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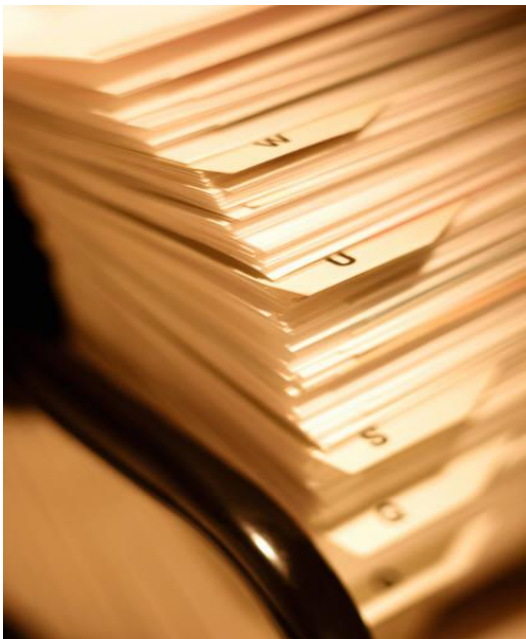
# Getting Started with Strategic Planning

## *The 4 Steps You Should Take*

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By: Aaron Dyer

Throughout the course of your entrepreneurial years, you will inevitably hear of the latest business trends, quick schemes for “getting rich”, and new investment gurus who for a brief period of time will have a spotlight on them. As a savvy entrepreneur it is important for you to keep abreast of these happenings, but not be drawn into each new fad as it comes around. The truth is that strategic planning is likely to be the most valuable business planning resource you will come across. You can follow a simple 4-step model that breaks down the steps for you to achieve maximum results in your business. Strategic planning is a tool for organizing the present on the basis of the projections of the desired future. That is, the strategic plan is a roadmap to lead an organization from where it is now to where it would like to be.



Strategic planning will benefit you, your company, and the employees that are the lifeblood of the organization. By following the 4-step model, you will be able to clearly define the purpose of the organization and establish realistic goals and objectives that

resonate with the themes of your Mission Statement. It will help you measure these goals in order for you to cultivate and maintain a positive atmosphere that is conducive to financial success. Furthermore, by following the steps you will pull you entire company together around a single game plan, or objective.

The key strategic elements of the 4-step strategic planning model include a guide for the daily execution of decisions such as:

- The basis for competitive advantage
- The scope of the products and services offered
- The markets that are targeted
- Sources of new business opportunities
- Resources and capabilities needed to implement the strategy
- The business results to be achieved

The 4-step model successfully introduces a method for taking a company in its current state, assessing the performance, and creating a plan that will lead the company to new heights and maximize results. The steps of the model are as follows:

### Strategy Assessment

This involves the strategic gathering and analysis of details concerning the company; including markets, competitors, technology, and past performance in order to gain a complete picture of the business. This phase will provide an information base for strategic decision-making and agreed-upon set of assumptions about the internal and external environments in which an organization will operate.

It's the phase that can be likened to doing the research for that big final paper in college. It is this first step that is absolutely necessary to take seriously, as only when it has been completed in a thorough manner,

can you move forward toward step 2, and ultimately the future you desire for you company.

#### Strategy Formulation

Management will outline and define a cohesive vision that incorporates themes from the Mission Statement. Key variables that will be considered are the type of product being offered, market mix, growth expectations, and availability of resources. The end result will be a clear vision that will empower and motivate employees and management. In this stage you will also develop the company's goals and objectives, as well as the strategies the company plans to use to achieve these goals and objectives.

#### Strategy Implementation

Strategy implementation will turn your previous research and plans into an active strategy where initiatives will be created in order to achieve measurable results. As a result of formulating a clear strategy, many projects emerge, the execution of which relates to successful implementation of a strategy. During this phase, employees are given the necessary skills to play their role effectively, with a particular emphasis on project management and decision-making. This investment in the people working for you will ultimately greatly benefit your bottom line, as motivated and competent workers produce quality work.

The creation of a strategic Action Plan is the key output of this phase, providing a detailed definition of each project, sequencing projects, developing a schedule, and indicating the required resource levels for each project. The training of key staff ensures successful implementation. During this phase, planned actions are taken, implementation is monitored, and the plan is modified as circumstances change and the strategy is revised.

#### Strategy Review and Monitoring

The final step will essentially review the effects your strategy has had on business and works as a tool to define measurable results. It is an integral part of the process, as it will give you further information on what is working and what needs to be reassessed. In addition, it will highlight the positives, which can then be shared with employees in order to keep morale high. Acknowledging the milestones achieved is another important part of the process.

Each phase of strategic planning works with the next, as each phase, upon completion, becomes a building block on which to step forward to the next level. If you take the time to work through the phases, you are taking the time to ensure a successful future for yourself and your business. Achieving results comes with diligent work, preparation, and attention to detail - all aspects that are at the core of strategic planning.

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#### **About the Author:**

Aaron Dyer is President of Dyer Consulting Group, a small business consulting firm that advises business owners on ways to grow their revenues and increase profitability through better strategic planning and financial management. For more information, and also to sign up for Aaron's future articles, visit [www.DyerConsultingGroup.com](http://www.DyerConsultingGroup.com)

