

Your Action Plan - And How to Execute It

By Terry H. Hill

1

Creating a strategic business plan is a great first step. However, if your business plan gathers dust on a shelf, its value is lost. This is where the action plan comes in. An action plan can help you stay organized, coordinate your activities, and keep your projects on schedule.

The action plan specifically outlines the steps or tasks that are necessary to achieve objectives. It includes a schedule with deadlines for significant actions, resources necessary to achieve objectives, and methods to measure these objectives. Preparing action plans addresses potential problem areas, considers the cross-functional impact of the actions, and ultimately increases productivity. It's the place where the rubber meets the road—the catalyst that transforms your [business plan](#) into actionable results.

Your action plan sets priorities and describes the specifics of implementing your business plan. The key components of your action plan are long-term and short-term objectives. Define your long-term objectives and then set short-term objectives—baby steps—that break the larger goal down into easy-to-achieve chunks. Review these mini-goals every three to six months, and keep checking to see if you're meeting your objectives.

Use your action plan to define how you'll operate your business on a day-to-day basis. Address issues such as how and when you'll manage research and development, hire employees, serve customers, market your offering, publicize your company, and work with partners and vendors.

Your action plan should get down to legal brass tacks as well. Providing detailed information about legal preparation and documents is a must. Describe how you'll obtain trademarks and licenses, rent space or create a home office; order, install, and maintain equipment; purchase and inventory supplies; market your business, and distribute products and services. In other words, your action plan turns your business plan into a game plan that makes it real.

How do you execute your action plan?

You've established your vision, created a business plan, secured funding, and outlined your action plan. Now it's time to act. So, how do you execute your action plan?

Once you've identified your long-and short-term objectives, you're ready to execute using the baby-steps approach that incrementalizes the entire process. Want to execute your action plan in the simplest, most success-prone manner?

Try this:

- **Create an action plan based on your business plan.**

Your Action Plan - And How to Execute It

By Terry H. Hill

2

- **Review the action plan with your team and solicit feedback.**
- **Agree on a strategy and a direction.**
- **Review your long-and short-term objectives.**
- **Break the objectives down into manageable components.**
- **Identify required tasks and prioritize them.**
- **Begin executing against these goals, taking incremental, baby steps.**
- **Break large tasks down into manageable short-term efforts. As each smaller goal is reached, you'll experience a sense of accomplishment and generate momentum and confidence.**

Copyright © 2007 Terry H. Hill

You may reprint this article free of charge in your newsletter, magazine, or on your website, provided that the article is unedited, and that the copyright, author's bio, and contact information below appears with each article. Articles appearing on the web must provide a hyperlink to the author's web site.