

START AT THE END

How Companies Can Grow Bigger and Faster By Reversing Their Business Plans

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DAVE LAVINSKY is the cofounder and president of Growthink, Inc., a consulting and publishing firm. Growthink has helped more than 2,500 clients develop business plans and has consulted with more than 500,000 entrepreneurs and business owners. In addition to Growthink, Dave Lavinsky has started and sold Emerge Juice and Nutrition Systems, Shoutmouth, Z Reporter LLC and Top Paying Keywords. He has published articles in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *Entrepreneur Magazine, Inc.*, *Business Week* and *The Los Angeles Times*. He is a graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles and the University of Virginia.

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MAIN IDEA

The best way to write a business plan is to reverse the normal order and start at the end. Precisely define what your end game is and then work backwards to identify what you need to be doing now in order for that perfect end game to come about. Reverse engineer the future to clarify what you need to be doing in order to get there.



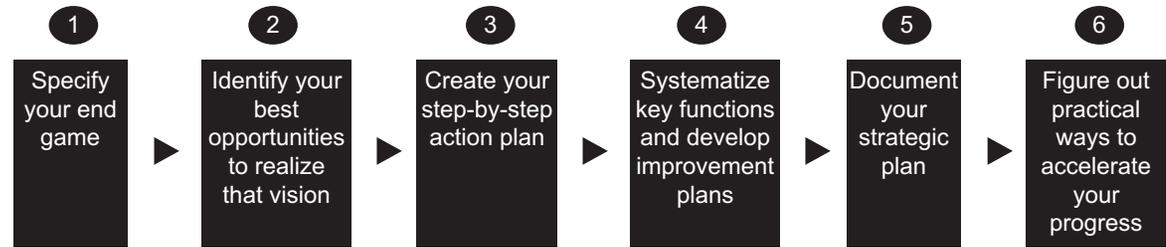
This is the planning approach professional sports organizations use. Players show up for preseason training with everyone knowing their team goal is to win the championship. Everything they do is performed with that singular goal in mind and there's not a player, a member of the coaching team or even a team fan who doesn't know what the organization's ultimate goal is.

This same kind of focus works equally well in business. You might not have a championship to win and your timeframe might be much longer than a single season but you need to have an clear end game articulated that everyone is working towards and then reverse engineer from there.

"The right business plan can transform your business. It can boost your sales and profits, and allow you to achieve the goals you had when you first launched or purchased your business. However, your business plan can only do this if you complete it properly. Most important, you must start with the end. You must dream big about what you'd like your business to achieve. Once you have that crystal-clear vision, you can begin planning and reverse engineering it."

- David Lavinsky

How to write a great strategic business plan



1. Specify your end game Page 2
 Great business plans begin at the end. Develop a vision from your customer's perspective and also from a business perspective. Break that destination down into annual, quarterly and monthly goals.

2. Identify your best opportunities to realize that vision Page 3
 Focus on opportunities which leverage your strengths and build on what you already do well. Don't get sidetracked into solving problems that don't warrant fixing.

3. Create your step-by-step action plan Page 4
 Figure out what are the right business assets you need to build and then set out a timeline for putting those assets in place. Develop a scorecard with your key performance indicators (KPIs) and then religiously track how you're doing in each of those KPIs week-in and week-out. Think about the KPIs you would want to know if you were looking at buying a competing business and get strong in each of those areas.

4. Systematize key functions and develop improvement plans Pages 5 - 6
 Make sure your business works for you and not the other way around. Systematize everything you do and get the right team in place. The easiest and quickest way to achieve this is to upgrade three plans – your marketing plan, your HR plan and your customer lockup plan. Track results in each of these three areas and improve.

5. Document your strategic plan Page 7
 Put your strategic plan down in writing so everyone focuses on the same set of goals. If people don't understand what success looks like, they can't possibly achieve it. Be specific.

6. Figure out practical ways to accelerate your progress Page 8
 Meet monthly to gauge your performance against your plan and to adjust your goals for the next month and the next quarter to reflect changes in the marketplace. Motivate everyone to spend more time on high yield activities and lead by example. Find workable ways to help everyone do more of what works and less of what does not.

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