



Dear Friend,

The Importance of Status

There are five seconds left. You get the ball. You could score, but why chance it. Just hold...wait for time to run out. The buzzer sounds. Whew, game over. But, wait; something's wrong. Instead of cheers, there's nothing but an eerie silence. After several seconds of confusion, you finally look up at the scoreboard. It's only then that you realize what happened. You lost...by one point!

This month's edition of *EA Insights* is dedicated to the importance of status. Now, by "status," I'm not talking about prestige or rank. In this instance, "status" reflects your level of results at a given point in time.

Whether you work on a traditional calendar year, a July - June fiscal year, or some different schedule, we all have an annual goal cycle. After you set your goals, though, do you monitor progress along the way? Or, more often than not, do you end up like the athlete above -- having time on the clock, and the ability to win, but missing the mark because of a failure to check the score?

Knowing where you stand is critical. And, that's true whatever your role -- business owner, executive, manager, or team member. So, I hope you find value in this month's edition of *EA Insights* as we explore together the importance of status. Next month we'll tackle the other aspects of strategic thinking.

All the best,

June

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Strategic Thinking Part I: Finishing Well

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Far too many people focus on strategic planning. That may appear to be an odd statement coming from one whose business has strategy support as one of its core services. After all, research shows that people who plan their activities and approaches are much more likely to achieve successful results than those who fail to plan.



So, perhaps, I should clarify my statement. Far too many people focus on strategic *planning*, rather than on strategic *thinking*. Strategic planning tends to be a one-shot deal. It's the creation of a direction for an organization or for an individual over the next one, three, five, or some other number of years, but that's technically where "planning" stops.

Please don't misunderstand. Developing a strategic plan is a critical first step. However, it's just that -- a first step. What happens after the ink dries is equally as important. That's the notion behind the broader strategic thinking concept. In order to achieve improved results, it is essential to embrace a cyclical approach that involves not just planning, but also implementing, monitoring, and evaluating of the plan.

In this series, we examine the phases of strategic thinking. And, strange as it may seem, the best place to begin is by starting at the end. To determine what you must do next, start by looking at what you did last.

A Realistic Look at Results

Launching the planning portion of the strategic thinking process without taking time to assess the results from the last period is akin to going grocery shopping without first checking your pantry and refrigerator to see what's in there. The result: you bring home yet another box of brown sugar (to join the three already in stock), and you fail to pick up the eggs that were needed for your signature recipe.

It's the same when you commence strategic thinking without first objectively evaluating where you stand in relation to the last round of goals. This type of assessment provides the opportunity to reach closure with respect to the prior year and to have a definitive starting point in planning for the year to come.

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Quotes

Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishments.
-- Jim Rohn

Do more than is required. What is the distance between someone who achieves their goals consistently and those who spend their lives and careers merely following? The extra mile.
-- Gary Ryan Blair

What great accomplishments we'd have in the world if everybody had done what they intended to do.
-- Unknown

The intelligent man is one who has successfully fulfilled many accomplishments, and is yet willing to learn more.
-- Ed Parker

Several factors should be considered as you review prior year strategic plan results.

Examine each goal and its expected outcome. For the evaluation to be meaningful and fair, every goal that was projected for action or for completion during the period should be included. It is important to paint a complete picture of each milestone for the period. Also, while the specific outcome should be self-evident from the goal statement, if it is not, be sure to clearly lay out the tangible result that was expected for each goal.

Determine whether the goal was accomplished. This is a simple "yes" or "no" answer for each goal. There will be time for explanations later in the process. Here, just settle whether the target was met. (Note: For multi-year goals, determine whether or not you completed the actions that were slated for the year at issue.)

Try to quantify the annualized dollar impact of the result. Translation: What was the dollar amount associated with your outcome? If you met the goal, how did that help you from a revenue and profit perspective? If you missed this target, what did it cost you?

Consider if there were non-monetary impacts of the result. How else were you affected by accomplishing or failing to achieve the goal? For instance, your outcome may have had a bearing on your customers, staff, management ability, or growth efforts. Take these non-monetary outcomes into account as you assess positive or negative goal results.

Reflect on the existence of mitigating or unforeseen factors that aided or hindered goal completion. Here's where you get to address explanations. Once the objective factors have been taken into account, consider the underlying reasons that contributed to accomplishing or missing the mark on each goal. Examples may include the economy, staff illnesses, construction, or any other circumstances that affected the accomplishment of your plan.

Who was responsible for the goal? In an organizational setting, identifying specific people who are accountable for each goal is critical. Often, people tie names to goals in the planning phase but fail to carry that accountability through to results assessment. However, continuing to link each goal to its champion provides the business owner or lead executive with an opportunity to acknowledge successful performance and to address challenges, as appropriate.

Evaluate the goal and its process. This phase of the assessment offers an opportunity to think about lessons learned with respect to each goal or category of goals. It is a chance to examine the pros and cons of the approach planned and/or used to accomplish the goal. The intent is to provide information that will enable you to leverage positive experiences and to avoid replicating problems as you move forward.

In a nutshell, those are the steps associated with an annual goals review. Conducting this type of goals assessment at or very near the completion of your strategy year is an invaluable exercise. Taking strategic inventory of the year helps you to finish well, and it fuels your planning for the upcoming period by coupling your long-term vision with accurate information about what already has been accomplished and how.

About Executive Advantage

At Executive Advantage, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

To learn more about Executive Advantage, contact us at inquiries@execadvantagellc.com.