

“Strategic plans” can actually keep organizations from their goals.

It's a painful that “strategic” plans rarely work *and* cost so much *and* take so long to write.

One CEO complained about his own business, “I just want all these idiots headed in the same direction—and I'm one of those idiots!” This intense frustration is too common.

Business plans should instead generate focus, direction and real teamwork. The goal tree on the next page is an effective antidote: imagine it posted in your conference rooms, on your intranet or on an easel during an off-site board meeting.

The Tree describes itself

The goal tree not only gets your plan onto one page, it helps the leader in two important ways: showing everybody *where you're headed* and *how they fit in*.

There aren't too many goals, but each goal is specific and inspiring. There's a clear path of delegation. And it's professionally formatted to reinforce its importance.

What a plan is and isn't

A plan is the set of goals your managers remember. If your managers and directors can't remember (or even find) your strategic plan, what good is it?

This plan isn't the document a start-up takes to VCs or the bank for financing; that's really a prospectus.

This plan isn't a facilitation technique for a planning “retreat.” You can't plan in a day; it takes more time than that.

This kind of plan isn't specialized for any niche or industry: The six main boxes (or “branches”) are how businesses are organized around the world. Why introduce jargon or unfamiliar terms when clarity is of utmost importance?

How to

Wordsmithing a “mission statement” poisons planning for the directors and managers. Start instead by brainstorming with your management

team all the big questions your business faces. See www.vanmell.com.

It's sensible, yet amazing how getting all the questions right naturally gets people thinking in the same direction. This website describes *Question-Based Planning*, a plain-English alternative to traditional “strategic” planning. Its basic steps are completed in five 2-hour meetings:

1. Brainstorming all the big questions
2. Exploring the departmental issues
3. Asking the questions of purpose and position
4. Drafting the tree of goals and tasks
5. Refining the tree and setting the plan

The two words of planning: Goal. Task.

The Tree's simple coding system links to 1-page workplans of how each manager plans to meet their goal. That workplan lists major tasks and milestones, budgets of money and time and commitments their boss needs to make.

The level of detail will depend on the manager's experience, but a sub-plan for each goal helps people delegate, share resources and lets the CEO focus on the big picture.

Monthly follow-up is a must

The leader absolutely must stick to a monthly progress review meetings. *Things won't change unless you change them.* This takes even more effort for a while, but after three or four months, everyone will see and feel how working under a plan leads to a very satisfying success.

The benefits are obvious

1. Direction and priority at a glance
2. Everyone sees how they fit in and fit together
3. Everyone sees their career path
4. Obvious lines of delegation
5. Keeps directors focused
6. Makes accountability crystal clear

People love to work together toward big goals. The goal tree helps the leader proudly communicate the plan that helps everyone contribute to the common cause.



ACME WIDGET

2010/2011 Business Plan

This business plan and goal tree show how we can all work together to achieve something great; it makes our direction and priorities clear to everyone.

Our Widgets help people build great gadgets!

80% Repeat Business
40% Gross Margin
20% Market Share

Goals

