

The Bottom Line



TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS FOR SMALL AND MID-SIZED COMPANIES

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Strategic Business Planning: Not just for Big Business



Strategic Business Planning Model

Describing how to create a Strategic Business plan for your small business.

A business without a strategic business plan can be likened to a traveler without a road map. The traveler will eventually get to his destination but it will take longer. A strategic business plan provides the necessary direction needed for a business to succeed. Every action taken should be one that leads you in the direction you want the business to go. The plan is a shared vision with everyone in the business. This means all employees know the strategy and the roles they play in it. Also everyone is allowed input and changes are encouraged to be made when necessary.

However, many small businesses believe that strategic planning is only for large businesses that can afford the time and staff it takes to develop a sound plan. This is simply not the case. In a matter of hours a business owner can draft a plan that works for

their business. It is important to remember a strategic plan involves setting up a strategy that your business is going to follow over a defined time period. There is no set format for a strategic plan, however, there are a few components that are the same for every model. In its most basic form, the critical components are:

- Business purpose
- Organizational goals
- Strategies for reaching each goal
- Action plans to implement the strategy
- Monitoring the plan's implementation

The **business purpose** or mission of the business is the statement about why the business exists. This is a brief statement that sums up the spirit of the business. For example a business's mission may be "to be the world's leading sports and fitness company."

Organizational goals are the ends to which your efforts are aimed. A sample goal might be to provide the highest quality widget in the world. This goal commits all your strategies to choosing quality as an end point. Brainstorm different goals your company can pursue and then narrow them down. This doesn't mean you can't pursue all of them but you want to plan out which goals can be done in a particular time frame.

Strategy is another way of saying what approach you are

going to take to reach your goals. For instance, with the quality goal example above, you may pursue it by buying the best possible components or you may instill stringent quality checks. The important thing to remember is this step is the one step that is most likely to change. You may find that one step isn't working for the company and need to redefine how you will do things. Remember to be flexible.

Actions plans are specific activities that you will be using to implement the strategy. These are often stated as objectives and should be stated as precisely as possible so that progress can be measured and understood by all. For example, an objective may be to have only one percent reject rate at a certain rating point in the process.

When **monitoring your plan** remember to add checkpoints on your calendar and include benchmark dates. Many strategic plans fail during this phase because no one is monitoring the plans successes and failures.

When developing a strategic plan it is not only important to remember to focus on the goals you want to achieve but to remain flexible throughout the process to achieve the final outcome. You also want to adjust the plan when changes occur to insure you are following the most desirable path for your business.

News & Info:

Microsoft introduces new Exchange Server 2007

The new capabilities of the Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 delivers advanced protection for your company demands, the anywhere access your people want, and the operation efficiency your business needs to get things done.

For the majority of today's businesses email is the most critical communication tool. Email allows company employees to produce quicker and better results. With this greater reliance on email comes an increase in the number of emails sent and received and the amount of work getting done. Along with the change in communication tactics employee expectations have also evolved. Employees look for efficient access to email, calendars, attachments, contacts and so much more, no matter what device they are using. Exchange 2007 has been designed specifically to meet these challenges.

Some of the key benefits offered by Exchange 2007 include:

- Keeping communication alive and email flowing with enterprise-class availability.
- Helping safeguard users and the organization's valuable data from the harmful effects of spam and viruses.
- Providing trusted communication within the organization automatically.
- Simplifying regulatory compliance in a way that supports the different needs of employees.

To see if Exchange 2007 is right for your company contact Black | Line Consulting at (630)388-1700 or email support@blacklineconsulting.com.

Some information provided by microsoft.com

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Strategic Business Planning: Not just for Big Business

Cleaning up leaks in your business's infrastructure

Cleaning up leaks in your business's infrastructure

Describing ways to prevent security breaches in a company's network that many business owners may not have thought of.

Is it enough to simply install firewalls, password protect your network, set limits for what employees can or cannot have access to, or any of the other usual precautions for network security? In most cases, it is sad to say these precautions by themselves will not protect your sensitive information. You ask yourself, "Why not?" You've read the many security horror stories and the costly ventures companies took to clean their 'messes' up. So you have taken it upon yourself to add all the usual precautions to secure your network. What else is left?

Data 'spills' and network theft usually occur at the seams of an organization. For

example a sales representative's laptop is stolen from their car or a backup tape gets lost in shipping. Things like this occur everyday and should be seen as a threat to your network.

The following examples are just a few security hazards found within a typical office workplace.

1. **Laptops** - Laptops are very easy for thieves to steal. They are valuable, lightweight, and easy to sell. What can you do to prevent your companies information from being leaked if a laptop is stolen? Change the windows screen to demand a password each time the machine is awakened or rebooted. Also remind employees to be mindful of logging off anytime they step away from their computer.
2. **Wi-Fi Access Points** - Some companies still leave their wireless LANs wide open to any user. While this is fine for a coffee shop, if you don't want to broadcast sensitive information to just anyone with a laptop in range you will want to make sure you

are secure. Look for equipment that has Wi-Fi protected access (WPA) protocol, which uses stronger encryption.

3. **Corporate Intranets** - Internal websites are a great way to store company data but sometimes information can be leaked if the site is not configured properly. Make sure that all web proxies are 'one-way doors' so that web requests can pass from your intranet to the Internet and not vice versa. Remember to check for open ports and unprotected servers regularly.

There are many ways to defuse a possible threat within your organization and keep your business's infrastructure as safe as possible. However, making sure your confidential data remains 'top secret' isn't always easy. While firewalls, passwords, and other security precautions are a step in the right direction business owners need to train employees on the hazards that can occur at their workplace and how they could be more responsible.

