

Strategic Planning: A Biblical Design



By Richard Hasty and Aaron Andrade

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© January 2024

Definition and Importance of Strategic Planning from a Christian Perspective

Strategic planning is a systematic process essential for defining the direction of an organization and aligning resources to achieve long-term objectives. This structured approach to decision-making and resource management not only guides organizational growth but ensures all stakeholders are united under a shared vision and mission. This process mirrors the biblical accounts of planning, demonstrating that effective planning is not just a good practice for modern organizations but is rooted in the very nature of God and His actions throughout Scripture.

1. **God as the Ultimate Planner:** The Bible opens with Genesis Chapter 1, vividly describing how God created the universe and everything in it over six days. This account showcases God as the ultimate strategist, whose meticulous planning and execution brought about the complex and harmonious existence of life. From separating light from darkness to the creation of man in His own image, each step was taken with precision and purpose, highlighting the importance of a well-thought-out plan.
2. **Revealing Divine Plans to Humanity:** God's interactions with Abram, later Abraham, as narrated in Genesis chapters 12 and 15, further underscore His strategic nature. God reveals a grand plan to bless all nations through Abram's lineage, a plan that would span generations and involve detailed promises and covenants. The revelation of this plan to Abraham illustrates how strategic foresight is shared with key stakeholders to ensure alignment and commitment—principles that are directly applicable to strategic planning in any organization.
3. **Fulfillment of God's Plan Through Christ:** The Scriptures repeatedly affirm that God operates according to a divine plan laid out before the foundation of the world. This plan culminated in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, fulfilling over 400 prophetic verses from the Old Testament. This demonstrates God's long-term strategic vision and His unwavering commitment to seeing His plans through to completion, a testament to the power of steadfast and faithful execution.
4. **Created in God's Image to Plan:** Genesis 1:26 tells us that humans are made in God's likeness, endowed with the ability to think, plan, and create. As reflections of God's image, it is inherent that we too engage in strategic planning, not only as a means of organizational management but as a fulfillment of our created purpose to wisely steward the resources and opportunities God has provided.

Strategic planning within Christian organizations is much more than a business exercise; it is an expression of our God-given nature to plan and execute with wisdom and purpose. By adopting a biblical perspective on strategic planning, Christian leaders can craft plans that are not only effective in achieving earthly objectives but also aligned with eternal values and God's overarching plan for humanity. This approach not only drives organizational success but also contributes to the broader mission of reflecting God's glory through diligent stewardship and strategic foresight.



Biblical Foundations of Strategic Planning

1. **God as the Ultimate Planner:** From the creation narrative in Genesis to the intricate details of the Tabernacle in Exodus, Scripture reveals God as a master planner. His strategic unfolding of events, from creation to redemption through Christ, exemplifies the importance of having a clear, divinely inspired vision (Genesis 1, Exodus 25-27).
2. **Mission and Vision:** Reflecting our creation in God's image (Genesis 1:26), ministries should articulate their mission and vision clearly. These elements guide decision-making, much like the biblical prophecies that directed the mission of Christ (Isaiah 53).
3. **Values:** Core values are biblical principles that guide the ministry's culture and operations. As Proverbs 11:3 states, "The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity."
4. **Strategic Goals & Objectives:** Like Nehemiah's strategic approach to rebuilding Jerusalem's walls, setting specific goals aligns a ministry's activities with its mission (Nehemiah 2:17-18).
5. **Resource Allocation:** Echoing the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30), strategic planning involves stewarding resources wisely to maximize impact and return.

Collaborative Approach: Enhancing Consensus and Ownership

Incorporating collaboration into strategic planning reflects the biblical model of the body of Christ, where diverse members work together for a common purpose (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). This inclusive approach ensures that each leader's insights contribute to a broader spectrum of ideas, fostering unity and shared commitment to the ministry's success.

Strategic Planning in Action: A Christian Ministry Example

Consider a ministry we'll call Grace Outreach, dedicated to supporting families in urban communities through education and spiritual guidance. Initially, Grace Outreach struggled with resource allocation and program impact due to unclear strategic direction. Inspired by Jeremiah 29:11, the leadership, led by Pastor John, embarked on a strategic planning process that engaged various department heads and key volunteers. They sought God's wisdom in prayer and collaboration, setting a vision aligned with scriptural teachings.

This collective effort resulted in a new initiative focused on youth mentorship, significantly impacting the community and aligning with Jesus' instruction to let the little children come unto Him (Matthew 19:14) as well as a commitment to develop their future leaders and members. They adopted a determined and systematic discipleship approach and abandoned some of their disparate programs that had less definition and limited results. The strategic plan, refined through continuous prayer and feedback, allowed Grace Outreach to adapt to community needs and enhance its impact.

A good plan well executed outperforms
a great plan poorly executed
every time.

Importance of Implementation in Strategic Planning

Effective execution of a strategic plan requires a disciplined approach that mirrors many biblical principles. Just as Nehemiah meticulously planned and executed the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls (Nehemiah 2:11-20), ministries and Christian businesses must follow a systematic process to bring their strategic visions to life. This involves several critical steps:

- **Action Plans:** Every strategic objective should have a corresponding action plan that outlines the specific steps needed to achieve the goal. These plans should be detailed and include timelines, just as Noah followed God's detailed instructions to build the ark (Genesis 6:14-22).
- **Assignment of Responsibilities:** It is crucial to clearly assign responsibilities for each part of the plan. Each team member should know their specific roles, reminiscent of Moses appointing leaders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens to help manage the Israelites (Exodus 18:13-26).
- **Resource Allocation:** Just as the parable of the talents teaches us to wisely steward the resources entrusted to us (Matthew 25:14-30), strategic implementation requires careful allocation of resources to ensure that they are used effectively and where they are most needed.

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- **Regular Reviews and Adjustments:** The process of implementation should include regular check-ins and adjustments. This mirrors the biblical principle of seeking wisdom and counsel to ensure plans are on the right track (Proverbs 15:22).
- **Measuring Success:** Implementing a strategic plan must include defining what success looks like and measuring progress towards it. This is akin to Paul's exhortation to run the race in such a way as to get the prize, which requires discipline and direction (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

God's sovereign power



While strategic planning is a crucial aspect of stewardship and leadership, we also recognize that ultimately, all plans are subject to God's sovereign will. Proverbs 16:9 reminds us, "In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps." This verse underscores the truth that while we are called to plan diligently and act wisely, it is God who directs the outcomes of our efforts. Similarly, Proverbs 19:21 asserts, "Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails." These scriptures encourage us to hold our plans loosely, approaching strategic planning with humility and a deep dependence on God.

As we align our plans with God's revealed Word and seek His guidance through prayer, we can trust that He will direct our paths (Proverbs 3:5-6), ensuring our plans serve not only our organizational goals but also His greater purposes. In this way, strategic planning becomes not just a practice of wise management but an act of faith, acknowledging God as the ultimate planner and sustainer of all our endeavors.

Conclusion

We will always humbly acknowledge the sovereign and unknowable power of God in our plans. But strategic planning, rooted in biblical principles, is fundamental to achieving sustained growth and impact. This organized framework is consistent with God's original design. By embracing a collaborative approach and aligning with God's examples of planning and execution, Christian ministries can create robust strategic plans that are not only innovative but also widely supported and effectively implemented.

Through clear vision, focused goals, and faithful stewardship, ministries like Grace Outreach not only survive but thrive, demonstrating the power of God's love and provision through service to others.

AUTHORS	
 <p>Rick Hasty has been a management consultant, executive coach, and facilitator to senior executives and their teams for more than 30 years, working with leadership teams in multi-industries in North America and throughout the world. He is an author and keynote speaker on the important topic of leadership development.</p> <p>He formed LNG after serving in management roles at PwC for 12 years. He previously founded Conequity Resources, a management consulting firm acquired by PwC in 2010.</p>	 <p>Aaron Andrade has 20 years' experience as a senior leader, executive coach and management consultant creating organizational development programs that increase employee engagement, develop leaders and achieve business goals.</p> <p>Working in multiple industries, his coaching and team building strategies have received recognition in leading companies like The Boston Globe, Year Up and the U.S. Army where he was awarded a bronze star for his service in Iraq.</p>