

Where the hell are we??

The benefits of WHS

Strategic Planning.



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Introduction

If you want to go on a road trip to far distant places, you need a map – a real good one. Sure, you could just wing it and follow your nose (or the signs) but if you've got a map, you can PLAN your journey before you leave, so that you get there safely and with a minimum of fuss. And if you get lost, you can refer back to your map, and get back on the right track.

Sound good to you? Sensible? I'm sure it does.

It is no different when it comes to the safety function within an organisation. While it is tempting to let things grow "organically" and react to changes, an unplanned approach can result in dire consequences. Companies that lack a strategic approach to WHS spend a lot of time and effort on 'firefighting'; acting in a reactive mode. This of course results in missing the big picture, and often focuses on 'white noise' rather than critical risks. And it certainly prevents long term planning.

Strategic Planning provides a planned, documented and quantifiable approach for the comprehensive and systematic management of business functions and continuous improvement.



WHS Strategic Planning provides the architecture to embed a consistent methodology of managing hazards and risks. It includes the integration of deliberate practices, processes and linkages, while remaining sufficiently flexible and responsive to meet changing demands and environments

The advantages of adopting the WHS strategic planning process include:

- Increased Leadership Commitment
- Improved Hazard Identification & Risk Mitigation
- Cost Reductions - claims
- Improved Systems & Processes

Most importantly however, it provides the **road map** to a desired future state. Together, these advantages improve the likelihood of achieving your desired goals.

Terminology

Many terms are used throughout industry, often interchangeably, in an attempt to convey meaning and achieve alignment of purpose. In order to eliminate confusion, the following definitions within the planning context are useful:

Term	Definition	Example
Mission	A short statement of the primary purpose or intended undertaking of an organisation, group, or person.	I wish to be the best possible athlete that I am capable of being.
Objective	A desired end-result or condition, or the desired future state of an object or situation. <i>(Expressed as a Noun-verb-object sentence in the present tense).</i>	I will represent Australia in the 100m sprint at the next Olympic Games.
Strategy (s)	A statement of the intended approach for accomplishing an Objective . <i>(Expressed as a Verb-object statement).</i>	Put family and career on hold for the next three years, and train full-time in the best available environment. Develop a diet plan with dietitian Undertake coaching session 6-9am daily
Measure (s)	An indicator that gauges progress towards accomplishment of an Objective . A measure is a quantifiable aspect of the Objective.	1. 100m race times. 2. 100m race results.
Target (s) or Target Outcomes	An expectation – an achievable point on the scale of the measure. Every Objective must have at least one quantifiable measure with target.	1. Achieve race times of less than 10.00 seconds, 3 times in the next 18 months. 2. Be placed 1 st or 2 nd at the Australian Championships
Action (s)	The action items which are required to complete an Activity, Program, or Initiative. (e.g. Work Orders).	Actions to implement 1-4 above.

Benefits of Strategic Planning

This is a list of just some of the benefits that can be gained through implementing a strategic planning process.

- Focus is placed on the important things. Resources (time, talent, money) are properly allocated to those activities that provide the most benefit.
- Analyse the internal culture and evaluate its impact on the company's performance.
- Become aware of the company's potentials in light of its strengths and weaknesses.
- Identify and analyse available opportunities and potential threats.
- Strategic issues can be brought up for top management review.
- Able to set more realistic objectives that are demanding, yet attainable.
- Poor performing areas can be identified and eliminated.
- Develop better communications with those both inside and outside the company.
- Provides a road map to show where the company is going and how to get there.
- Develop better internal coordination of activities.
- Gain a sense of security among employees that comes from better understanding of the changing environment and the company's ability to adapt

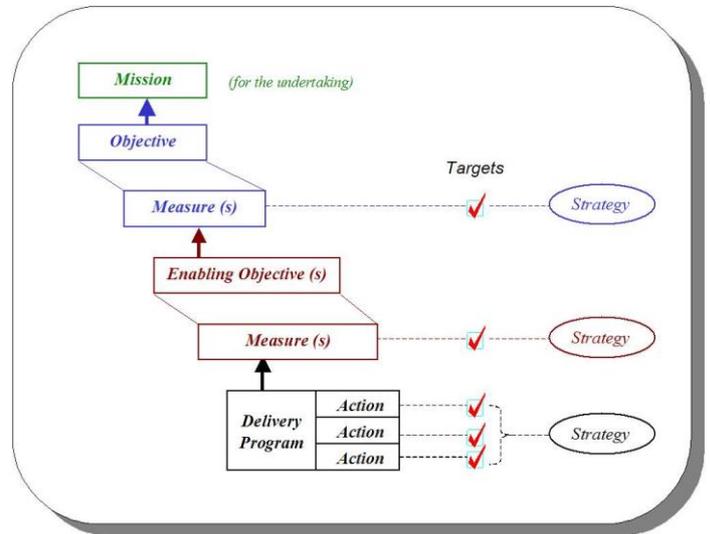


So what is a plan?

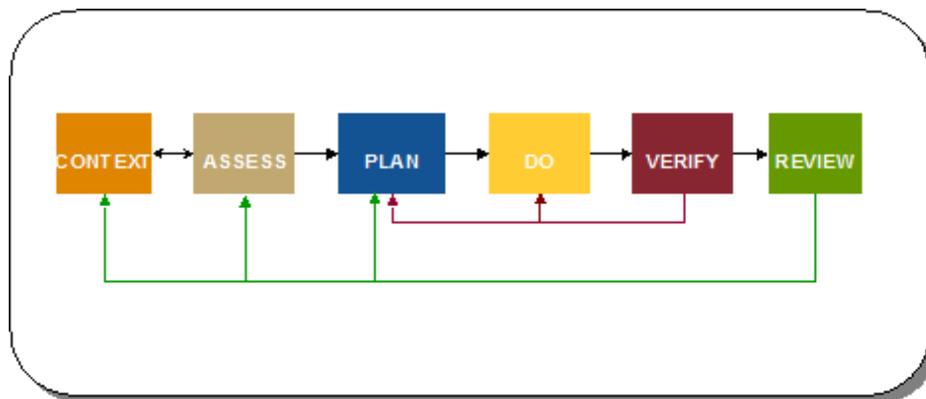
Before addressing WHS planning specifically, let's take a look at what a plan is and how it should be approached.

Alignment between the actions of employees and the objectives of our business is a most critical aspect to success.

A “**plan**” is a mechanism for converting high-level objectives into realistic and achievable actions thereby creating alignment of thought and effort both individually and collectively. These actions may cascade to generate lower-level objectives for more detailed plans.



Planning is a critical step in the delivery of a “quality” result, as illustrated by the graphic below:



Whilst a “plan” delivers a “road-map” for the *Implementation* (Do) phase of a real-world application, the plan itself should anticipate and incorporate all stages of the Quality Process. That is, the plan should be within *Context*, respond specifically to *Assessment*, provide concise direction for *Implementation*, include specifications for *Verification*, and expectations for *Review*.

Derivation of the WHS Plan – the Policy

The WHS Policy is the primary rule in regard to WHS in an organisation. Everything germane to WHS should derive from this primary statement:

The health and safety of our people is of the highest priority and cannot be compromised. **Our objective is a workplace free of incidents and injuries.** To achieve this we must all ensure our own safety and that of our fellow workers through an absolute commitment to safe work practices and a healthy work environment.

To deliver on our commitment, we will:

- **comply with all applicable health and safety laws, regulations and statutory obligations;**
- **proactively identify hazards and control risks through the application of health and safety risk management systems and procedures that are relevant to the nature and scale of work undertaken;**
- **set measurable targets and seek to continually improve our health and safety performance;**
- **seek to achieve the personal commitment of all employees, subcontractors, suppliers and all other stakeholders to healthy and safe workplace practices through appropriate consultation, communication, training and supervision;**
- **maintain and monitor health and safety performance indicators; and**
- **periodically review and revise our Health and Safety Policy and procedures to maintain their relevance.**

The well being of our employees and those working with us is of primary importance. We understand that without exception no activity will be undertaken unless it can be done safely.

It is the responsibility of all individuals to achieve a healthy and safe workplace

Prime Objective

Enabling Objectives

How we deliver the Prime Objective

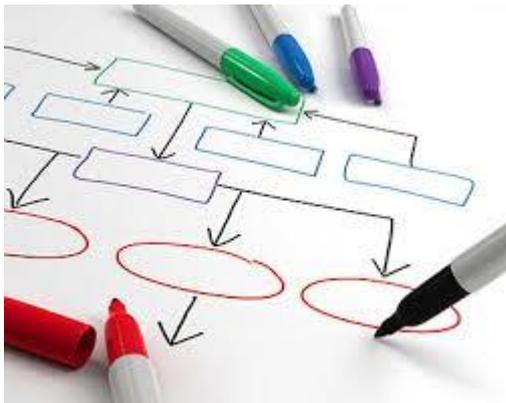
The Policy forms a principal component of the context of the plan, delivering the Prime and Enabling objectives.



Method

Strategic planning has a basic overall framework. Not to oversimplify the strategic planning process, but by placing all the parts of a plan into the following three areas, you can clearly see how the pieces of your plan fit together:

- **Where are we now?** Review your current strategic position and clarify your mission, vision, and values.
- **Where are we going?** Establish your desired future state and your vision. Clearly see the direction the WHS function is headed.
- **How will we get there?** Lay out the road to connect where you are now to where you're going. Set your strategic objectives, goals, and action items and how you'll execute your plan



Major Components of a Strategic Plan

Strategic plans can come in many different shapes and sizes, but they all have similar components. The list below defines one approach to a strategic plan in the order that they're typically developed.

Topic	Description	<u>Deliverables</u>
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ascertain the WHS context in which you work.• Establish stakeholders, their aspirations in the WHS environment, and their requirements of you.• Define your mission, the prime objectives, and the scope of the plan	<i>Mission</i> <i>Prime Objectives</i> <i>Scope</i>

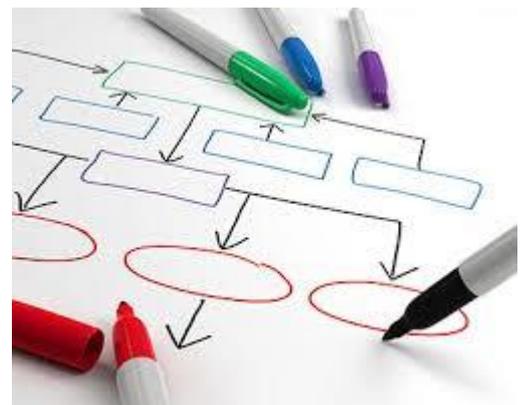
Assess	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine the situation and assess the opportunities and risks. • For each prime objective, assess the range of possible approaches, define the measures and targets, and choose prime strategies that will move measures towards targets. • Choose the “enabling objectives” that you believe are essential for supporting the prime objectives. The enabling objectives will require their own measures with targets. • Use an assessment method such as SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats) to understand the “current state” and consider possible “future states”. • Refine or redefine the enabling objectives as necessary to exploit the opportunities and avoid the risks (or vulnerability to the Threats). 	<p><i>Prime Measures & Targets</i></p> <p><i>Enabling Objectives</i></p> <p><i>SWOT</i></p> <p><i>Vulnerability Analysis</i></p>
Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For each enabling objective, decide on the associated strategies (delivery programs), then break these into their component actions. 	<p><i>Actions aligned to Objectives</i></p>
Do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define who is responsible for each of the strategies and their supporting actions. • Identify the appropriate Systems of Work best suited to the actions. 	<p><i>Account-abilities</i></p> <p><i>Systems of Work</i></p>
Verify & Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the Assess and Plan steps, appropriate measures will be specified, along with the users and/or recipients of the information. • Specify how you will verify that the field actions are aligned with the requirements of the Plan • Also, identify how you will monitor the measures, to verify that results achieved are moving towards the targets defined in the Plan • <u>Validation of the Plan, and early amendment if necessary, is critical to successfully implementing the delivery program, and achieving the objectives.</u> • Allow for an appraisal to determine whether the overall plan is delivering the satisfaction expected within the agreed context. • Also, ascertain that the “Assessment” remains relevant and appropriate to the Context. (both the context and the assessment conditions <i>will</i> change over time). 	<p><i>Governance</i></p> <p><i>Quality of Result</i></p> <p><i>Intention to Succeed</i></p> <p><i>Stakeholder Satisfaction</i></p> <p><i>Relevance</i></p>

Creating the plan – get going!!

It isn't the intention of this paper to provide a detailed method of writing a WHS Strategic Plan, or even provide a template (sorry about that!). However, there are some easy ways to get started.

- Get all the stakeholders on board
- Create your vision
- Assess your current state
- Develop your objectives
- Assemble the plan (with subordinate action plans)
- Make sure you execute it and verify its progress

In developing your strategic plan, Kotter's *Eight Stage Change Process* is a useful model in gaining alignment with stakeholders, and setting up the internal structure to support the Plan.¹ It can provide a practical structure from which one can define their WHS Strategy and vision, develop objectives and strategies and design their strategic safety plan and direction for the future.



¹ For more information on Kotter's *Eight Stage Change Process*, see 'Leading Change'.

Need help?

There are distinct benefits in utilising a 3rd party to assist you in developing your plan. Some of these include:

- Helps get you started
- Coaching/mentoring through the process
- Creates accountability
- Bringing the experience of doing this with other organisations
- The benefit of a broader contextual view



Further Information

If you found this paper to be informative, and you need assistance in your planning activities, we'd be more than happy to help you in your efforts.

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