

Things to consider.

Business planning to drive the right outcomes for your practice.



What do you need to accomplish this year for it to be a success?

Sometimes we hear, “I don’t know.” Other times we are told, “I know what I want to accomplish but don’t know how to get started or make progress.”

If this sounds familiar, you’re not alone. In our experience, few advisors have a documented business strategy with established goals, know how they are progressing toward them, and have a plan for when things get in their way.

Regardless of how you define success, a documented business plan can help you get there.

Getting started.



Developing a strong growth strategy

How you build scale and grow your practice may help inform your overall growth strategy. Consider:

Specialization

Create focus by honing in on an ideal client profile, persona, or technical specialization.

Partnership

Gain capacity with third-party partnerships (or centres of influence) and affiliations. What are the areas of your business you love, and have the time and expertise to do well versus those areas that may be better outsourced?

Integration

Your technology and operations can help you deliver on personalized experiences and scale services that your clients (and ideal future clients) expect.



Complete a business audit

We specialize in helping advisors gain clarity and focus, prioritize efforts, and make an impact. Our business audit exercise is the best place to start to uncover growth opportunities and make positive changes.

We believe there are eight key components of an advisory practice. Start by rating the current state of each component from zero to five, with five being, “I strongly agree with the statement in the Business audit tool” and zero being “I strongly disagree.” Do the same with your ideal future state.

Practice vision and management

“We have clear vision and alignment, a strategic plan, and manage the business’s risk, profitability, and productivity well.”

People and culture

“We have the right people in the right seats based on skills and expertise. Our team is aligned in attitude and effort.”

Technology and operations

“We have defined and adopted processes, and are at our desired level of efficiency.”

Client service and experience

“Our client service model meets or exceeds our clients’ expectations, confirmed through client feedback and strong referral and retention rates.”

Financial planning

“Our financial planning solutions and processes address our clients’ needs and expectations.”

Investments

“Our investment management process is consistent in meeting our firm’s and our clients’ goals and expectations.”

Business development

“We have a strong digital presence (e.g., website and social media), are growing through our marketing and development efforts, and effectively communicating to our clients.”

Adaptability

“We effectively navigate key issues and opportunities to progress toward our ideal future state (e.g., adopt new ways of doing things).”

We recommend asking members of your team to complete this exercise on their own, and then come back to share their results. Once analyzed, you’ll start to see where the greatest gaps are between your current state and desired state. Focus there.

To help you gain clarity on what your success looks like, consider the question, “What does a ‘four’ look like for my practice?” This is the time to get granular and specific—but be realistic. Consider tackling your priorities in phases. Everyone defines success differently, so make sure you do this on your timetable and keep yourself and your team accountable.



Complete your one-page business plan

When we work with advisors, we are listening for three key components that can help inform strategy and tactics:

- 1. Goals.** What do you want to accomplish? What does the ideal future version of your practice look like? Goals can be annual or in monthly increments. If your strategies don't get you closer to your ideal future state, are they worth it?
- 2. Ideal client.** If your goals provide direction on where you are going, your ideal clients will help you get there. Keep their needs top of mind.
- 3. Strengths and opportunities.** Identify what makes you and your team strong. Look for ways to lean into your strengths and capitalize on opportunities. Evaluating your own strengths and opportunities can be difficult. Get input from your team, a trusted peer, or professional partner before moving forward.

When you triangulate what you want to accomplish (your goals) with who you want to accomplish it with (your ideal clients), and how to best accomplish those goals by leveraging your (strengths and opportunities), you gain clarity on the right strategy and tactics.

Complete the goals, ideal client, current state, future state, and the strengths and opportunities sections of the S.C.O.T. analysis on your "One-page business plan."

Now let's document your goals.

Remember, when you focus on too many things, nothing or very little happens. It can be frustrating. We recommend having no more than one to three primary goals per year. Consider what goal(s) make sense from your business audit results. You may be familiar with S.M.A.R.T. goals. Take it a step further and test if your goals meet the S.M.A.R.T. criteria (and how to make them SMARTer if needed).

S.M.A.R.T. goals



Specific

If your goal is specific, it's clear what you are trying to do, what success looks like, why it matters, and who is involved. Ask your team, "To the best of your knowledge, what are our key business goals and priorities?" They should be documented and communicated as clearly and specifically as possible.



Measurable

How do you know how you're doing? How do you know when you are done? What we measure and report on, we pay attention to. Keep your team accountable and focused.



Attainable

One of the best ways we know how to gut check if a goal is attainable is to back into what it requires. Do you buy in or believe it's realistic? What about your team?



Relevant

When our purpose, mission, and goals are aligned and are focused on what we enjoy and believe in, we tend to have the motivation to act.



Time-bound

Do your goals have a deadline(s)? Time-bound means we know what we want to accomplish and by when. The smaller the goal, the more likely we are going to take action and achieve it.

Document your top SMARTer goals

Remember the three essential components that inform strategy—goals, ideal clients, and strengths and opportunities. With that in mind, what strategies and tactics will you need to accomplish your documented goals?

Start with strategy

What are you going to leverage to reach your goal(s)?

Declare an owner

Every strategy and the underlying tactics need an owner. Ownership is an incredibly important driver when it comes to taking action.

Metrics for success

Wherever possible, look for leading indicators. These activities point toward a future state, which can typically be controlled. We recommend staying away from lagging indicators, results that confirm a pattern, as they can be harder to predict.

Milestones

Map out any key dependencies that have to happen in order for you to make progress.



Goals to outcomes tool

Commitment is an absolute to ensure that you take the right actions needed to see the right results. It can also be the hardest part of effective goal setting and goal getting.

Each individual on your team can have their own goals to outcomes worksheet to revisit regularly. The very right-hand column, which captures purpose and mission and annual goals, will be the same for everyone. Quarterly, monthly, weekly, and daily goals will vary based on roles and responsibilities.

- **Start from the right with purpose and mission as a reminder of your “why” to stay focused and committed.**

Then move left. Use your annual goals from your business plan, and then back into your quarterly goals. For example, if you want to grow by \$20 million, you need to ideally bring in \$5 million in new business each quarter.

- **Now plan your activities.** For project-based goals, simply document what activities you’ll commit to each period. For AUM or revenue-based goals, document how many prospect meetings/phone calls/campaigns you will need to achieve your goal. If your ideal client has \$1 million AUM on average, you will need three new clients to achieve a goal of \$3 million. If your close rate is 75%, you’ll need to conduct four prospect meetings. If you don’t know your close rate, try 60% and then track your own rate over time.

- **The next column further refines your focus.** As you work backward, this exercise may give you clarity as to how realistic your goals are (or aren’t). Think about what you need to do each month. There may be milestones/dependencies to support larger goals.
- **What do you need to do this week to support your monthly goals?** Stay focused on the one or two things that will help you maintain your commitment and momentum.
- **Lastly, daily goals are on the far left-hand side.** There is power in knowing the one thing you need to do today to continue making progress toward your goals.

Communication is a key attribute of gaining buy-in and engagement from your team. Monitoring and reviewing your goals and celebrating successes can help create a growth-minded culture.

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