

"Strategic planning is important throughout all aspects of a company's life cycle. As market conditions change and new technologies emerge, it is important for businesses to plan for these changes and react accordingly, making adjustments and pivots along the way."

- Excerpt from *Completing the Deal*, by Matt Andersen - CEO, Westlake Securities

Key steps in Strategic Planning

- Assess short-, mid-, and long-term goals for creating shareholder value
- Create a "direction objective" statement (where is the company headed?)
- Identify gaps: current state vs. desired future state ("direction objective")
- Define measurable steps to close strategic gaps
- Prioritize actions: alignment with growth goals, viability with resources
- Build execution plans: clear roles, timelines, KPIs, resource allocation

It is important that your execution plans have the follow-through detail

- Clear objectives for deliverables and quality
- Activities and action items needed to create deliverables
- Key targets and performance indicators
- Risk management plan
- Human capital
- Financial capital requirements
- A process for monitoring progress, timetables, and achievements

Board of Director & Management primer questions

- Where is customer "spend" moving over the next 3 to 5 years, and are we prepared for that?
- What does it take to double our business in three years?
- If capital wasn't a concern, what would we do to grow, and why?
- This time next year, we own our biggest competitor(s). How could that change the game?
- Are we a growth, cash flow, buyer, or seller type of company?
- How do we make the business more efficient or yield a higher margin?
- Are internal and external factors aligning to consider a minority or majority sale of the business?
- If not now, when and what are the signals and triggers to look for?
- How will shareholders realize liquidity for their shares? When? In whole or in part?

Strategic planning suggestions

- Two half-day sessions can often be more productive than a full day
- Evaluate the benefits of on-site vs. off-site planning
- If you are stuck in a planning rut, have prepared questions, or have outside parties come in to mix it up and challenge the status quo
- Moderators can be helpful in keeping the meeting on task
- Low or no tech is often preferable to keep participants focused. Clean off the white board and invest in yellow pads.
- Mix in social time to keep the meeting fun and allow for additional creative thought