

** BreitIdeas can help you develop a Strategic Plan in order to implement the ideas below for your organization at your facility. Please call us at 321-806-8664 to setup a free consultation meeting to discuss how the Strategic Planning process can be tailored for your company. The process typically takes a few hours of your time over a six week period and the average cost is roughly \$3,000 for a tool that will benefit you throughout the next calendar year.*

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning means different things to different people. Large companies can have entire groups dedicated to the planning process. This is great for the companies that can afford it, but what about the *smaller companies*? The companies that can benefit tremendously by having a planning tool that will guide them through tough decisions over the course of the year do not have excess budget to maintain this staff. **So how does a smaller company get the benefits that planning offers?**

The benefits of a Strategic Plan:

- Clear Path Forward
- Consistent Decision Guidelines
- Periodic Measurement Tool for Business Success
- Getting Your Entire Organization to Move in the Same Direction
- **Peace of Mind Knowing that You Have a Plan**

Ideally you already have a vision or mission statement for your company. This is the highest level piece of information that guides the decisions your management team will make. Your mission or vision can contain many ideal scenarios. For example, “We are a quality driven organization that is focused on customer satisfaction”. This statement allows the members of the organization to understand that you are focused on quality and customer satisfaction. What it does not explain is where you want to go or how you will get there.

Your Strategic Plan should contain two main pieces of information: **Where do you want to go and how do you think you can get there**. The example I use in my *Strategic Planning for Business Development* class at the Florida Institute of Technology’s Small Business Center is: We want to go to Hawaii and we will drive a car to the airport and take a plane to the island. The “where we want to go” is the strategy. The “how we will get there” are the tactics. As Sun Tzu said, “Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat”. **Both a strategy to guide and tactics to implement are required to have a successful plan.**

The most important thing about selecting a strategy is that it be crystal clear. “I want to increase sales by 15% this coming year”, is very clear. “I want to reduce employee turnover by 50% this coming year”, is also a good strategy statement. These statements would form the beginning point for two of the sections of your Strategic Plan; Marketing and Human Resources, respectively. Your annual planning tool has more sections, but each would start with a clear, measurable and focused strategic statement.



Many business owners and leaders wonder how they build the foundation for a solid plan. One part of the answer is to take an objective view of the prior year activities. **What were your greatest accomplishments? What were your worst disasters?** Your lessons learned through both the good and bad experiences are how you base your future decisions. More importantly, the planning process allows you to communicate these experiences to the other members of your organization. A comment in a staff meeting back in February has long since been forgotten by the office staff. However, the irate phone call that you received about workmanship that sparked that staff meeting comment may still be in the back of your mind every time the phone rings. The planning process affords you the opportunity to put formal measures in place to ensure that your people receive the training or even the motivation required to keep your quality of work at world-class levels.

You can use your Strategic Plan as a tool over the course of the coming year to keep tabs on how well your business is performing. *The planning process will have you look at minimum requirements for keeping the business going as well as setting goals to drive growth.* These requirements and goals will set a baseline for you to use to compare your actual accomplishments throughout the year. For example, if you had Sales of \$50,000 in January of 2005, assuming a goal of 15% growth, your baseline for 2006 would be \$57,500. In addition to just doing the simple math though, you would be forced to look at the factors that drove the sales numbers in 2005 to ensure the feasibility of the 2006 goals. One scenario might be that due to the hurricanes of 2004 your backlog for January 2005 was extremely high and you had requests back up through March. These numbers would need to be normalized or justified for the 2006 baseline process.

Your Strategic Plan will also ensure that the people working in your business understand where you are trying to go. This will allow them to make decisions and take actions that will move the company forward. Through the planning process the management team will have to “buy-in” to the goals that are being set and the tactics that are being implemented. A plan done in a vacuum will not yield any results and may even have a reverse effect. *Simple activities such as asking a functional leader to review and comment on a budget item will allow that person to feel a part of the planning process and not just a factor in the planning process.* A business owner now has a guiding tool that he or she can point to when people ask why. The Strategic Plan will allow the members of the organization to all have a common understanding of why the business exists and what they can do as an individual to help the company be successful.

Many factors go into your Strategic Plan. **It is better to start small than not to start at all.** Initially your biggest benefit will be in setting up a plan that will allow you to have tangible outcomes that you can measure. Sales, employee turnover, number of new clients, number of irate phone calls and significant expense items are the easiest to predict and the easiest to track. These are areas where you can start small yet still achieve great benefit. *The important thing to remember about a Strategic Plan is that you have a clear strategic statement and realistic tactics for achieving the strategy.*