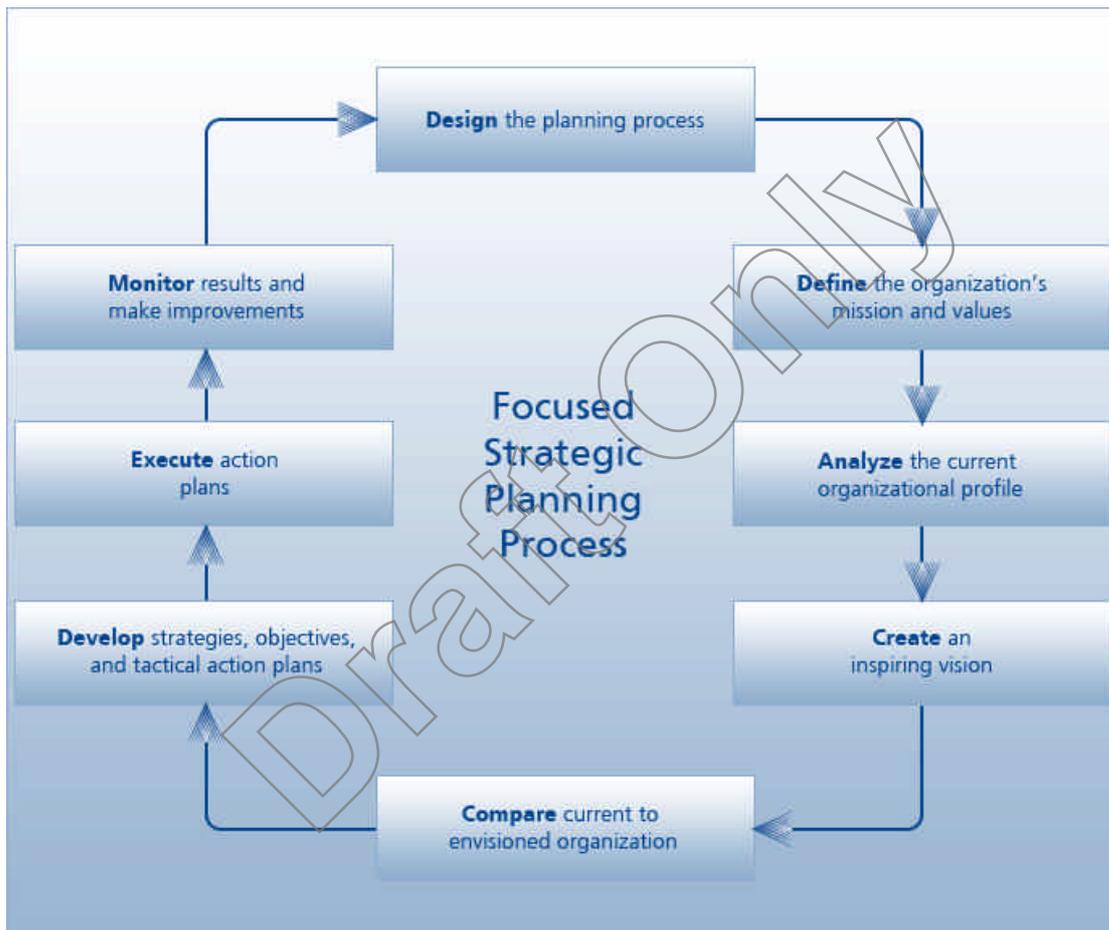


Plans vs. Planning

Too often people can't see the difference between plans and planning. In my mind, the first reflects rigidity while the latter epitomizes flexibility.

"In preparing for battle, I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable." - Dwight D. Eisenhower,

from Dr. Mardy's Quotes



Plan (Etymological Dictionary of Modern English)

1. A series of actions that you think about carefully to help you to achieve something an economic/spending/corporate plan

1670s as a technical term in perspective drawing; 1706 as "drawing, sketch, or diagram of any object," from French plan "ground plan, map," literally "plane surface" (mid-16c.), from Latin planum "level or flat surface," noun use of adjective planus "level, flat" (see plane (n.1)). The notion is of "a drawing on a flat surface." Meaning "scheme of action, design" is first recorded 1706, possibly influenced by French planter "to plant," from Italian pianta "ground plan."

A plan is typically any diagram or list of steps with timing and resources, used to achieve an objective. See also strategy. It is commonly understood as a temporal set of intended actions through which one expects to achieve a goal. For spatial or planar topologic or topographic sets see map.

Plans can be formal or informal:

- Structured and formal plans, used by multiple people, are more likely to occur in projects, diplomacy, careers, economic development, military campaigns, combat, sports, games, or in the conduct of other business. In most cases, the absence of a well-laid plan can have adverse effects: for example, a non-robust project plan can cost the organization time and money.
- Informal or ad-hoc plans are created by individuals in all of their pursuits.

The most popular ways to describe plans are by their breadth, time frame, and specificity; however, these planning classifications are not independent of one another. For instance, there is a close relationship between the short- and long-term categories and the strategic and operational categories.

It is common for less formal plans to be created as abstract ideas, and remain in that form as they are maintained and put to use. More formal plans as used for business and military purposes, while initially created with and as an abstract thought, are likely to be written down, drawn up or otherwise stored in a form that is accessible to multiple people across time and space. This allows more reliable collaboration in the execution of the plan.

Planning - thesaurus entry

- The process of deciding how you will do something before you do it
- Why is planning important?
- It helps us to identify our goals clearly. It makes us decide clearly and concretely what we need to do to have the effect on society that we want.
- It helps us make sure that we all understand our goal and what we need to do to reach it by involving everyone in the planning process.
- It makes us all work in a goal-oriented way rather than in a loose or ad-hoc way where we just respond to issues and crises with no clear plan or goal.
- Planning helps us see in advance those things that can help us achieve our goal and those things that can prevent us from achieving our goal and work out what to do about them.
- Planning helps us to be accountable for what we do.
- Planning helps us decide how best to use our resources (people, time, money, information, equipment) so that they make the most significant contribution to achieving our goal.
- Planning lays the basis for us to assess and evaluate our achievements effectively.

Planning

Planning (also called forethought) is the process of thinking about and organizing the activities required to achieve a desired goal.

Planning involves the creation and maintenance of a plan. As such, planning is a fundamental property of intelligent behavior. This thought process is essential to the creation and refinement of a plan, or integration of it with other plans; that is, it combines forecasting of developments with the preparation of scenarios of how to react to them.

An important, albeit often ignored aspect of planning, is the relationship it holds with forecasting. Forecasting can be described as predicting what the future will look like, whereas planning predicts what the future should look like. The counterpart to planning is spontaneous order.

Operational planning

Operational planning is the process of linking strategic goals and objectives to tactical goals and objectives. It describes milestones, conditions for success and explains how, or what portion of, a strategic plan will be put into operation during a given operational period, in the case of commercial application, a fiscal year or another given budgetary term. An operational plan is the basis for, and justification of an annual operating budget request. Therefore, a five-year strategic plan would typically require five operational plans funded by five operating budgets.

Operational plans should establish the activities and budgets for each part of the organization for the next 1 – 3 years. They link the strategic plan with the activities the organization will deliver and the resources required to deliver them.

An operational plan draws directly from agency and program strategic plans to describe agency and program missions and goals, program objectives, and program activities. Like a strategic plan, an operational plan addresses four questions:

- ✓ Where are we now?
- ✓ Where do we want to be?
- ✓ How do we get there?
- ✓ How do we measure our progress?

The operations plan is both the first and the last step in preparing an operating budget request. As the first step, the operations plan provides a plan for resource allocation; as the last step, the OP may be modified to reflect policy decisions or financial changes made during the budget development process.

Operational plans should be prepared by the people who will be involved in implementation. There is often a need for significant cross-departmental dialogue as plans created by one part of the organisation inevitably have implications for other parts.

Operational plans should contain:

- clear objectives
- activities to be delivered
- quality standards
- desired outcomes
- staffing and resource requirements
- implementation timetables
- a process for monitoring progress.

Planning in organizations

In organizations, planning is a management process, concerned with defining goals for company's future direction and determining on the missions and resources to achieve those target. To meet the goals, managers may develop plans such as a business plan or a marketing plan. Planning always has a purpose. The purpose may be achievement of certain goals or targets.

- Main characteristics of planning in organizations are:
- Planning increases the efficiency of an organization.
- It reduces the risks involved in modern business activities.
- It facilitates proper coordination within an organization.
- It aids in organizing all available resources.
- It gives right direction to the organization.
- It is important to maintain a good control.
- It helps to achieve objectives of the organization.
- It motivates the personnel of an organization.
- It encourages managers' creativity and innovation.
- It also helps in decision making.

The planning helps to achieve these goals or target by using the available time and resources. The concept of planning is to identify what the organization wants to do by using the four questions which are "where are we today in terms of our business or strategy planning? Where are we going? Where do we want to go? How are we going to get there?"

Planning in public policy

Public policy planning includes environmental, land use, regional, urban and spatial planning. In many countries, the operation of a town and country planning system is often referred to as "planning" and the professionals which operate the system are known as "planners".

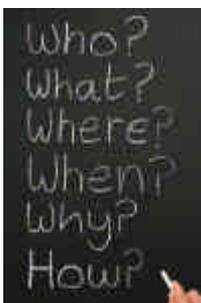
It is a conscious as well as sub-conscious activity. It is "an anticipatory decision making process" that helps in coping with complexities. It is deciding future course of action from amongst alternatives. It is a process that involves making and evaluating each set of interrelated decisions.

It is selection of missions, objectives and "translation of knowledge into action." A planned performance brings better results compared to an unplanned one.

A manager's job is planning, monitoring and controlling. Planning and goal setting are important traits of an organization. It is done at all levels of the organization. Planning includes the plan, the thought process, action, and implementation. Planning gives more power over the future. Planning is deciding in advance what to do, how to do it, when to do it, and who should do it. This bridges the gap from where the organization is to where it wants to be. The planning function involves establishing goals and arranging them in logical order.

Planning should start with the 5 W questions before getting to the How?

Posted on [May 27, 2012](#) by [kbondale](#)



With all of the tools, techniques and processes within our profession, we sometimes lose sight of the basic principles of project management. One way to ensure that you are not over-complicating things is to assess your approach from the perspective of a small child.

On project planning, understanding & communicating the five W's can provide context and perspective for the low-level details found within the individual project plans.

1. **What** – at its very essence, scope definition is about answering the “What do we want to do?” question. It’s amazing how many projects will consume significant resources (and churn as a result) without having a simple answer.
2. **Why (and Why, Why, Why, and Why?)** – if there’s one thing we lose as we grow up, it’s the admirable (?!?) persistence that a small child demonstrates when trying to learn about something new. We might ask the “Why are we doing this project?” question once or twice, but how often do we probe really deep to understand the fundamental root benefits & motivations that are driving its existence? We should adopt the traditional performance improvement technique which recommends asking “Why?” five times to ensure that we are not presenting a surface-level driver as the main reason for investing in a project.
3. **Who** – Although the What might not have been sufficiently decomposed to identify all of the skills or competencies required, there should be some idea of the critical roles that are required to deliver the What.
4. **When** – When is the latest that the What must be delivered to enable the organization to achieve the Why?
5. **Where** – where is the optimal location for the work to be performed and where will the What be used?

The project manager’s focus can now shift to the question that too often gets all the attention before there’s a good understanding of the five W’s: **How?** This ensures that we don’t spend too much time on approach, methodologies and practices, without having first understood the project’s essence.

The Difference Between a Strategy, a Plan, and a Process

by Robert on April 12, 2013 •

I received a great question at an IP strategy training course I taught. The question was about the difference between a strategy, a plan, and a process. It came about because while we expect on paper most people could match these three words to their appropriate definitions, in practice, they get confused. So to address the definitions in practice, I thought it might be fun to examine their purpose for their employer.

A strategy is a solution to move from where you are now (A) to where you want to be (B)...or put another way, it is what you want to happen to achieve an end. Strategy is a class of solution that deals with uncertainty – the possibility that opposing forces may inhibit you reaching (B) or reaching it in acceptably good form.

A strategy should raise the probability that its employer will reach (B) in good form. It does so mostly by creating conditions that favor success. For example, a strategy can be that you will only support businesses where you can be a first or second tier player, where your objective (B) is to build a product solutions portfolio that fits that defined nature. Building a portfolio of first or second tier only product solutions is what you want to do. It is a solution to a problem associated with running a type of business that you determined third or less tier product solutions will not support. Your strategy does not specifically say how you will arrive at this end. That is where your plan comes in.

A plan is how you will move from (A) to (B). As such it should support your strategy by providing a way to reach (B) that provides an acceptable balance of risk and reward. So your strategy is what you want to do and your plan is how you will do it. For example, you may decide as a strategy that you need to acquire lots of patents in an area to help you maintain freedom of operation, and then your plan is how specifically you will do that...R&D, acquisition, license, etc. This is, of course, oriented on the level of organization you are dealing with. Company, divisional, team, and personal plans and strategies take place simultaneously, which creates issues of alignment that we can cover in a future post.

Understanding the difference between a strategy and a plan allows you to make useful strategic planning decisions that separate the two. It allows you to act in line with General George S. Patton's insightful quote, "Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity." You can include statements of intent within your planning so that when plans go wrong, which they often do, people can adjust their how-to-do-it (the plan) in a way that makes sense with what you want them to achieve (the strategy).

A process, in contrast, is a defined way of doing a task. It can be a linear in nature – do A, then do B, then do C – or it can have branches – do A, then B, and then C or D depending. A process sets strict parameters to the "how" that can, if misapplied, allow the "how" to take priority over the "what."

Since a process is so anchored in the "how," it can never be a strategy. If used well, a process can be an essential part of a strategy. For a strategist, the chief purpose of any process is to drive out uncertainties that do not need to be there within a plan. For example, no matter the strategy and plan you chose regarding IP, you want to anchor that strategy and plan on good

IP. As a part of a strategy and plan you can set processes in place for idea review, documentation, and protection that assure you will have the quality of IP protection you need as circumstances arise. Then you can address all the uncertainties of what competitors, partners, and customers may do to challenge or advance your IP portfolio without also having undue uncertainty about whether you can present good IP documentation when you need it.

So when you do strategic planning for IP, you and consulted team members first determine what you want to do – your strategy. You next determine or appropriately delegate how you want to do it – your plan. You and your team then look at all the uncertainties associated with your strategy and plan with the mindset to drive out those uncertainties that do not need to be there. To drive out uncertainties, you may incorporate processes – often as simple as checklists – so that those executing your strategy can focus their talents where uncertainty remains. You do all of this in context with your opposition because you can win or lose any strategic contest on any or all of your strategies, plans, or processes.

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