



Strategic Planning that Actually Works

By Andrew Bartley, MDiv, MBA and Corinne Walsh, MA, LL.M.
Principals, Platinum Leadership Inc. © 2017

You've poured heart and soul into your company. It's a constant pressure cooker to cultivate new clients and deliver what you've promised. Paperwork alone could fill your every waking moment. In the midst of all this, you know it's time to develop your strategic plan. If you and your team were to work together to set priorities and goals and get clear on what constitutes success, you'd all be pulling in the same direction. The intended result of a strategic planning process is not merely a plan on paper. It's a well-honed team of leaders ready to execute your strategic priorities. Looking ahead three to five years:

- What performance levels will be "the new normal" for your company?
- What standards of excellence will guide you?
- How will your people create the impact you want to have in the world?

Through strategic planning, you'll chart a course for your company. It will be informed by stakeholder wants and needs, the realities of your business environment and your organizational strengths and capacity. Your team will set specific standards as to how you'll compete, serve and thrive in your marketplace.

Step 1

An effective strategic plan starts with your company's big picture:

- What vision, mission and values guide your leaders?

Step 2

It continues by establishing priorities for your organization:

- What areas will we focus on?
- What is the goal and desired impact of each priority?

Step 3

It concludes by outlining the most timely and effective strategies to operationalize each priority. For each strategy, clarify:

- What key actions, timeline and resources are required?
- What leader will be responsible?
- What key performance indicators will measure success?

The following pages provide resources for each phase of your strategic planning. Depending on previous work, you may require intense effort or a simple review and refresh of Step One before focusing on Steps Two and Three.

STEP ONE: CLARIFY YOUR COMPANY'S BIG PICTURE

- What vision, mission and values guide your leaders?

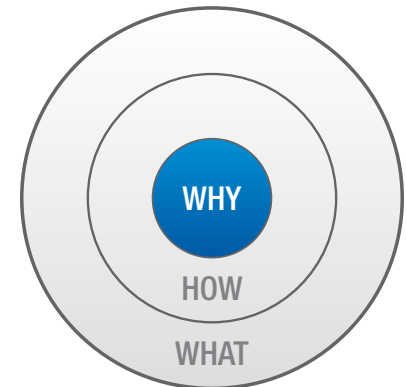
Vision: How will the world be different because of what we do?

Mission: What will we do to bring our vision to life?

Values: What timeless guiding principles and ideals shape our choices?

To understand the difference between vision, mission and values, consider a peacekeeping unit in action. Their vision is to create lasting peace in a region, with safety and security for all. Their current mission may be to keep a particular neighbourhood safe. Core values, such as impartiality, integrity and respect, will guide their behaviour at all times.

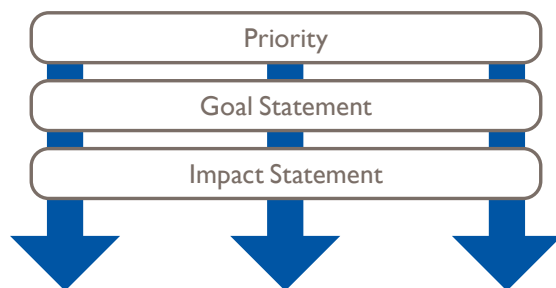
Two books we've found particularly helpful for Step One are Simon Sinek's *Start with Why* (2009) and Jim Collins & Jerry Porras' *Built to Last* (2002).



Simon Sinek, *Start with Why*, 2009

STEP TWO: ESTABLISH 3-5 PRIORITIES FOR THE COMPANY

- What areas will we focus on?
- What is the goal and desired impact of each priority?

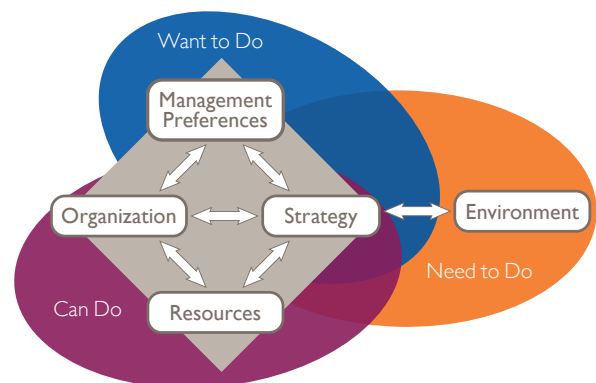


It's tough for most leaders to commit to a limited number of priorities in crafting a strategic plan. From your perspective, so many things need work. At the same time, you probably know how ineffective it is to push forward on too many fronts. It'll be good news for a group of leaders to select three to five key areas that are within their circle of influence to focus their efforts. Progress on these selected priorities will increase momentum, creating a powerful halo effect on the rest of your business.

Take time to craft a goal and impact statement for each of your strategic priorities. This will give people 'a picture to carry in their heads' and increase the likelihood of success. Describe this in detail. What goal is to be achieved? What impact will result?

Test your priorities and the core activities, value propositions and product market foci they represent through three lenses: What do you need to do, what can you do and what do you want to do?

Two solid reference books for Step Two are Mary Crossan et al. *Strategic Analysis and Action* (2015) and Jim Collins' *Good to Great* (2001).



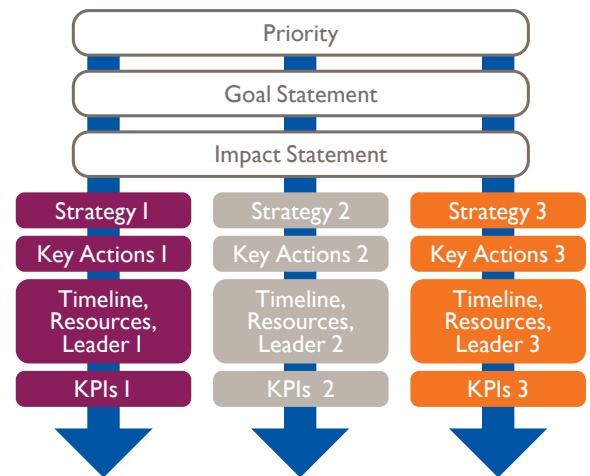
Mary Crossan et al., *Strategic Analysis and Action*, 2015

STEP THREE: OUTLINE 2-5 STRATEGIES FOR EACH PRIORITY

- What strategies will help us achieve the goal?
- What key actions, timeline and resources are required?
- Which leader is responsible?
- What key performance indicators will measure our success?

We developed the Action Plan Template below to assist discernment and decision-making during Step Three. It's time to get practical and tactical in bringing each priority to life.

If you imagine each goal as a specific destination, assess how long and what resources will be required to get there. Clarify who's driving during each initiative, who else is in the car, and what road signs will indicate success. When your planning retreat is over, your team will be ready to hit the road.



ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

Priority:						
Goal:						
Strategy <i>What broad endeavours will help us achieve our goals for this priority area?</i>	Key Actions <i>What specific actions will help us move forward?</i>	Timeline <i>By when?</i>	Resources/ Supports <i>What financial, human, capital or other supports and resources are needed?</i>	Leader & Accountability <i>Who will be principally accountable for this initiative? To whom are they accountable?</i>	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) <i>What targets, measures or outcomes will indicate our goal has been achieved?</i>	Evaluation/ Progress <i>What results were achieved? What progress has been made so far?</i>

CONCLUSION

Balancing the need for action and contemplation is at the heart of strategic planning. How you do anything, is how you do everything. And the more your people's fingerprints are on a strategic plan, the more likely they'll be invested in its success. In this spirit, we've noticed co-workers are more likely to form high-functioning teams when strategic planning processes include five key characteristics:

- Find time and space away from business as usual to dream and plan
- Hire a facilitator or systems coach so everyone can participate fully
- Cultivate an atmosphere of openness and trust
- Explore and acknowledge shared vision and values
- Have fun creating your plan, sharing meals and memorable experiences



Platinum Leadership
Business Alignment Model

With these pieces in place, team members are more likely to be motivated and to contribute their discretionary effort. Continue to ask, 'What culture will support our leaders to implement our strategy to achieve our vision?' Cultivate curiosity, and expect wisdom and insight to emerge from your system. Strategic Planning is a team endeavour, and untapped creativity and intelligence are ready to be unlocked in your system.



Visit Platinum Leadership's YouTube channel to see the accompanying video for this resource and to watch examples of strategic planning in action.

**PLATINUM
LEADERSHIP**
INC.

Choose Excellence™



999 Waterloo Street
London, ON N6A 3X4

519 433 8982

info@platinumleadership.com

platinumleadership.com