiences.

   1.3. Continue to test and evaluate for favorable or negative reactions, key words and themes that reflect the community’s perceptions of WQED in order to keep naming, branding, and messaging fresh and meaningful across audience sectors. For example, “public,” “community,” “education,” and “neighborhood” are words currently associated positively with WQED. Can those associations grow to include “creative,” “fun,” “adventurous,” “valuable,” and “exciting”?

2. Develop customized communications and public relations plans for education and for radio/classical music.

3. Re-conceptualize and refocus the established e-newsletter to tell a bigger, more complete WQED story to donors and public.

4. In combination with the e-newsletter or as a stand-alone, use the new Digital Guide as an additional communication device, incorporating links to content across platforms.
DEVELOPMENT and MEMBERSHIP

WQED will research, pursue, test and, as appropriate, invest in new programs and initiatives for membership and fundraising, driven by content strands, digital access, data, and net results.

Strategic Initiatives:

1. Develop and implement the gradual decrease of transactional on-air fundraising and replace with mission pledge opportunities and a decrease of overall pledge days.

   1.1. Analyze thoroughly how net revenues would be affected by a three-year program to decrease transactional, on-air fundraising in favor of mission-oriented pledge opportunities and a reduction in overall pledge days.

   1.2. Develop a communications plan informing stakeholders of the commitment by WQED to lessen interruption of regular programming and to assist with re-engagement of viewers.

   1.3. De-emphasize national pledge breaks and replace with local pledge breaks to enable direct communication to our audience.

   1.4. After successful “Rickstarter” experiment, continue to strategically use crowdfunding as a fundraising tool for projects.

   1.5. Develop strategy for reaching out to millennial donors.

   1.6. Develop new and sponsorable public events. Explore Pittsburgh Broadcasting Hall of Fame and other event-driven fundraising and engagement trends.

   1.7. Collaborate with other public media and content creators in the region on development strategies. Use Collaboration fund to spark interest.

2. Rethink and revitalize WQED’s Membership program.

   2.1. Utilize Campos research and digital data mining to determine where, how and to whom we should devote our messages and marketing. Use digital data mining to identify upgrade possibilities from individual members.

   2.2. Promote PASSPORT content portal as a significant benefit of membership, and provide training for ease of use.

   2.3. Enhance and promote new WQED Digital Guide as a membership benefit.

   2.4. In deeper consultation with Content and Distribution and Development and Membership, explore fundraising around specific content strands.13

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13 Donors would identify specific areas that match their interests within the mission of WQED. Instead of raising funds exclusively for general operating support, this would allow donors to identify the areas they value the most. This will increase both donor engagement, satisfaction and the overall level of support. WQED would continue to actively raise funds for general operating as well, which is also important to the financial health of the organization.
Examples:
• Education
• Classical Music
• Music and Performing Arts
• Food
• Local Stories/The Region
• History
• Civic Journalism
• Science and Nature
• Future Fund
• Health

3. Enhance WQED’s major donor program and planned giving program.

3.1. Begin with the VP of Development and Membership and the Director of Development meeting one-on-one with major donors to cultivate, steward and solicit as appropriate. Use the President/CEO and Board members judiciously to assist with one-on-one interactions.

3.2. Increase Development and Membership staffing levels with emphasis on major gifts and planned giving, and other positions that would facilitate an overall increase of off-air revenue.

3.3. Enhance the current major giving clubs by retooling benefits to encourage retention and upgrading. Create marketing and promotion plan that highlights the significance of major giving and major donors through new and local spots on TV and radio (including testimonials) and consistent messaging in newsletter and other digital communications.

3.4. Overhaul major giving pages on the WQED website to be inviting and user friendly.

3.5. Utilize Campos research and digital data mining to determine where, how and to whom we should devote our messages and marketing. Use digital data mining to inform upgrade possibilities from individual donors.

3.6. In conjunction with planned giving consultant, develop and implement a communications plan to market planned giving vehicles to current donors and non-donors.

3.7. Recruit Board Members who have the capacity to support WQED at a major level and/or can pave the way for the solicitation of individual or corporate major gifts.

3.8. Increase engagement of current Board members in fundraising activity, including donations, corporate support and alternate revenue streams.

4. Reboot Corporate Support with newly-hired Director of Corporate Support reviewing all processes and selling strategies.

5. Conclude current $10 million Campaign for WQED with $2.2 million raised in quiet phase plus proceeds of the Spectrum Auction. Communicate appropriately with staff, foundations, and donors.
MEASUREMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

WQED will measure its performance and hold itself accountable by improving the use of available data, identifying and filling information gaps, and developing measurements, impact, and accountability standards to track and assess success in every area of its operations. A subcommittee of the Board of Directors is currently developing standards and metrics to track WQED’s progress and to promote accountability in achieving the goals set forth in the Strategic Plan.

Those standards and metrics will be:

- Specific
- Measureable
- Understandable
- Relevant
- Time Bound
- Valid
- Actionable