

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A STRATEGY VS A PLAN (AND WHICH DO YOU NEED)?



A Plan: A plan is the details: who, how, when, and how much to achieve a goal or objective. It aligns resources, timing, and expectations. A plan has a more limited scope than a strategy, and the development process should be more focused and quicker so you get into action as soon as possible.

A Strategy: A strategy is the story of an exciting journey; it explains how you plan to move from where you are today to where you eventually want to end. A strategy outlines how you will overcome challenges, confront vulnerabilities, and leverage all your assets and favorable forces to prevail through the journey to reach your ultimate destination.

Both define expectations and outline milestones and targets to measure progress and performance. Still, a strategy is frequently long-range and more directional than the near-term specifics found in a plan.

You can have a plan without a strategy, but a strategy without a plan is a story unfulfilled.



But how do you know which one your team or organization needs?

A plan is needed to ...

- allocate and align resources, especially when they are limited.
- manage people and processes efficiently.
- ensure clarity and alignment so you can get into action!
- clarify roles and responsibilities.

Richard S. Shineman Foundation

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Adapted from www.focusedmomentum.com/blog/difference-between-a-strategy-and-a-plan

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A strategy is needed when ...

- you are not clear on your destination or when there is no agreement on the destination.
- you have been through a great deal of change, and there is confusion about how to regain traction.
- even with all your grand plans, hard work, and dedication, you are not getting the performance you want or need.
- you are new to your leadership role and want to define an exciting new direction.



How does the process of producing a plan differ from creating a strategy?

If you need *a plan*, you focus on a goal, break down the goal into smaller goals or objectives, then work out the what, how, when, how, and how much for each objective. Straight forward for sure, but rarely easy. Plans take time to build as they are usually iterative—the more complex the goal, the more complex the plan.

If you need *a strategy*, your process should disrupt typical problem-solving practices to invite new ideas and divergent points of view into your strategy discussions. As you begin strategy development, your thinking will feel more divergent, eventually converging when your planning team achieves alignment. A strategy will emerge from robust planning discussions, leading to highly satisfying plan development.

Understanding what you need is the first step, but aligning your processes to satisfy that need is equally important. Share this post with your team to clarify if you need a strategy or a plan, and then build the right approach to complete your planning with that need in mind.

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