

# The process of strategic planning

Business



Strategic planning is how most successful organizations get things done. It is a relatively simple process — just choose goals, and build a plan to achieve them. That it is simple does not mean it is obvious, though, so in this article we'll be going over the process of strategic planning.

If you haven't already done so, it's definitely worth going over our article “What Is Strategic Planning?” before continuing.

Every good strategic plan has a few basic elements over which various different tools and techniques can be applied as necessary. Here are all the essential steps to the process of developing a worthwhile strategic plan.

- Visioning

Visioning is the broad term which describes the process of asking yourself where you want your organization to be after some period of time (“Where do we want to go? What do we want to do?”). This step encompasses developing your organization's mission, values, and, for lack of a better word, vision. For more information about this step, be sure to check out our recent article about strategic planning tools, where it was also included.

- Choosing Goals

To ensure your organization's success, it's important to set clear and achievable goals. In general, this step is relatively self-explanatory, but very useful in progressing from just having a destination (“Where do we want to be?”) to also having a route (“How will we get there?”). Moreover, this is how you will know that you are making progress in reaching your end destination, and will also help to keep spirits high within your company.

Some of your goals should also be associated directly with the vision that you should have developed in the previous step — that is to say that you should also extrapolate a set of clear, tangible goals from your vision.

- Adding Milestones

Similarly to goals, milestones help to provide a precise measurement of how far along your organization's current 'journey' you are. Milestones don't necessarily have to represent points at which a clear project or subproject has been completed, though. If a writer's goal is to complete a 10,000 word eBook, a suitable milestone might be to reach the halfway point of 5,000 words. Without a doubt, milestones should be introduced in strategic planning.

- Circumstance Analysis

How can one predict how a company will be faring in the market 20 years from now, without at least an estimation of what the market will look like then? Circumstance analysis — in the form of SWOT analyses, PEST analyses, or even sometimes Five Forces analyses — is essential for setting achievable goals and finding routes towards them. Should you like to know more about this step, be sure to read our article about strategic planning tools (linked above) to learn the roles of the various analyses, or check out this article about competitor analysis tools if you find your organization in competitive seas.

- Revision

This step can mean two things. Firstly, at this point you should go back over your entire plan to make sure that the goals you set and your means to

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reaching them are still valid, with your new knowledge about present and future circumstances (straight from step 4). Secondly, you should revise — if not completely re-make — your strategic plan a few times a year to guarantee your organization will get the maximum benefit possible.

In conclusion, the process of developing a profitable strategic plan can be split up into 5 simple steps. All of these should help your organization to choose an ambitious (but still realistic) destination, find an effective way to get there, stay firmly on track, and overall: make considerable progress.

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