

When you decide to go on a trip, you pick a destination and decide the best way to get there. Do I fly, drive, or take a train? How long will it take to get there? If I want to arrive by a certain time, when do I need to leave? Will things like weather, currency exchange, or crowds of other tourists affect me?

Too often, though, that same traveler will go back to work and just hope for the best when it comes to business success. They have a goal in mind, but no roadmap to get them there.

Why do people do that? Many leaders say it is because change happens so fast that a plan seems out of date by the time they finish writing it. That misses the most important point about strategic planning: **the real value is not in the plan itself, but in the planning process.**

It is not enough to just dream about what could be...a good planning effort forces you to be realistic, but also helps you redefine "realistic." The simple act of putting things down on paper forces you to really think, to debate ideas, to divide up your resources and match them to your goals. In short, it gets you away from talking about all those things you should be doing and moves you in the direction of actually doing them. Whether you are leading a company, or you are a manager leading a smaller effort within a bigger organization, it is important to know where you want to go and what it will take to get there.

ESTABLISH A GOAL

Clearly understanding where you want to go, and being able to explain that goal to others, is the critical first step. Sometimes the business goals that seem like common sense are not the ones that will actually make you most successful. We will explore how to define business goals in a way that aligns with your company's values and priorities, and use those goals to help drive not only business plans, but also human capital processes such as recruiting and professional development.

UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION

A good planning process starts with questions. What is the world around me like? What resources do I have? What are my obstacles and opportunities? We will discuss how to identify key facts and assumptions that define your business context. Once you start answering these questions, the impossible (or at least, the improbable) often becomes possible.

IDENTIFY OPTIONS

As you ask questions, you start to see what is important and what is not; you see new possibilities open up; you consider connections and networks that were not obvious before. We will practice identifying effective options, planning for contingencies, and measuring success.