

Strategic Planning for Success

Learning Guide

MCMILLAN PATH TO EQUITY 2021

McMillan LLP
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Placing Strategic Planning



Strategic Planning in Context ::

On our Mastery Wheel, we've identified Strategic Planning as one of the core skills you need to develop and hone over time, continue to improve and work toward proficiency in.

As with the other skills we've talked about together, like Storytelling and Habits, Strategic Planning will sit on top of and touch all of the other aspects of your life and work - your relationships, your purpose and your personal mastery.

Strategic Planning + Your Path to Equity

Where does it fit?

Strategic Planning for Success is a bit of a culminating Module in your Path to Equity Program. The development of a strategic plan will call upon many of the skills and mindset shifts you’ve learned about in our time together. Here are some of the ways you’ll use your earlier learning as you develop a Strategic Plan.

The foundation of your plan will be your core values and your vision for your future - informed by your unique value, purpose, personal brand and identity (**Module 5 :: Unique Value + Purpose and Module 6 :: Personal Brand, Identity + Voice**).

Your process of thinking strategically and having a plan that accords with that process will involve having a strategic mindset (**Module 1 :: Mastering Mindset**).

The continuous refinement and improvement of your plan will become habituated (**Module 7 :: The Habit Foundation**).

And the activities you choose to engage in will be filtered through your plan so that you can determine their specific utility toward your ultimate goals (**Module 8 :: High Impact Activities**).



Strategic Planning + Your Path to Equity

Where does it fit?

We're told time and again that what it feels like not to be strategic or have a plan. We're asked - and we have been asked in this group, even - how to go about selecting the activities and opportunities that will be most fruitful and make the best use of time and other resources.

The answer is, simply, to have a Strategic Plan to refer to as your guide.

In this Module, we're sharing the building blocks of a Strategic Plan with you so that you can begin to structure one of your own. But more than that, we're hoping to shine a light on the process, the thinking and the way of being that will allow you to think strategically over time.

More important than having a strategic plan is having a strategic planning process that you can apply to your plan as you evolve it.

“A Strategic Plan isn't an event. Strategic planning - strategic thinking - is a process, a habit, a way of being.”

- Jane Southren

Strategic Planning :: Definition + Purpose

What Is A Strategic Plan and Why Do you Need One?

When you know where you want to go, you can choose the way there.

We like to think of a Strategic Plan as a roadmap. It begins with your destination - a statement of where you want to be, or in other words, **your definition of success**. In strategic planning language, this is your **Vision Statement**.

It then breaks down the route you'll take to reach it. It addresses the landmarks you'll visit along the way, and how long you'll take between them. These are your **Strategic Objectives**.

A strategic plan is about taking what you **hope** for your future and turning it into what you **will create** for that future.

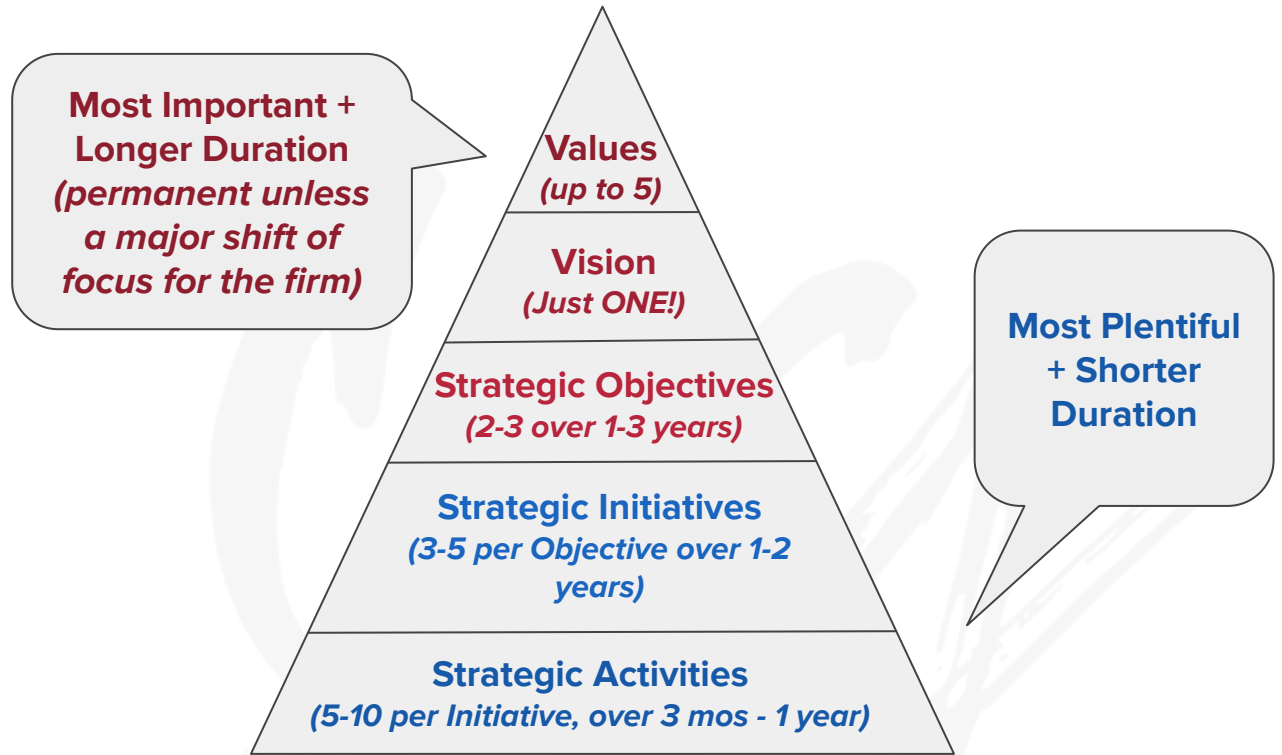
A strategic plan is one of the foundational ways to ensure that you can be successful in what you set out to accomplish. Just like you will more successfully reach your destination with a map and a timeline in mind, you will more successfully reach your goals using the exact same tools.

Creating a strategic plan is about identifying where **you want to go** and **how you will get there**. It's not about looking at the plan or path of someone else and following it. That's their plan, their path to their future vision. Your vision for your future is yours alone, so your strategic plan is yours, too.

The benefits of having a Strategic Plan are many. Primary among them is that the plan will keep you focused and on task. It will allow you to be efficient in your decision making by providing a filter through which you can evaluate opportunities or activities you're considering pursuing. Do they match your vision and meet your objectives? Do they further you toward your goals? Your strategic plan removes the guesswork and allows you to proceed with confidence.



The Plan :: Elements + Hierarchy

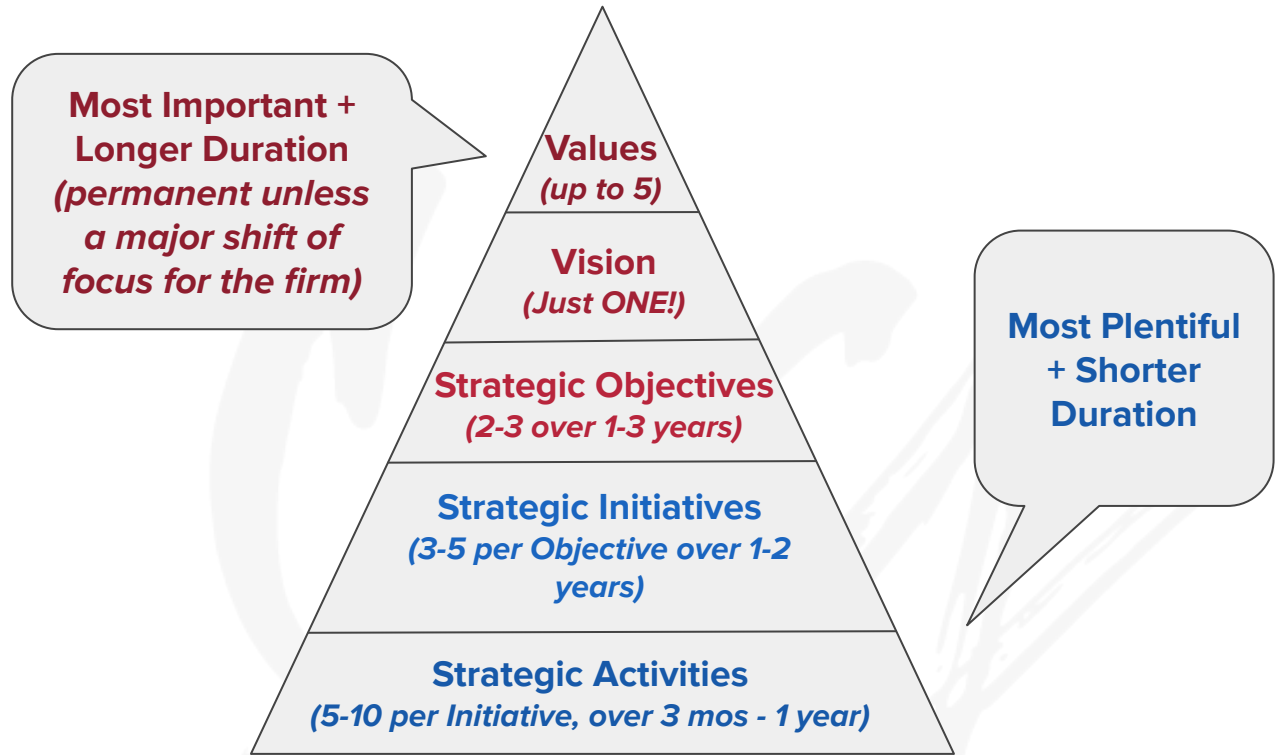


Our version of a Strategic Plan consists of very specific elements that we believe ensure its success. The elements are broken down into **Foundation Elements** and **Tactical Elements**.

At the top is **Values**. These are the Core Values that you've determined are most important to you in your life and in your work. These Values exist as a foundation for everything that you do. They don't tend to change over time, they stay with you, they are who you are. While you may hold many values in high regard, you won't tend to have more than five core values.

Next is your **Vision Statement**. This statement says where you want to be in the future, and the skills that are unique to you that are going to help you get there. Your Vision Statement is your North Star, your destination. It is a statement of fact, it's future focussed and aspirational and stretches you to places that you can almost not imagine reaching just yet. But it stretches into places that you truly believe you are meant to reach. Your vision statement will rarely change unless there's a material change in your circumstances in your career and your life, but even with those changes your vision statement is likely to remain largely unchanged.

The Plan :: Elements + Hierarchy



Next are your ‘Lanes of Focus’ which inform and become your **Strategic Objectives**. These are the areas where you see the greatest opportunity, areas where you know that your attention and focus can have the greatest impact and the areas that you’ve identified need to be focussed on in order to reach your vision of the future. Your Strategic Objectives are literally the steps to get to that desired future state.

Underneath your **Foundation Elements** sit the **Tactical Elements** of your strategic plan. Your **Strategic Initiatives** and **Strategic Activities** are the specific things you’ll do and ways you will do them to fulfil your strategic objectives.

On the following pages we’re going to take a closer look, with examples, at both the **Foundation Elements** and the **Tactical Elements** of a Strategic Plan.

Foundation Element :: Values + Vision

Examples + Language

Let's put a spotlight on the Foundation Elements.

Below is an example of the Values and Vision Statement that one of our clients developed as the foundation for their Strategic Plan.

You'll note that the tone, the essence of the values are expressed even though the specific words are not all utilized. You may or may not use all of your value words in your aspirational vision statement, but they will be strongly represented in it.

When crafting a Vision Statement it's important to remember to be aspirational. Pick a point in the future and imagine yourself there, see what you're doing, have achieved and feel what it is like to be there. Then describe that state.

Values	Vision Statement
Integrity	<i>I will work passionately to effect lasting change and create positive momentum to make the world a better place. With an eye to what is possible, I will make a meaningful contribution wherever I go, inspire others, advocate for what I believe in and leave things better than I found them.</i>
Excellence	
Wisdom	
Passion	
Strength	



Foundation Element :: Strategic Objectives

Examples + Language

Next, your *Lanes of Focus* and *Strategic Objectives*.

Remember, Lanes are buckets or areas with potential and opportunity for impact, and each lane will have a Strategic Objective, the specific goals that connect directly to your vision for the future.

Using our client as an example again, let's take a look at the Lanes and the Objectives that came from them:

Lanes of Focus	Strategic Objectives
Develop and strengthen relationships	I am an engaged and generous business partner, trusted advisor, collaborator and friend
Process Excellence	I have the processes, frameworks and systems in place that support and foster efficiency, collaboration and service excellence.
Expansion + Growth of the Practice	I continuously assesses the needs of the practice with an eye to building the most well-rounded and fulfilling book possible.



Tactical Element :: Initiatives + Activities

Examples + Language

Moving into the **Tactical Elements** of your Strategic Plan, we begin to break down the Strategic Objectives into more manageable pieces that will have clear and measurable actions that can be taken in service of them.

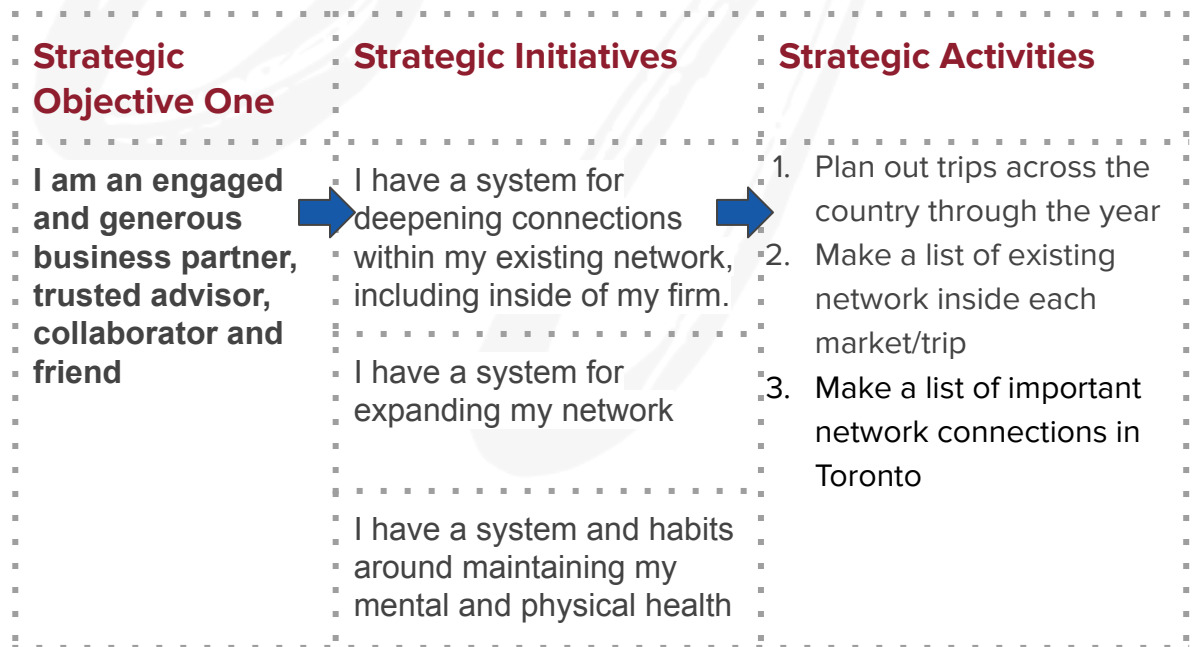
Strategic Initiatives are more specific than the Strategic Objectives they sit under, but are not so specific that they can be checked off a to-do list all at one time. They need to be broken down into smaller, bite-sized pieces - **Strategic Activities** - that you can work on and ‘complete’ in furtherance of the Initiative.

Initiatives may stay on your Strategic Plan for one to three years, and as time goes on, the Activities under them change - as they get completed, new activities are defined that will move you closer to completion or achievement toward the Initiatives.

Strategic Activities are the ‘to dos’, the actions and activities that can be undertaken and measured as you work through the execution of your Strategic Plan. Some of these activities may be repeated at intervals - monthly, quarterly, annually over time - and some of them may be finite, one time actions.

All Activities can be measured using some form of quantitative tool, and are meant to be completed by a specified time.

Let’s look at an example..



Strategic Planning In Practice

When, How, Where to Use It

So once you have a Strategic Plan, when, how and where are you going to use it?

The answer is always, in every way and in every part of your practice.

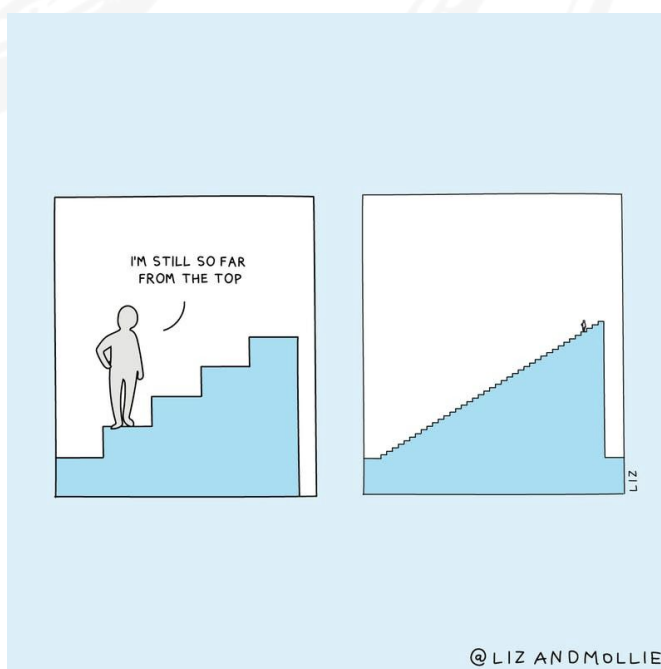
Your **Vision Statement is your destination**, your 'North Star' - your definition of success, inspired by and reflective of your core values.

Next, your **Strategic Objectives are your specific goals**, your way to reach your desired outcome, your vision for the future, more directly and in less time than if you worked toward it without a plan.

Together, you will use these elements as filters to sort every opportunity that comes your way, and every single activity you consider engaging in. Every one. Every time.

Simply put, if the opportunity or activity does not directly connect to your values and vision, or advance you toward one of your strategic objectives, it is not for you, right now.

And finally, your strategic plan in its entirety, and specifically the Tactical Elements of the plan, are your tools of measurement that allow you to track your progress and chart your success on the way to meeting your objectives. It allows you to set your sights on where you've yet to go with the perspective of seeing how far you've come.



Strategic Planning + Your Path to Equity

Getting Started

Your Strategic Plan will inform and touch all parts of your practice, and help you get really specific about what you do, when you do it - and how. Because you'll be doing it all from a plan, and with a set intention - working toward your future vision.

As we end the Program, we invite you to take the learning you've gained throughout and apply it here, to the development of your own Strategic Plan. This will be an ongoing process, not one that can be done in a single sitting nor one that should be rushed. In our stand-alone Strategic Planning Program we work with individuals and firms over months, workshopping each element of their Strategic Plan.

We believe that perspective and accountability are key when working through the elements of a plan, and so we encourage you to work with someone - a colleague, mentor, consultant or advisor - who will give some perspective and keep you accountable as you develop yours.



Strategic Planning In Practice

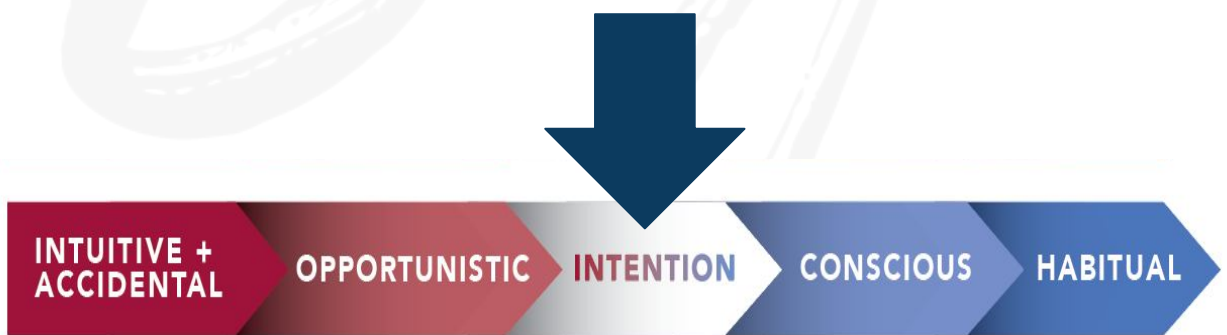
Making Your Plan Work :: Intention

We've talked all the way through this program about applying *intention* so that the things you used to do by accident, or when they presented themselves become done by choice, consciously and, eventually, habitually.

There is nowhere that this intentional behaviour is more important or effective than in strategic planning as a PROCESS, as an ACTIVITY and as a way of being.

Once you have a strategic plan, and the way of being and the process that allowed you to develop it for the first time, you have the process and skills to continue to evolve and adapt it over time. You will check in on it constantly, you'll always know whether you're on track against your Strategic Objectives and you will always have a way of knowing if an activity or opportunity is 'on plan'.

Develop, refine and revise with **INTENTION** until **HABITUATED**



Strategic Planning In Practice

Making Your Plan Work :: Systems

Once you have a Strategic Plan and are ready to put it into action, you need to find a tool that works for you that will help you use it actively and effectively, keeping you on track and allowing you to measure your progress.

Some of our clients use project management tools, others use simple spreadsheets, but whatever method you choose we cannot stress enough that the success of your plan depends on you using **something**.

Two of the tools we recommend actively are: **Asana** and **Google Sheets** (or Excel). We encourage you to play around and find the tool that's best for you. Know that whatever you choose will likely require some time to adapt to and habituate the use of. But stick with it.



Google
Sheets

“You do not rise to the level of your goals. You fall to the level of your systems.”

James Clear - Atomic Habits

Activity

Write Your Personal Vision Statement

To begin, please go back to the Module 5 work you did on your Top Five Values. Bring them forward and note them here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Next, think about your ideal future state, where you want to be in your practice in five or ten years, and beyond. Think of the aspirational words that describe the essence of who you are, what you stand for, what you want most to become. Dream big!

Capture those words here (or on a separate page so that you have the freedom to brainstorm more fluidly):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Now let's add to that list. Think of words that tell who, what, why and how you do what you do today. How do you tell the world why you exist, and what you offer them?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

See the next page to complete this Activity.

Activity

Write Your Personal Vision Statement

Now it's time to put the words together into a draft Vision Statement. Don't edit yourself too much on the first draft. Let the words flow and edit over and over again until it's just right. Here's ours for inspiration:

At Southren Group, we will unleash the potential of everyone we come into contact with to make positive changes in their lives, businesses, communities and the world. By illuminating and amplifying their inherent gifts, and inspiring them to apply those gifts to achieving their aspirations and goals - even the ones they didn't know they had - we will give them the tools they need to succeed in whatever they set out to do.

Now it's your turn! Use the space below to dream the vision into words.

Challenge

Fill in the Elements of Your Strategic Plan

Your complete Strategic Plan is not really a ‘fill-in-the-blanks’ activity, as it takes time and reflection over a longer period to draft, refine, revise and finalize. But before you begin the process in earnest - and we strongly suggest that you do - we thought we’d provide you with some prompts to get you thinking about the Foundational and Tactical elements of your plan.

Refer to your Vision Statement from the Activity on the preceding pages. Using that as your ‘North Star’, begin to fill in some of the other elements of your plan below. How might you break down the path to that future state? Feel free to refer back to the examples and language earlier in the guide to help you.

Element	Draft
Lanes of Focus (3)	1. . 2. . 3. .
Strategic Objectives (one per lane)	1. . 2. . 3. .
Strategic Initiatives (2-3 per Objective)	Strategic Objective One: 1. . 2. . 3. . Strategic Objective Two: 1. . 2. . 3. . Strategic Objective Three: 1. . 2. . 3. .



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