

# THE COST OF "HOPING"

By: **Darcy Bien**  
Co-founder, *Stretch Strategic Leaders*



**"Running a company without a strategy is reckless."  
~ A.G. Lafley and Roger Martin<sup>2</sup>**

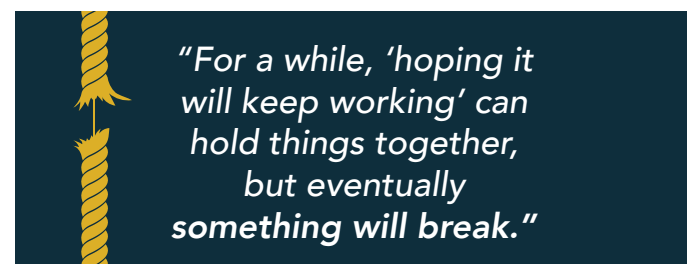
One day, a message popped up on my computer screen with some warning about my printer's ink pads. I hit "ignore" in the hopes it would keep working. For three more months, every time I saw the message, I hit "ignore" again and again and kept hoping. Like magic, the printer kept working. I am a strategist by trade, so I knew this would come back to bite me. Unfortunately, picking a replacement seemed overwhelming with so many different models. So, I crossed my fingers, another very ineffective strategy!

One morning, as I was preparing for a kick-off meeting with a new client, it happened. The magic failed, the printer broke, and I was in full-throttle panic mode. I needed copies – quickly. After two hours of trying to navigate online print services (which is about as intuitive as a Chinese puzzle box), I hightailed it to an office supply store and grabbed a printer (which, of course, my husband later told me had horrible reviews and I paid too much for it!) then rushed home to complete my preparation.

As I completed the session with my client, I reflected on my printer fiasco and this Japanese proverb came to mind: ***"When you're dying of thirst, it's too late to think about digging a well."***

I was dying of thirst alright. My pain level was HIGH, consumed with putting out the fire. I noticed how comfortable I got at ignoring the pop-up warnings and hoping it would never happen again. I was burying my head in the sand about my printer's impending demise.

For a while, "hoping it will keep working" can hold things together, but eventually something will break. Hope is not a strategy. I see this with my clients a lot. Until pain from putting up with the status quo is greater than the pain of change – we simply don't act.



As a consultant who helps clients with strategic planning, I know firsthand how hard it is to change. It's as though we must be pushed into it. Statistics show proactive change rarely happens – actually less than 10% of the time. We are creatures of habit, and our brains like to follow familiar pathways – after all, for most of the time, it makes life easier.

## TAKE THE LEAP

During the past 20 years, I have facilitated more than 400 strategic plans with clients. Recently, my partner, Cyndi Wineinger and I created Stretch Strategic Leaders to integrate leadership, training, and strategy. The first step with potential clients is to make a case for strategy by sharing the experience of business owners who took the leap of faith!

Here are two questions you might be asked:

### *Why would you proactively choose to embrace change?*

ANSWER: Strategic planning manages change to avoid the pain of firefighting. When pain is avoided, fewer resources are wasted, decisions are made based on a plan, rather than reacting in stress, and the company is aligned in terms of what the strategy is and the plan for executing.

### *Is the timing right for you to begin strategic planning?*

ANSWER: It depends, but one thing is certain – if your business day is full of fighting tactical fires, and if you don't have time to think about where you're headed as a business, then strategic planning would be helpful for you and your leadership team.

*“Strategic planning manages change to avoid the pain of firefighting.”*



## WHAT IS STRATEGIC PLANNING?

Strategic planning is far from a new concept and was formally defined as a concept by the military. The word strategy comes from the Greek (stratēgia) – the art of generalship.

There's no greater uncertainty than being at war. Wouldn't it be useful if you knew how to win battles when you are in a strong position, as well as when

you're in a weak position? A sixth century Chinese military strategy book, *The Art of War*, written by a general/philosopher tells you how.<sup>2</sup> Many of my smaller clients are in a weak position and must find unique ways to win.

So, what does having a plan to win mean in the context of business<sup>3</sup>? Just as in war, in business it's critical to win; this means finding a stronger position to overcome the competitors, even large ones. This starts with understanding your company's strengths and weaknesses, those of your competitors, and determining where and how to win. Beyond beating the competition and winning new customers, it's also knowing which battles to pick and which to walk away. In strategy, we want to maximize the wins while managing our resources to achieve the best returns.

## LOOK UP

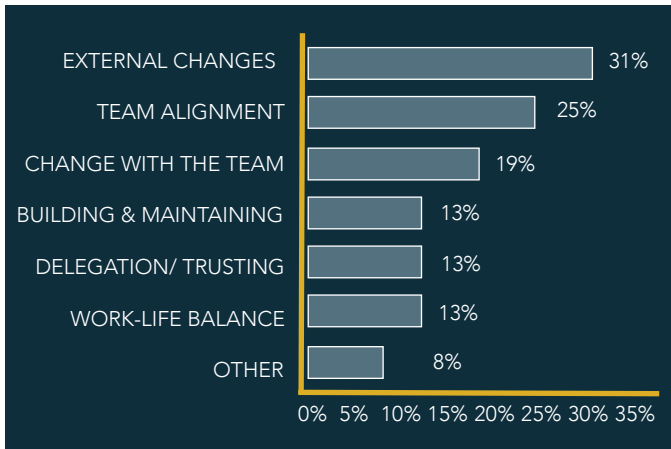
Lynda Applegate<sup>4</sup> compares strategy to soccer, using the phrase “look up.” What does this mean? Great soccer players don't look at the ball when they're dribbling. They look up and out - constantly scanning the field, looking at the defense (the competition), and adjusting their team's strategy to win the game.

Yes, strategy means change. Markets will shift, competitors will catch up, and employees will have different needs. The mindset shift is to proactively manage the changes, staying ahead versus reacting when the pain is high. The goal is to create space and time for your businesses to look up from internal day-to-day, look out at the market and what's happening, and create a plan to win. You'll dedicate time to be curious about your market, your competition, the economy, changing technologies, and disruptive ideas.

2 This notion, of being able to win from a strong position, but better still, even from a weak position, is the context for “The Art of War.” Sun Tzu, sixth century Chinese military strategy book, beloved of military strategists, business leaders and salespeople!

3 Listen to David Kryscynski on how to win with strategy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TD7WSLeQtVw>

4 Lynda M. Applegate, Baker Foundation Professor at Harvard Business School, also serves as the Chair of the Advisory Committee for Harvard University's Masters' of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies degrees in finance and management. Lynda also plays a leading role in developing and delivering HBS Executive Education Programs for entrepreneurs and business owners. Speaking at Harvard Business School 20th Year Reunion.



resources for where you should invest to win and walk away when the investment is not worth the potential return (i.e., you will not win, or even if you do, it's not worth it). See Chart #3 for the Benefits of strategic planning based on client surveys. Having a well-communicated and unified view will result in your employees, not only supporting but, understanding why it's a "yes" or a "no."

Saying "no" doesn't come naturally, but it separates those "yes" leaders who may have grown revenue, but at the cost of lower profits, from those who said "no" to the poor opportunities.

## THE PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

My clients run businesses ranging from \$10 - \$200 million in revenue, with 20 - 500 employees. When I survey them about their key challenges as leaders, their biggest concern (see Chart #2) is to understand the critical external changes that will impact them, including future economic conditions.

If you are a typical small business owner and spending less than 5% of your time on strategy, it is very difficult to find time for research. It takes time to hear different opinions, share learnings, and gain alignment on key changes. Unfortunately, many just don't take the time to proactively plan for new trends or challenges. Instead, they are reactive and spend too much time "fighting the fire" of running a business. Incidentally, team alignment is the second most critical challenge for businesses.

For some clients, team-based strategic planning is the first time they have worked together and really looked up and outside of their company, engaged in conversation about key markets and competitors, and created a longer-term plan to act on new opportunities and threats.

The good news is strategic planning, done the right way, tackles many challenges companies need to address.

## STRATEGY HELPS WITH "ALIGNMENT"

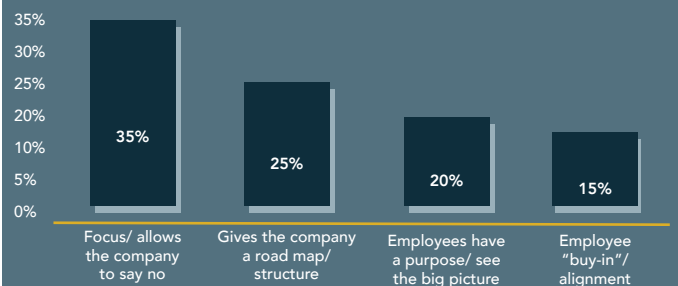
A strategy provides focus and defines choices - when to say "yes" and when to say "no" to specific customers, products, services, initiatives, or employees; a good strategy helps you allocate

## STRATEGY + ALIGNMENT

One of my clients, the President of a Design-Build Company, described the benefits of strategic planning.

*"First, having a well-articulated strategy helps all employees have purpose in their work. If carried out properly, employee and company goals align to achieve the strategy. Prior to our company having a well-defined strategy, we had people moving in different directions pursuing opportunities that they, individually, thought were valuable, but could not get support from other functions of the organization. A well-defined and communicated strategy now ensures our people are working on a common plan."*

## THE BENEFITS OF STRATEGY



## STARVE THE PROBLEMS

Many companies need to free-up resources before they can focus on the opportunities.

*One of my smaller service companies with less than \$5 Million in revenue, started strategic planning with more than 1,500 customers! Their customers had a range of annual revenue from \$500 - \$15,000. The top 10% of their customers made 80% of their PROFIT.*

*This was a very eyeopening experience. The reality is they were losing money on many of their lowest revenue customers.*

*For two years, they had a strategic priority (also known as a focus area) called, "Starve the Problems." Before they could focus on key accounts, they had to implement pricing strategies and policy to say no to unprofitable accounts so they could say "yes" to more money!*

## HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU'RE READY?

Most businesses "get stuck" at certain revenue markers for their industry. Others who scale too fast, run out of cash. This is very common because the next level of growth requires proactive

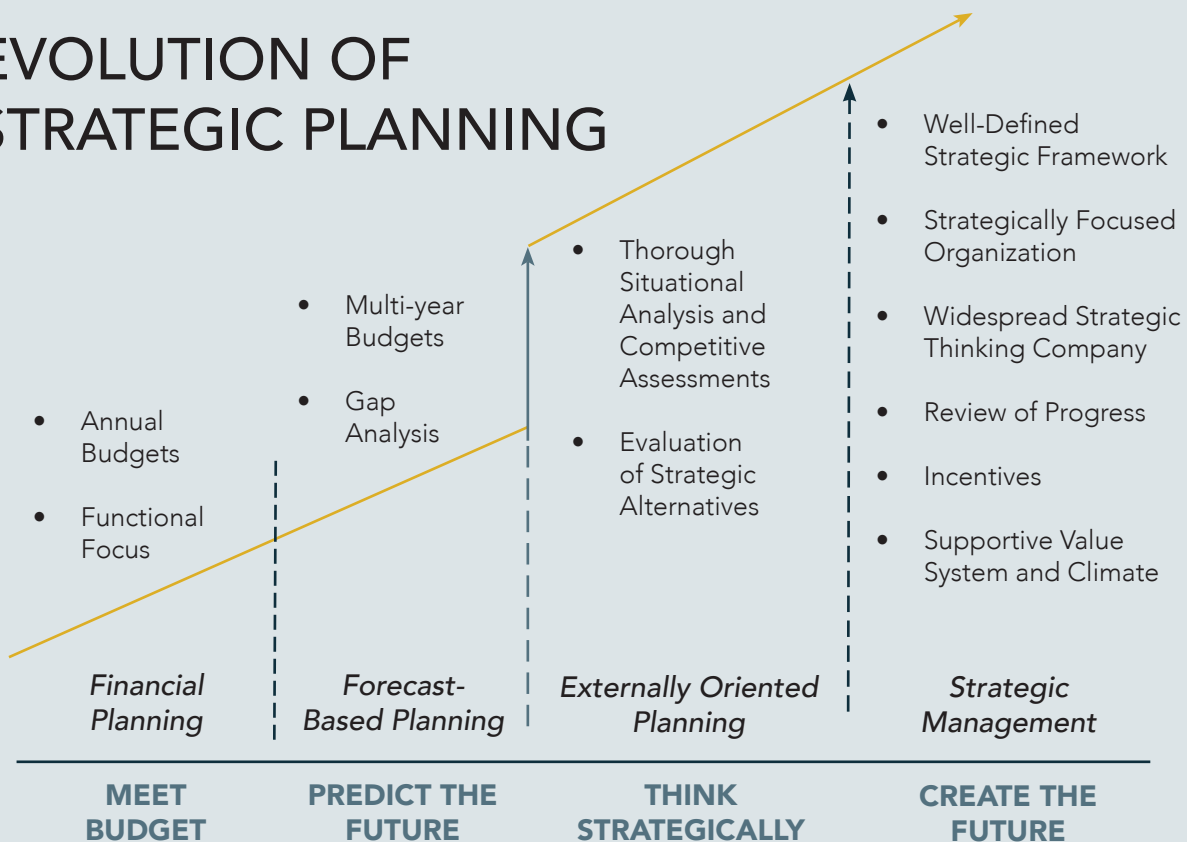
investment – i.e., key hires, a new technology, or strategic shift to a new market or product. To get off the plateau requires a growth focused business model, cash to invest in opportunities, and an aligned organizational structure. More leaders need to become experts in their area rather than wearing multiple hats.

Laura Brunner<sup>5</sup> created the Evolution of Strategic Planning model; this is a model which describes the phases that companies go through both before and after their readiness for strategic planning. As you will notice, when you start externally-based strategic planning, there is an incremental jump to a whole new level of strategic planning. Most of our clients start in Phase 1 or 2 with a goal of moving to Phase 4 over the next couple of years.

**PHASE 1:** Meet the Budget Most of the time is spent looking in the rear-view mirror at revenue, profit, and short-term planning, usually annually. When a business starts adding metrics, specifically leading indicators (pipeline, lead-time, customers and employee satisfaction), where investment in

<sup>5</sup> Laura Brunner, Founder Partner of Partners in Change, one of my companies.

## EVOLUTION OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

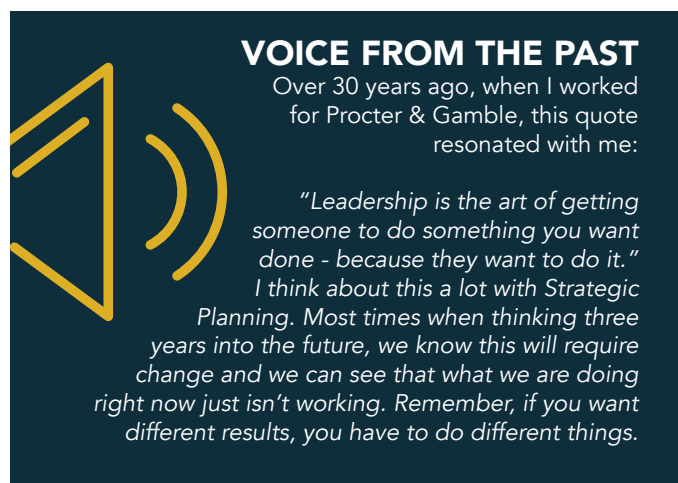


the operation is needed to grow, they move to Phase 2.

**Phase 2:** Predict the Future During Phase 2, a company tends to think two to three years ahead instead of just planning for the year ahead. Leadership starts looking for the gaps in infrastructure, especially human talent, which need to be filled for growth to be sustained.

In a Phase 1 business, some critical responsibilities are still part of someone's job. For successful growth it's essential to hire people who have the competencies and knowledge – for example, in Marketing or HR. These are roles that are not well executed by a "generalist;" they require subject-matter expertise. As an alternative to hiring, a cost-effective way to acquire this expertise is through outside support, like specialty firms, consultants, or fractional C-level people. A key outcome of a strategic planning process is to identify and prioritize what is needed from the staff to scale the business for growth.

I tend to work with companies that are ready to take that incremental leap by moving from Phase 2 to Phase 3.



**VOICE FROM THE PAST**  
Over 30 years ago, when I worked for Procter & Gamble, this quote resonated with me:

*"Leadership is the art of getting someone to do something you want done - because they want to do it."*

*I think about this a lot with Strategic Planning. Most times when thinking three years into the future, we know this will require change and we can see that what we are doing right now just isn't working. Remember, if you want different results, you have to do different things.*

**Phase 3:** Think Strategically It's time to switch from playing Chutes and Ladders to Chess. Phase 3 companies have a sustainable model, have done some planning (probably not formal or team-based, though), and are ready to take it to the next level. The company leaps from internal considerations to a need for "external" knowledge and understanding. Thinking strategically means looking for market opportunities and threats; it's time to examine competitors, industry research,

and customer feedback to make informed decisions for the most advantageous chess moves. Because the leadership team has grown from just a few to six or eight key people, it is also critical to achieve alignment around a longer-term growth plan.

**Phase 4:** Strategic Management Strategy is now integral to the company's operations, although unlike the slog of Phase 3, the process is now energizing and engaging. Supporting the process so many times, it's my favorite moment to watch leadership teams "wake up," a concept that's explained further in the book *Alive at Work*.<sup>6</sup> This book cites studies indicating people are more engaged and happier at work when they are given the time to be creative and to dream. Companies in Phase 4 have a solid strategic framework and widespread strategic thinking; they are fully committed to a strategic planning process, utilize proven tools, and most importantly, have a capable strategic team driving incentives and celebrations tied to the strategy.

## TIME TO STOP BEING RECKLESS

The main responsibility of a leader is to proactively prepare for the future of the company. Here's the reality: it's your job as a leader to define the future. After all, if you don't, who will? We can all agree that change will happen, and we can either manage it proactively or wait until we are forced to adapt.

You'll need a learning and team mindset because the first time you commit to strategic planning, it might be uncomfortable; with practice, however, it will get better. As a first-time planner, think of strategy planning as an opportunity to listen and to learn, document what's in your head, and share it with others. Then implement, keep learning, and continuously improve.

## WHY DON'T PEOPLE WANT TO CHANGE?

One of the biggest barriers to developing a strategic plan and implementing it successfully is the people-part. Many years ago, I asked

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<sup>6</sup> *Alive at Work: The Neuroscience of Helping Your People Love What They Do* Daniel M Cable, Harvard Business Review Press. 2019. Social psychologist and professor Daniel M. Cable takes leaders into the minds of workers and reveals the surprising secret to restoring their zest for work.

my organizational development partner, Cyndi Wineinger<sup>7</sup>, why people who don't change don't adapt to new ideas? Her answer was simple: "They don't want to."

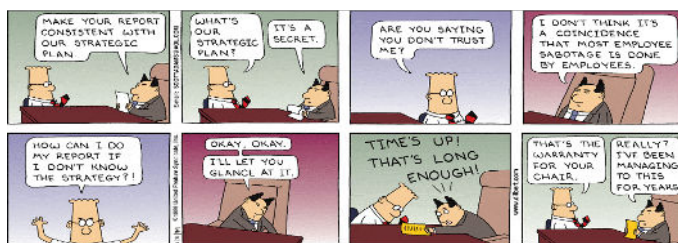
When she first said this, I was ready to argue. "What about the plan? What about the new reality that will require them to change? What about the...?" But, at the end of the day, she was right. People change when they really want to. This is a huge opportunity for small companies. You need to figure out why your people should want to change. Engaging them in the strategy planning process is a huge part of a successful change process.

Involving people beyond key leadership when you are developing your strategy allows them to contribute ideas to those goals and provide reasoning to support them. When they participate in the process, they feel the need and want to be involved, understand their role in making things happen and own the outcome. Employees want to be involved, heard, and trusted.

As we know, many plans sit on the shelf because someone uninvolved in the process was handed the plan but unmotivated to act on it. It may be a great plan, but without buy-in, that's all it will be – a great piece of work, sitting on the shelf with very little impetus to make it happen.

If companies tell me they have a strategy, I ask to see it (at which point they get uncomfortable). The plan is probably in the owner's head, nowhere else. Owners tend to tell employees about it only on a need-to-know basis.

If it's not visible and communicated, it might as well be "the warranty for your chair."<sup>8</sup>



7 Cyndi and I work together now doing integrated strategic planning and leadership training. She's an expert on all things "people" related and she knows how to effect change.

8 By kind permission of United Media, publisher of Dilbert.

So, the most significant part of becoming that strategic leader is providing the motivation for your people to embrace change with enthusiasm. That's the hardest task ahead of you.

## STRATEGY IN MOTION™

Across my career, I have researched best practices and developed a strategic planning process for my clients. This is also part of the Stretch Strategic Process. I will walk you through how to use the process for yourself and your company.

Today, Strategy in Motion™ is a proven process for growing small to midsize companies. As part of the process, there are several tools to help you gather data and guide you towards your strategic plan.

My **Strategy in Motion™** process has four steps:



### Step 1: Listen and learn.

You start the process by assessing what you already have available and determine what is necessary to research; this includes both an internal analysis with customer and employee surveys, as well as an external analysis, with industry, market, and competitor research.

### Step 2: Develop the Strategic Plan.

This includes your vision, core purpose, core values, and key strategic choices you want to focus on. This is an interactive process with working sessions, giving an opportunity to hear different perspectives, but then coming together behind aligned strategic priorities.

### Step 3: Implementation.

This is where the rubber meets the road with

scorecards and action plans. Many companies become anxious when accountability increases and some even “freeze” at this stage. Our process and tools will help you over the speed bump.

#### Step 4: Strategic Management.

The company starts to share the strategy with the organization, devolve action down through the organization and continually assess the effectiveness of the plan, making necessary improvements.

You stick with your plan, you improve, but eventually, it’s time to assess how it went and start over. And with any good process, it gets better with practice!

### HOW TO THINK ABOUT STRATEGIC PLANNING?

Consider strategic planning has two parts – “Strategic” and “Planning”:

1. The “Strategic” embraces **what** you want to achieve; or, put another way, what it means to win.
2. The “Planning” is **how** you will close the gap to what you want to achieve and what choices you will make so that you will win.

The “What” and the “How” – it sounds like a formula for sorting out any kind of life goals, and indeed it is. I’ll show you how I used strategic planning in a life situation in a moment... but there’s one thing missing. It’s the “Who” – and I don’t mean the 1960s rock band.

Jim Collins had a foundational belief that “good is the enemy of great.”<sup>9</sup> Lots of organizations are “good enough.” They have been in business for many years, and they are surviving. Many of these are lifestyle businesses.

For me, strategic planning is deciding if you want your company to be great; for instance, “winning” a race versus just participating in the race. This is:

- **Being proactive** versus reactive.
- **Making choices** and trade-offs versus saying

yes to everything.

- **Gaining alignment** versus telling people what to do.

Notice that third item – gaining alignment. This requires leadership. It is critical to first define “who” are your key leaders, and then utilize a team-based process with lots of engagement discussing “how” the company will be successful.

If you’re an owner or leader who wants your company to be great, then you need to decide how to define winning. One thing is certain: strategic planning will help you define and reach greatness with the help of key leaders in the organization.

### LET’S TALK ABOUT WINNING

I’ve worked with hundreds of companies, and they’ve all had their own unique definition of winning and wildly different choices. It’s important to first understand how the current ownership defines winning.



	BASE	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
<b>Sales (\$M)</b> What revenue goals do you have?						
<b>Profit (Gross or Net Margin %)</b> What profitability goals do you have?						
<b>ROA (net profit/total assets)</b> What business ratios are critical to you?						
<b>Productivity (Net Sales/Employees)</b> How does productivity need to change?						
<b>What other goals are important to you?</b>						
<b>Culture</b>						
<b>Succession Plan / Leadership Transitions</b>						
<b>Operational</b>						
<b>Personal</b>						

#### First, ask the key Stakeholders (see Stakeholder Goals Tool)

When I start a strategic planning process, I work with the business owners to define what their key goals are for the company, including their vision. Here are some goals I hear over and over:

- I want more time to work “on the company” versus “in the company.”
- I’d like to take a vacation and not worry or work the entire time.

<sup>9</sup> Good to Great. Jim Collins. Harper Collins. 2001.

- I want to be financially independent (\$2M in investments and \$1.5M in a 401K) and provide for my family and my employees.
- I want to retire (by the time I'm ...) and transition to my children.
- I want to take care of my employees (secure a future for them).
- I want to sell my company (for \$20M) and then sit on the beach/create a non-profit/travel the world/write a book/climb Kilimanjaro/retreat to my tropical island paradise.

Whatever their personal vision looks like, we need to understand the owners' key goals for the company. They hold their personal goals with passion. Unfortunately many have never shared these goals with anyone else.

Business owners (which might include family members, members of the board, or investors) are key stakeholders. All of their perspectives matter. We need one aligned version of the "Stakeholder Goals" to provide the expectations for strategic planning and understand what is important to the owners.

## WHAT IS WINNING?

So, if a vision is a long-term desired state and a goal is a way of measuring it, what is winning? Winning is setting your sights on something outside yourself, even outside your company. This should inspire the organization. Let me go back to my race analogy:

### What does it mean to win a race? In a race you might want to:

- Be first, aka be a market leader.
- Be fastest in your group, aka be the most innovative in your industry.
- Be in the top 10, aka the preferred choice in your local market.

There are many ways to define winning. Some companies define winning related to how the company is perceived in the market. For example, Regional Leader in Health Care for our product, Leader in Customer Satisfaction (highest Net Promoter Score), Our product is the First choice. The key is measurability. How you define and measure winning will help your leaders understand the choices to make to get there.

Jim Collins didn't research large companies because he thought you had to be big to be great. He analyzed large companies because they have lots of accessible DATA, unlike private companies. Everything his research tells us is as relevant to small companies as it is to large ones. One of his best books is Beyond Entrepreneurship, with stories and best practices for how small companies successfully grow and scale.

## DARCY RUNS A MARATHON

Now that you have an idea of the "why" for Strategy in Motion™ (SIM) process, I'd like to share a true story that offers a good example of the strategic process. So, what happened? I decided to run a marathon while in business school and it was not easy...

It's 1999 and I'm studying at Harvard Business School. My fellow students are a bunch of crazy, goal-oriented people, so it's no surprise they decide to run a marathon. Spurred on by mass frenzy, I create a personal goal to complete my first marathon with a measurable goal of finishing in less than 4 hours. My normal distance is around 6 miles, so 26.2 in 4 hours was definitely a stretch.

I was already a runner, but I needed Strategic Planning to hit my stretch goals:



**Step 1 of Strategic Planning is research, feedback, and benchmarking (SIM Step 1: Listen and Learn).** I talked to seasoned marathoners and did some research on "how to train" for a marathon. I chose the Cape Cod Marathon because the timing worked, it was close by, it was a beautiful place, and I had never been there. I also quickly realized that I need to start training to increase my mileage.



Then, I moved to **SIM Step 2: Development of Strategic Plan.** This involved assessing my current reality with a very tried-and-tested tool, SWOT Analysis.

S	W	O	T
<b>STRENGTHS</b> [WHAT I DO WELL]	<b>WEAKNESSES</b> [IMPROVEMENT AREAS]	<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b> [GROWTH AREAS]	<b>THREATS</b> [BLIND SPOTS]
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Already running</li> <li>• Healthy, in general, in good shape/diet good</li> <li>• Community of runners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long distance</li> <li>• Time management/procrastinator</li> <li>• Sometimes drink too much</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Join a running group</li> <li>• Buy a treadmill</li> <li>• Lots of training plans available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School work suffers</li> <li>• Injury/getting sick</li> <li>• Weather conditions</li> </ul>

As you can imagine, my SWOT wasn't the same as my friends; specifically, my roommate, Page, who qualified to run the Boston Marathon. My strategic plan was different from Page's because it was customized for me to reach my vision and my goals. Page ran a lot faster than I did, so her training and goals were different.

Once I had my strategic plan in hand, the real work was next – **SIM Step 3: Implementation aka the training!** No one told me how hard long runs really were; they conveniently forgot to mention how much time it would take and how horrible it was to run in cold, rainy, Boston weather. I adjusted my strategic plan multiple times, as my school workload was heavy and there were other fun things I wanted to do instead. I also adjusted my training plan each week and included measuring my weekly increase in miles and time running. Did I mention how many times I fell during long runs or the time, after a long run and I was starving, I tried to make rice and forgot to put in the water? I was struggling, but kept moving forward.

The last step – **SIM Step 4: Strategic Management** – involved managing the changes and adjustments as an on-going process, unique to my situation. This included communication, support, and on-going assessment of my plan – thinking about each run as part of the process – not single events. Did I mention while I was training there that I gave up things I love (like late-night parties?)? As long as I improved my miles and times each week, I was moving forward. Fortunately, I trained alongside friends, and we supported each other. What is so interesting is that we all had different goals and chose different races, which

resulted in unique training (aka strategic) plans.

When the time came for me to run the Cape Cod Marathon, I was scared out of my mind and felt like there was no way I would finish! Luckily, I had my support group (which I identified in Step 1 and confirmed in Step 4) cheering me on at different parts of the race – this is critical!! At about mile 14, and another hill, I was really dragging. Page jumped in the race and ran a few miles with me! Honestly, this memory still brings tears to my eyes.

It was so difficult AND so amazing. In the end, my time was 3:57 (yep, I exceeded my stretch goal by 3 minutes!). Thank goodness for my support group! It took commitment, hard work, and a little pain, but it was totally worth it.



In my marathon example, I only had to convince myself to do the training, but I needed my friends to support my choices!

**For a company to develop a strategy, you need others to help, and you need to gain alignment from them and the company as a whole on what it means to win and what you want to achieve (i.e., your vision and goals).**

All successful strategic processes engage the leadership, management team, team members, customers, and sometimes the entire community. The time spent gaining support pays huge dividends when it comes time to implement; you have people ready and willing to get on board.

If your company is new to strategic planning, the construction of the plan needs a foundation to be in place – some key strategic concepts:

1. Why we exist as a company (**our Purpose.**)
2. How we operate to be successful (**our Core Values.**)

3. Where we win (**our Core Focus.**)
4. What makes us different (**our Brand Promise.**)
5. Where we are going (**our Vision and Stretch Goal.**)
6. Critical areas of focus (**our Strategic Priorities.**)

The first four strategic concepts are critical to a first-time planner. A lot of time is spent defining these. After these are clearly defined, you revisit and assess how you are “living these out.”

It was the vision and goal that kept me going when I ran the Cape Cod Marathon. Without those I would have found it hard to focus on strategic priorities (my training) and the planning that followed.

## SOME KEY REMINDERS

So, in practice, what is the SIM Strategic Planning process?

- It’s a process which gets better with practice. It is not just a set of events or strategy days; it is a process that needs focus and your leadership team’s commitment.
- This is a team-based process and should create more than an annual plan. I recommend planning for the next three-years with clear choices and trade-offs, what is your “no” strategy.
- You will evaluate and update your plan regularly, monthly, quarterly, annually and rebuild about every two to three years.
- The tools are proven and will work and should be customized for each company. This is critical to make it work best for your company.
- Your leadership team is critical and normally will either accelerate your plan or be the constraint. Your leader’s ability to stretch will determine their ability to strategically lead.

It typically takes three to four months to complete the “Listen and Learn and Plan” Development phase (1 and 2 of the SIM process). Then the real

work begins with implementation and strategic management. That’s the really fun part!

## SUMMARY

In this chapter you:

- Looked at the cost of ignoring the warning signs, hoping, and doing the same old thing year after year. This approach only works for so long – eventually, something will break. Hope is NOT a strategy.
- Understood what strategic planning is for and how it helps you win in business. Critically, you have to look up and outside your business to gather the information you need to create a plan to win!
- Examined the phases of how companies evolve through planning; most companies start with a functional, one year focus, and then move to an aligned multi-year strategy. You established which phase you’re in and confirmed the role of leadership to move to the next level.
- Acknowledged that planning is good, AND execution requires buy-in from your people; all your people. Implementation is the hard part of strategy, mainly because people resist change. It’s your job to help them understand the “why” and inspire them to make the change.
- Grasped the four stages of “Strategy in Motion™,” the foundational process that you’ll use to take your company on this strategic planning journey.
- Examined what Strategic Planning is, including vision and goals for both owners and leaders.
- Embraced the key strategic concepts that are the foundation for your Strategic Planning.

*And how’s my printer? The best part is the new one works better than my old one. I’ve learned, once again, hope is not a strategy and change is good!*



**STRETCH**  
STRATEGIC LEADERS

If you want to know more about the specific process, please check out our website, [stretch-sl.com](http://stretch-sl.com). We have articles, tools, videos and an online Strategic Bootcamp to help you take the next step.