

Not Drowning, Planning!

Elixir Consulting's Sue-Ann Charlton wants advisers to ask the tough questions – not just of themselves, but of their businesses. In this article, Sue provides a guide to positive, proactive business planning...



Strategic planning is an important part of running a business. It's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day running of your business and overlook doing the very thing that financial advisers do so well for their clients – planning to help them achieve their goals (the old saying of getting too caught up in the business to work on the business).

Although it can be a time consuming exercise, thorough planning for the year ahead can help ensure you stay focused on what you're trying to achieve and don't become distracted along the way.

It was Henry Ford who insightfully observed: "Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off your goal."

As business coaches who work with financial planners around Australia who consistently achieve 30% average growth year-on-year, we are often asked how a firm can successfully undertake strategic planning for their business. Here are some thoughts to help you make 2012 your best year yet.

it is important
to understand
whether what
you experienced
in the last twelve
months occurred
by natural
evolution or
by design

Formulating a great business plan

So what makes a business plan 'effective'? Before a business owner or leader can effectively plan for the year ahead, it is helpful to critically assess the previous year. Take a thorough look at the business and ask yourself the question: "Are you pleased with what your business achieved in the last twelve months?"

Some key areas to review include:

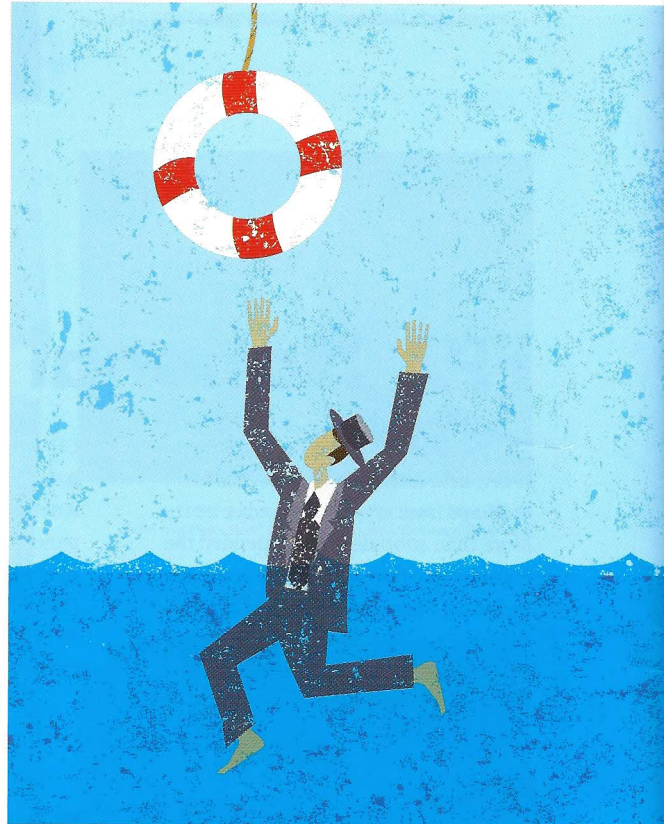
Financials – did the business achieve what you want/need it to from a financial perspective? Is accurate financial data available to closely monitor the financial performance of the business?

Business focus – has time been made regularly (i.e. at least monthly) to lift your head up from what you do every day in order to focus on your business?

Staff – have you got the right people in the right roles? Are they working at capacity? Are they engaged employees?

Implementation – is your back office running effectively with systems and processes to ensure nothing 'slips through the cracks'? Are your processes documented to assist in the transfer of knowledge to other staff members?

Marketing – do you have a marketing plan? Are you able to measure its effectiveness? Is there a steady stream of quality new leads to your business?



New client process – what is the experience like for a new client coming to your business? Are your conversion rates what they should be?

Client review process – are you delivering the ongoing service that your clients are paying for? Is it meaningful and valuable for them? Are they engaged in the process? Are they paying you enough?

Technology – are you getting the most out of your technology spend? Is technology enabling your business or is it a source of frustration?

Quality of advice – are you comfortable that your clients are receiving the highest quality of advice every time? Is there a peer review process in place to help manage any risks in this area?

