

# Key Strategies & Insights for Project Success

Thoughts, concepts, and ideas for project leaders and professionals

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## Planning – The Look Ahead

In his infamous appeal to American colonial patriots, Thomas Paine proclaimed that “these are the times that try men’s souls.” We are certainly living in trying times as well. Not that our current difficulties are commensurate with the revolutionary war faced by our forefathers, but with near double-digit unemployment and economic instability here and abroad, these are trying times nonetheless.



Periods of challenge and difficulty call for a careful watch of the horizon and a steady hand on the wheel. “What direction to take?” is the all important question. This lull in business and economic growth is an opportune time for reflection, contemplation and careful planning for the future.

Planning doesn’t need to be over-complicated. At its core, it is simply the act of looking ahead and making preparations (a plan). It’s far too easy to get caught up in the crisis of the day, week after week and month after month and, as a result, most of us don’t plan nearly enough. Planning allows us to “take action” vs. “reacting.” The Cheshire Cat may have said it best; “If you don’t care where you’re going, any road will get you there.” So, where to go? Try planning.

How you undertake the planning process is not nearly as important as that you take the time to plan. Look up from day-to-day activities, take a deep breath, assess the situation, and consider a time further down the road than maybe you have in a while. Give it a try. You might be surprised at the benefits you’ll derive from the effort.

**KEY STRATEGIES:** Although outside planning assistance can be beneficial, planning does not necessarily require the involvement of a specialty consultant. Here are several simple strategies to help in undertaking initial planning efforts:

- Hold a Planning Retreat: Get away from the office for a change of perspective.
- Evaluate Past and Present: Ask yourself “Where have we been?” and “Where are we now?” Consider carefully the answers to these questions. They can be enlightening.
- Conduct a Focused Brainstorming Session: Capture and evaluate ideas. Consider establishing basic parameters to keep creative ideas within reasonable boundaries. But be careful not to stifle creative thinking! Be open to the hard questions especially those that begin with “what if...?”
- Undertake a SWOT Analysis: Clearly identify your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Consider how to make improvements in all areas.
- Research Information: Interview clients, colleagues, and other business experts to determine how they see the future and gain an understanding of their long range plans.
- Analyze Core Competencies: Examine the skills and talents resident within your firm and consider how they might be more fully leveraged.
- Sunset Outdated Services: Downsize or eliminate services that are no longer viable.

For more information on our philosophy, visit our website.

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**Helping mission-directed project leaders achieve unexpectedly better outcomes for their building projects**

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