

Starting a Business

Starting a business is a dream, but living the dream can be risky. However, risk can be minimized through careful planning. In his column "Plan for Success" in the Small Business Advisor, Robert A. Sullivan emphasizes the need for planning before starting a business.

Sullivan makes a distinction between a business plan and a strategic plan. He describes a business plan as a well-defined, structured document used as a presentation to potential investors. A strategic plan, however, is not designed to acquire funding; it defines the purpose of the business, the current situation of the business, and where the business will be in the next few years.

Sullivan suggests the following structure for a strategic plan.

- **Vision Statement** - your overall, long-term goal, 20-30 words.
- **Mission/Purpose Statement** - the reason why you are pursuing the vision statement goal.
- **Scope of Business** - the upper and lower limits of work and of the customer base.
- **Assumptions** - the notions that you will be operating from, i. e. keeping your present job, working only a few hours a week, the competition is poor, etc.
- **Goals and Objectives** - specifically-stated, realistic, desires whose attainment can be measured; i. e., "...to reach \$1000 gross receipts within 30 days", or "...to be able to work full-time in the business within 90 days."
- **Risks** - as many specific negative factors as you can list; deal with possibilities, not surprises.
- **Strategies** - the methods you use to reach your goals and objectives; e. g., networking, newsletter, volunteering, press releases, etc.
- **Progress Reporting Methods** - the ways that you evaluate your success in pursuing your plan. Read and update your plan frequently to reflect any necessary changes in the way you do business. If you succeed or fail, you should be able to determine the reasons.

Let us help you brainstorm your business concept, formulate your strategic and marketing plans, and develop your company's operational documents. At the appropriate stage in your company's lifecycle, we can assist you in developing formal business and marketing plans. We stand ready to work with you to achieve your short- and long-range goals.

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