

## **Strategic Planning: Creating a Coordinated and Systematic Process for Your Organization's Success (944 words)**

A strategic plan is a plan that defines the goals for the entire organization. A good strategic plan achieves the following. It reflects the values of the organization. It inspires action to achieve a big future. It explains how you'll win in the market. It clearly defines the criteria for achieving success. It guides everyone in daily decisions. Strategic planning means consciously choosing to be clear about your organization's direction in relation to what's happening in a dynamic environment.

A good strategy achieves the following. It establishes a unique value proposition compared to your competitors. It executes through operations that provide different and tailored value to customers. It identifies clear tradeoffs and clarifies what not to do. It focuses on activities that fit together and reinforce each other. It drives continual improvement within the organization and moves it toward its vision.

Strategic management refers to both strategy development and execution. If we're getting paid to work, we could just as well focus on the organization's unique value proposition and not just our own unique value proposition. So, are you doing things right or doing the right things? Strategic planning guarantees both. Doing the right things is critical, and doing things as well as possible is a must. So, it's strategic planning or bust.

**Key Components of a Strategic Plan:** You may be starting to think that strategic planning is a good use of your time, but you're not quite sure what it all needs to be included. What makes a strategic plan, strategic? Strategic planning requires a balanced approach of these four components: culture, strategy, balance, and customers.

The first is **culture**: Your organization's culture is made up of people, processes, experiences, ideas, and attitudes. Your strategy is where your organization is headed, what path it takes, and how it gets there. Secondly, there are **internal and external strategies**: Strategy is internal through member surveys, board assessments, financial statements, to identify your organization's strengths and weaknesses. Strategy is external by gathering information from your customers, competitors, industry, and environment to identify opportunities and threats. Thirdly, a strategic plan needs to be **balanced**: A balanced framework considers goals and objectives in four areas: financial, customers, internal business processes, and people. And finally, **customer and market focus** are crucial: Growth comes from focusing on your customers and delivering superior value to them consistently year after year. Focus on making your current customers happy and finding new ones.

This framework will help make the plan work. Too much focus in one area can create tension and confusion. Hey, and that's what strategic planning is supposed to eliminate. You have a strategic plan. Now it is time to roll it out, share it with the staff, and choreograph the actions.

**Four Steps Unleashing Your Strategic Plan:** Articulate the plan, describe your strategic differentiation, affirm and support organizational engagement, and sell the idea of organizational transformation. **Articulate the plan.** Explain how the plan has coordinated the established mission, vision, goals, actions, and key performance indicators for the next 24 to 36 months. **Describe your strategic differentiation.** Explain how the plan has a strategic focus on delivering a unique value proposition developed from a clear understanding of the market conditions and our customers' needs. **Affirm and support organizational engagement.** Exhibit enthusiasm and explain expected actions so that everyone knows the strategic direction, understands their role, and commits to accountability. **Sell the idea of organizational transformation.** High-performing teams, driven by shared values, will consistently drive decision-making based on the agreed-upon strategy, with data, structure, and systems in place to support the activities. Show the connection. The strategic planning process will provide clarity and create confidence. Unleash the plan.

It is important for organizational success for people to really understand where the organization is currently, where are we going in the future, and how precisely we are going to get there. Encourage your organization to do some strategic planning. It will help to make sense of the next 24 to 36 months, for everybody.

**Strategic Planning has Its Benefits:** Strategic planning can take a bit of time. I think it is worth it. There are many benefits to strategic planning. For one, we will be more proactive instead of reactive. A strategic plan helps us identify true opportunities instead of distractions and false starts. It helps us identify which products, services, and activities are winners and which are losers.

A strategic plan eliminates wasted time and money. This allows us to spend more time on high-impact, high-growth activities. So it will certainly help us achieve our vision for success. Success will increase member commitment. Because we are effectively utilizing resources, agility is possible.

Strategic planning makes everyone aware that they are part of something bigger than themselves and they can anticipate and recognize that they are making a difference in their industry, and in their personal and professional lives. Another benefit is that strategic planning helps plug the brain drain, so knowledge is passed on to the next generations.

Here is the bottom line. Vision brings things into focus. Strategy explains the value you deliver. Goals and objectives empower members. Execution and evaluation ensures success. Through strategic planning people will know what to do and why. That's a huge benefit to the organization and the team. It provides guidelines for action. It provides a scorecard for accomplishment. It creates cohesiveness on your teams. You have the job, you're getting paid, so, go ahead and plan and create the future while you are at it.

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