

From the Sacramento Business Journal:

<http://www.bizjournals.com/sacramento/stories/2004/10/18/smallb4.html>

Got Growth?

Create a solid strategic plan and follow through on it

Sacramento Business Journal - by Larry Mandelberg

Date: Sunday, October 17, 2004, 9:00pm PDT

Each of us craves success and savors the right to define what that means. For some, it is symbolized by working hard and enjoying a productive day. For others, vast sums of money. Regardless of your definition, without unmitigated luck, effective strategic planning and execution is the only way for you to achieve your personal success. Without a specific goal and a plan to get you there, you will end up wherever you are headed, which might not be where you want to be or think you are going.

Strategic planning derives its power from that very thought, clarity on where you are headed, the destination you crave, or the goals you are trying to achieve. The hardest part about creating your strategic plan is understanding what success means to you. Once you get that awareness extracted from your subconscious and are honest about it with yourself, the road becomes clear and easier to navigate.

The next step is to define what benefits you and those around you will reap once you have achieved your goals. Be specific, be clear. Think about the problems you may encounter while trying to achieve your goals and the assumptions you believe to be true. Ask yourself "what if" questions -- What if a law is enacted that restricts me? What if one of my largest vendors or clients goes out of business? -- and think about what you might do if those issues arise or the assumptions prove false. Write them all down and be prepared.

Look for obstacles that may be in your way, and leading indicators or vital signs that will help you ensure you are on the right path and achieving some degree of success. Think about opportunities you may be able to leverage and be open to new ones all the time. Identify at least three strategies you can use to move you closer to your goals, and the actions you will take to implement those strategies. Write them down along with objective measures you will use to monitor your progress and make sure you are on track.

Make sure you write down everything discussed above and share it with those who play an integral role in helping you achieve the success you desire. Now that you know where you are going and how you will get there, the only thing left is to work your plan, monitor progress, adjust as new issues arise, and enjoy the journey.

Larry Mandelberg is founder and managing principal of Beyond Point B, which provides executive coaching, business analysis and training services to help businesses be more successful.