

# Too Much Plan and Not Enough Strategy?

By Jamie Notter

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How do you create a high-performance strategic plan? First, drop the emphasis on “plan” and refocus your energy on strategy. An organization’s strategy is basically a collection of answers to important questions related to the organization’s purpose, environment, resources, and goals. However, if you emphasize strategy over plan, you’ll get very different results for each topic. Consider the following.

## PURPOSE

**Strategy-focused:** Clarifies the purpose and vision for the organization based on the values important to an organization’s constituents.

**Plan-focused:** Develops a purpose or mission statement that describes what the organization is already doing.

## ENVIRONMENT

**Strategy-focused:** Assesses how and why external factors will change the values held by an organization’s constituents and assesses the possibility of changing what those external factors are and how they will affect the values.

**Plan-focused:** Studies member attitudes and seeks to validate, realign, or develop programs based on the data.

## RESOURCES

**Strategy-focused:** Identifies what resources, current and future, will best enable an organization to fulfill its purpose.

**Plan-focused:** Treats existing resources as pieces of a puzzle that can be put together to form an organizational whole.

## GOALS

**Strategy-focused:** Asks what actions will enable an organization to fulfill its purpose.

**Plan-focused:** Makes existing programs the goals and then connects them back to the purpose.

Every strategic planning process is unique. Techniques for accomplishing a new strategic plan are numerous, and the number of cultures and subcultures in organizations is infinite. However, in addition to keeping the focus on strategy rather than planning, the following are three fundamental tenets necessary for a successful strategic planning initiative.

**Strategize:** Strategic planning must be done continuously. The world is changing too quickly for even a one-year strategic plan to stay truly relevant throughout its life.

**Include:** Involve as many people as possible when developing strategy. There is no better way to get buy in than by involving all stakeholders.

**Communicate:** People will not buy into your strategy if they do not understand it, so be prepared to effectively communicate your strategy, both internally and externally.

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