Strategic Planning Doesn’t Have to Be Complex — This Simple, 3-Part Framework Delivers Faster Results

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Strategic planning has long been treated as something complex, expensive and exclusive to large corporations. But for smart entrepreneurs, especially those just starting or scaling on limited budgets, strategy must be lean, agile and actionable.

In my book *O Empreendedor Smart*, I dedicate a full section to strategy because I believe it is one of the pillars of building a sustainable and intelligent business. Yet I also argue that traditional models — with months-long planning cycles and expensive consultants — are no longer suited for today’s business landscape.

Modern entrepreneurship demands something more practical: a strategic plan you can start implementing in days, not quarters. Most importantly, it should be aligned with your current stage of growth.

Related: **How To Create A High-Performing Strategic Plan**

Why simplicity beats complexity in strategy

Let’s be honest: When you hear “strategic planning,” many imagine consultants in suits, PowerPoints and endless meetings. But as I often say: “If it takes six months to plan,

it’s already too late.”

Your strategy must reflect the speed and clarity with which you operate. That’s why I teach entrepreneurs to ask direct questions instead of building bloated documents:

- Who do I want to serve?
- What unique problem am I solving?
- What resources do I already have?
- What does a win look like in 90 days?

These simple, high-leverage questions create clarity and momentum — two ingredients that matter more than polish.

This approach echoes what A.G. Lafley and Roger Martin argue in the book *Playing to Win: How Strategy Really Works*. Effective strategy comes down to hard choices about where to play and how to win.

A framework that works: Clarity, focus, action

The foundation of the Smart Method is a three-part strategic process:

1. Clarity: Define where you want to go

Peter Drucker once said, “The best way to predict the future is to create it.” But to create your future, you need to know what it looks like.

Start by choosing a direction. What is your big goal for the next 12 months? It could be doubling your revenue, expanding to a new city or launching a digital product. Be specific. Avoid vague language. If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.

Clarity is not about certainty. It’s about choosing a direction and committing to it. Without that, you’re always reacting to noise instead of building a path forward.

2. Focus: Identify the core levers

Once your goal is clear, choose three key levers that will move the needle.

In our early days at Coworking Smart, I chose:

- Reduce unnecessary costs by 30%
- Improve team productivity through training
- Increase lead flow using digital sales funnels

You don’t need 15 priorities. You need three. Done consistently, they create results.

This is aligned with the 80/20 principle. According to Harvard Business School, 20% of activities typically lead to 80% of results. Strategy is about identifying and doubling down on that 20%.

3. Action: Turn strategy into daily practice

This is where many plans fail. They look great on paper but are never translated into action.

Break each lever into weekly tasks. Track your progress. Build a rhythm of execution. For example:

- Weekly budget review to reduce costs
- Daily team check-ins to reinforce productivity goals
- Launch one new digital campaign per week

The secret? Treat your plan as a living document. Adjust based

on what the data tells you. And stick to it for 90 days. This short-cycle execution mirrors the principles of OKRs (Objectives and Key Results), which have been used by companies like Google and Intel to stay aligned and focused.

Related: Your Business is Failing Because You Have a Bad Strategy. Here Are 5 Hacks for the Perfect Business Strategy

Lessons from a global learning journey

After traveling to different countries to study entrepreneurship, one thing became clear to me: Complexity is often a mask for indecision. The most effective entrepreneurs I met had simple strategies, clear execution and a bias for action.

They weren't waiting for the perfect conditions. They were moving forward, measuring results and refining as they went. That's what inspired me to simplify our own strategic process at Coworking Smart.

Today, we operate six units across Brazil, including a new low-cost model in Rio de Janeiro focused solely on virtual office services. Our growth didn't come from spreadsheets. It came from execution aligned with a simple, validated strategy.

Smart strategy is lean, not light

Let me clarify: Being lean doesn't mean being superficial. It means being effective.

A smart strategy does not skip depth — it just cuts waste. You still analyze your market. You still study your customer. But you do it quickly, using tools like:

You can also validate your assumptions quickly using tools like Typeform or Google Forms to gather feedback before you

commit to large-scale actions.

Related: Setting Measurable Goals Is Critical to Your Strategic Plan (and Your Success). Here's Why.

Strategy is not a document — it's a discipline

Most entrepreneurs don't fail because they lacked vision. They fail because they didn't build systems that support the vision.

Strategic planning should be the steering wheel of your business — not a shelf document, but a tool you consult weekly.

Start small. Ask better questions. Define your 90-day win. Build your plan around what you can execute, not what looks good.

And remember: Strategy isn't about being perfect. It's about making better choices more often.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/growing-a-business/what-entrepreneurs-get-wrong-about-strategic-planning/489070