



## maybe you really *don't* need a plan!

“Mary, your business model will never work. Entrepreneurs don’t like to plan anyway, so they sure aren’t going to pay you to help them to do it.”

The colleague who issued that warning twelve years ago meant well. Fortunately, his words did not deter me from focusing my start-up enterprise on helping owners plan for business growth opportunities. What I have found, is the opposite—in fact, most entrepreneurs love to plan. Therein lies the dreaming. They are so fond of planning that they have many plans—and change them frequently. This opportunistic, flexible approach to planning is now being emulated by many larger public corporations as they try to survive today’s rapidly changing environment.

Entrepreneurs don’t mind planning—they just hate to write it down. By documenting your goals, you make a commitment to your self. Taking the next step and sharing that written record of your intentions with others makes it even more real. It’s a combination of scary (“What if we fail to reach the goal?”) and confining (“What if we miss other opportunities while pursuing this plan?”). Plus, we all know that there are surprises out there on the horizon. So why bother anyway?

There are clients that brag they have never had a formal plan or “budget”—won’t even let us use the “B” word in their presence. A few of them have been very successful in spite of this planning allergy. What do they have in common? They share six characteristics:



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**1. Outstanding performance.** The business has an exceptionally high profit margin; so unexpected blips in performance are not a threat.

**2. Large war chest.** These owners have very deep pockets, little or no debt and a stellar credit rating. Cash can be available on a moment’s notice.

**3. Very stable environment.** No significant changes are expected in product/service direction, technology, marketplace competition, operational expansion or staffing.

**4. Tight financial reins.** All commitments to spend money or discount price flow through an owner.

**5. Minimal delegation.** Employees don’t need to know where the enterprise is going when the CEO or owner is personally directing their daily efforts.

**6. Charismatic leadership.** The CEO is a piper, able to hold people accountable and continually improve performance without setting tangible goals or linking their compensation to achievement.

If this does not perfectly describe your business, I hope you are developing a written plan and budget for this year!

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