

TOP 100 TIPS

KEY BUSINESS TOOLS

1. **Carefully select the members of your planning team.** Use two criteria for selection - first make sure you include those who can, and will, contribute positively to the content of your plan. Second, make sure you also include those who are positioned to drive the successful implementation of the strategies within the plan.
2. **Involve employees beyond those on your planning team.** Ask them for help. Have them participate in pre-planning surveys to suggest issues for discussion at your up-coming strategy sessions. Be sure to offer them feedback on the outcome of those sessions. Remember, asking for their input implies a promise to provide feedback. If you forget that feedback, they'll feel cheated.
3. **Gather relevant information prior to your strategy sessions.** Have your planning team think through the issues you're likely to discuss at your up-coming strategy sessions - and decide on the information they'll need to deal with those issues to arrive at decisions. This analysis should cover economic forecasts, industry developments and marketplace trends, as well as a review of the competition. Formulate assumptions about the future and the impact of these assumptions on your business.
4. **Hold your strategy sessions away from your office.** Avoid the interruptions and distractions which so often arise during planning sessions. The meeting will be more effective in a comfortable place, free from interruptions and distractions. It's best to get away from your business premises. Develop an agenda and appoint someone impartial to facilitate the discussion.
5. **Educate your managers to the strategic planning process.** Make sure they all understand the definition, and the importance, of terms - like, "vision", "mission" and "objective", and make sure they all understand the critical role they play in both strategy development and strategy implementation.
6. **Focus on Important Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.** This is one of the techniques Strategic Planners use to help businesses assess their external environments and internal capacity. In order to plan for the future, ask yourself such questions like...

Strengths: What are the advantages of your company and products? What do you do well? What do you have that your competitors don't? What is it about your relationship with your customers that you can use to your advantage?

Weaknesses: Where is there room for improvement? Where does your company trip up? How would the marketplace describe your weaknesses? What does the competition have that you don't?



“

The secret after climbing a great hill is that one finds there are many more to climb. I can rest only for a moment; with freedom comes great responsibility. I dare not linger, for my long walk has not yet ended.

”

- Nelson Mandela



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Opportunities: What's happening out there that you can capitalise on? What new, useful technologies are coming? What changes in buying or usage habits can be exploited?

Threats: What outside events or competitors are waiting to hit you when you're not looking? What potentially harmful regulations are on the horizon?

7. **Define (or Redefine) the Company's Vision and Mission.** A business's vision and mission statement (usually no more than one or two sentences) describes the purpose of the business. It enables all members to share the same view of the company's goals, philosophy and future direction.
8. **Build Consensus.** A management team with a clear and consistent vision of where the company is headed is likely to be operating in tandem to reach their destination regardless of whatever situation is encountered. Getting buy-in from all the team players will go a long way toward ensuring the strategic plan's success.
9. **Communicate your strategy.** Once you've developed your strategic plan, let your employees know what it is. After all, it is they who will help with its implementation.
10. **Remember that strategic planning is more than an event; it's a process.** Once you've developed the plan, your work is just beginning. Implementation is where you'll spend the bulk of your time and resources. Make sure you take that implementation seriously. Integrate your plan into the day-to-day operation of your business. Have your people develop specific actions / goals and timelines to implement your strategy. Monitor progress of those actions at your quarterly staff appraisal meetings. Remember, it's one thing to develop a strategy, and quite another to implement it - *map out an action plan!*



“

A man who does not plan long ahead will find trouble right at his door.

”

- Confucius

11. **Select a group that makes sense for you and your business.** Does the group attract your potential customer? Does it put you in contact with your strategic partners? Does it help you stay current in your field? Could you learn new skills that will help you find business? Meetings that involve potential customers or strategic partners get you in touch with your target market. Meetings that teach you new skills or keep you up to date can get you in touch with mentors and peers.
12. **Become an active member.** Once you decide on a group to join, become an active member so others will get to know you. It may be a Chamber of Commerce, a trade association or a professional networking set-up such as a breakfast network – experiment and see where you feel comfortable. You might try to get a role within the group to put you at the centre of things and give you contact in a different way than if you just attend as a delegate. Meeting someone once is just the beginning. You want to cultivate deeper relationships.
13. **Attend every meeting.** Do you know the old saying, out of sight, out of mind? The same principle applies to a networking group.
14. **Prepare a power-packed 30-second introduction.** Be clear and concise about who you are, what you provide, the benefit of your product or service and the type of clients you are looking for -- all in 30 seconds or less!
15. **Set goals for the event.** Set some goals for the networking event. Who do you want to meet? How many contacts would you like to make? What do you want to learn?
16. **Give to other people.** If you go to networking events just to promote yourself, you've only got half the picture. Great networkers go to events not only to promote themselves, but to also contribute to the people they meet. See how you can bring business to the people you meet.
17. **Listen more and talk less.** Ask people questions and get them talking about themselves and their business. Find out what they are struggling with or what they are celebrating.
18. **Have fun!** Meeting people, being in a giving mode, and being passionate about who you are and what you have to offer is fun! Look forward to going to these meetings/events and have a blast networking.
19. **Form relationships.** Business is done with people we know well. Now that you have the business cards of the people you've met, contact them and let them know what you're doing and find out how they are doing. Keep them updated with any changes in your business and use them as a resource when appropriate.
20. **Be Patient.** When you meet people, you won't establish a relationship immediately. It takes time and patience.



“

People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they can't find them, they make them.

”

- George Bernard Shaw



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21. **What prompted you to come here?** Opens the conversation and encourages a relaxed, friendly discussion.
22. **Why is that important?** Gives clues as to priorities and concerns.
23. **What is going well for you this year?** Focusing on the positive, encourages openness and helps build rapport.
24. **What difference is that making?** Starts to delve deeper and reveal where they want to be.
25. **If there was anything you could change, what would it be?** Reveals issues and challenges faced – and therefore how you can help.
26. **What difference would that make?** Encourages them to tell you how valuable you could be.
27. **If that was happening, what would you be seeing?** Helps clarify and visualise the difference you could make.
28. **If I could help you with that, would you be interested?** Gives confidence that their goals can be achieved with your help.
29. **Who else do you know that I should be talking to?** This is the best time to ask whether they can refer you to someone else.
30. **How do we go about doing that?** Gives them the initiative to manage the introduction.



“

When you innovate,
you've got to be
prepared for
everyone telling you
you're nuts.

”

- Larry Ellison

31. **Spend ten times more time planning** for your negotiation than the average person. Why? Simply because the average negotiator is totally unprepared at worst, or has spent a few minutes at best. The 6 P's Principle applies – Proper Preparation Prevents Particularly Poor Performance.
32. **Know who will be at the meeting** from the other organisation and find out everything you can about them personally. What is their position in their organisation? What is their authority level? How have they negotiated in the past? Who do you know who has dealt with them before? And what can they tell you?
33. **Review your position in the preparation stage.** Understand your BP (Best Position), your LP (Likely Position) and your WAP (Walk Away Position). You also need a FBP – (Fall Back Position). This is the alternative that you have to fall back on, if everything breaks down. Understanding our FBP and how it will affect you, makes your negotiating position clearer. Investing the time in having a strong FBP will help enormously.
34. **Keep silent once you have asked your question.** Remember SILENT is an anagram of LISTEN. You can't listen if you're talking. When you are talking you are giving information and when you are silent you are receiving information.
35. **Observe defensive gestures** such as folding arms, crossing legs or moving away from you. These are gestures that suggest the person probably does not agree with you, doesn't like what you are saying and certainly won't be buying – what you're selling.
36. **Use time to your benefit.** Set time deadlines – 80% of concessions come in the last 20% of the time.
37. **Set aside issues that cannot be instantly resolved** and move on to the ones that can be agreed immediately. Take the difficult issues to one side and 'park them' to come back to them later. This has the effect of agreeing most of the points and helps the other party come towards an agreement on the outstanding points. They will have invested a great deal of time in the 80%+ of the items, which were easy to agree – why jeopardise the deal now
38. **Have a higher authority in your armoury.** Average negotiators believe that it is a weakness to have to refer to a higher authority. Experienced negotiators know that having the ability to refer things upward to your 'committee' etc can be enormously powerful. It also gives you some thinking time. Make sure it is a committee of people and not one individual.



“

Start out with an ideal
and end up with a deal.

”

- Karl Albrecht

39. **Concede reluctantly in small amounts.** Make any concession conditional on receiving concessions from the other side.
40. **Watch out for the 'nibble'.** This is when things have been agreed and the person asks for something else to get agreement. My kids are very good at doing this – they ask for things in small amounts and when they get agreement, start asking for additional things. Flag to the other person you understand what is going on by saying, with a smile on your face, something along the lines of “We’ve worked out a super package for us both, don’t spoil it now.”



“

He who has learned to disagree without being disagreeable has discovered the most valuable secret of a diplomat.

”

- Robert Estabrook

41. **Decide your seating.** Decide what seating you prefer – theatre style, board-room, U-shaped, and then ask for it. If you don't ask, you almost certainly won't get it.
42. **Arrive early and check everything.** That way, you can focus on what matters i.e. delivering your message and interesting your audience. Bring an extension cable and a remote control for advancing your slides. All too often your laptop will not be in the best location that will suit you as a presenter.
43. **If you wear glasses** and will be speaking behind a lectern, don't use the attached lamp as it will create shadows from your glasses onto your face. Best of all avoid using a lectern as it will allow you to connect with your audience.
44. **Never tell an audience you are nervous.** All presenters are nervous to some degree, but the good ones prepare so well that the audience never knows and even the presenter soon forgets.
45. **Avoid putting whole paragraphs** or even full sentences, on your slides. You'll be tempted to turn to the screen and read. Instead, use phrases that prompt you on what to say about each point.
46. **Use the 6x6 rule for visuals.** For visuals that use words – no more than six words per line and no more than six lines per slide. Keep it simple, the best slides are those that have no text at all. The audience comes to hear you speak, rather than read your slides.
47. **Use some spot colour.** This will emphasise points and add interest to your slides. Don't put red and green together though, as 15% of the male population is colour-blind in the red/green combination.
48. **If you dim the lights, speak a little louder.** This helps the audience focus on what you are saying, even when they can't see you clearly.
49. **Avoid using animation in your slides.** A lot of animation can be tedious and distracting for the audience. Some animation is a good thing, but stick to the most subtle and professional, similar to what you might see in a TV news presentation.
50. **Repeat questions that are asked.** In a large room, always repeat questions from the audience before you answer them. Even the clearest answer makes little sense to those who didn't hear the question.



“

Well done is always better than well said.

”

- Benjamin Franklin

51. **Prepare your conclusion first.** Decide what you want your audience to remember. Memories are short and listeners find it difficult to remember more than four or five main points.
52. **Have all the parts.** Make sure your presentation has an opening, a body, and a conclusion. Tell them what you are going to tell them (opening), tell them (body), and tell them what you told them (conclusion).
53. **Select a grabber** for your opening, that will quickly focus attention on your message. Use a story, rhetorical question, or a headline from the morning paper – anything that grabs attention and stays on theme. Quickly tell your audience What's In It For Them (WIIFM) if they will listen to your message. Grabbers and WIIFMs can often be combined with great effect.
54. **Establish an anchor.** An anchor is a repeating theme that can be replaced at various points in your speech to give emphasis, enhance memory, and make your speech hang together.
55. **Appeal to both sides of the brain.** Ensure your message appeals to both types of listeners – right brain (emotional) and left brain (analytical). Back-up your ideas with some mix of both.
56. **Tell stories and anecdotes** throughout, which incorporate the themes of your message. Stories are small dramas that are entertaining, easy to remember, and full of imagery.
57. **Make it fun.** Always plan to get a smile or two and remember that enjoyment does not necessarily require rib-splitting laughter.
58. **Establish eye contact** with all sectors of your audience by looking at target individuals in each sector. Occasionally dwell on one individual for two or three seconds. Greet some of the audience as they arrive. It's easier to speak to a group of friends than to a group of strangers.
59. **Use normal gestures and body language.** Avoid distracting habits such as rocking back and forth, rubbing your face, or leaning on the lectern.
60. **Control your anxiety.** Control up to 70% of your public-speaking anxiety through good preparation. Building a speech on the fly is anxiety producing. Decide to simply have a conversation with the audience. Don't give a speech or be an orator, just have a conversation!



“

There are three things to aim at in public speaking: first, to get into your subject, then to get your subject into yourself, and lastly, to get your subject into the heart of your audience.

”

- Alexander Gregg

61. **Open your letter with the most important point**, and close it with the same point expressed differently. Readers' attention is at its highest at the beginning and end, so make the most of these times to get your message across.
62. **The recipient is more important than the heading.** When addressing letters, place the subject heading of the letter after your salutation.
63. **Use simple words to make your meaning clear.** Why say "expedite" when you mean "speed up"? You don't need to keep all your words to one syllable, but a series of more complicated words one after the other slows down the comprehension of the reader, no matter how intelligent. Keep it simple. Also when writing to someone outside your field, use plain language instead. If you have to use unfamiliar or jargon words, explain them as you go along.
64. **Write in the positive form.** Instead of "We cannot process your order until we receive your cheque," why not say "As soon as we receive your cheque, we will process your order."
65. **Modern punctuation.** Gone are the days when commas (,) were placed after each address line, salutation and closing. As to are the full stops (.) gone from initials and within abbreviations and acronyms. For example: Mr. P.W. Davis, and F.C.M.A.
66. **Read your sentences aloud.** If they sound stilted, try rewriting them until they sound like natural speech.
67. **Use everyday language.** Remove the over-formal, outdated phrases and use language as you would talk. Instead of "Further to your letter dated..." or "I am in receipt of your letter dated..." or "With reference to your letter dated...", how about using "Thank you for your letter dated...". Also cut out the fluff. "In the majority of instances", simply means "usually". Why use five words when one would do the job.
68. **Think of a paragraph as a unit of thought.** Short paragraphs are easier to absorb. When you change the subject, take a new paragraph
69. **Yours sincerely or Yours faithfully.** Remember to close your letters with "Yours sincerely" when your letter is addressed to a named individual and use "Yours faithfully" when your letter is addressed to Dear Sir/ Madam.



“

Develop the winning edge; small differences in your performance can lead to large differences in your results.

”

- Brian Tracy



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70. **The apostrophe (').** There are two uses for apostrophes. Use an apostrophe to show that a word has been shortened, or two words have been made into one. For example, “We’ll meet again, so don’t say that we won’t”. The other use is to show that something belongs to someone, or something else. For example, “Peter’s workload was increasing”, “The customer’s payment was late”. When there is more than one person or thing ‘owning’ something, put the apostrophe after the ‘s’. For example “Should teachers’ pay be increased? Watch out for words connected with ‘owning’ that don’t have apostrophes. These are the ‘pronouns’ such as ‘yours’, ‘his’, ‘hers’, ‘ours’ and ‘its’. Be especially careful with ‘its’. It only takes an apostrophe when it is short for ‘it is’ or ‘it has’. For example “It’s a mistake to let a child have its own way”. Use an apostrophe when a period of time is connected to something else. For example “All staff may take a month’s holiday”. Don’t use apostrophes in words that are straight forward plurals. For example, don’t write “There has not been much of a take up of PRSA’s”.



“

Letters are among the most significant memorial a person can leave behind them.

”

- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

71. Write a meaningful subject line. Recipients scan the subject line in order to decide whether to open, forward, file or delete a message. Your message is not the only one in your recipient's mailbox. When replying or following up on a previous message, change the subject slightly so that the recipient will know it is a new message.
72. Keep the message focused and readable. Often recipients only read part-way through a long message, hit 'reply' as soon as they have something to contribute, and forget to keep reading. This is part of human nature. If your email contains multiple messages, avoid this risk by numbering your points or breaking it down into smaller paragraphs.
73. Write emails as you would a message on paper. Use standard capitalisation and spelling. Don't type in all-caps. Writing in block capitals comes across like shouting. Regardless of your intention, people will react as if you meant to be aggressive. Although emails have become a fast mode of communication they still project an image of your business.
74. When sending bad news, write the message, then take a break before sending it. Is it still appropriate? Often a phone call or even a meeting is a better way to break bad news or express aggravation. All too often, emails have made news-worthy items and have been popularised in cyberspace.
75. Avoid using distribution lists. Don't automatically send all messages to a preset distribution list. Sometimes this is helpful, but too often people's mailboxes fill up with messages that are of no interest or importance to them. From the recipients point of view, this can be especially prevalent when using 'reply to all' instead of just 'reply' to the sender.
76. Remove your email alert. Don't read your email messages every time your computer beeps to say you have new mail. 'Curiosity killed the cat' and we just can't stop ourselves jumping from what we are working on, only to check our new mail. If using Microsoft Outlook, go to Tools, then options, under the 'preferences' section, click on email options, then advanced email options, and un-tick all the boxes in the section headed 'When new items arrive in my Inbox', then click 'ok'. Set aside certain times to read your mail throughout the day, depending on how busy you are, and stick to those times.
77. Don't assume privacy. Unless you are Donald Trump, praise in public and criticise in private. Don't send anything over email that you wouldn't want posted in the canteen, much less in the public domain, with your name attached. Also use BCC (Blind Carbon Copy) instead of CC when sending sensitive information to large groups.
78. Clear your mailbox often. Some items you want to keep can be printed and filed, and much of it can be thrown out. Why not set up separate mail folders in your 'Inbox' just as you would with a filing cabinet.



“

Insanity:
doing the same thing
over and over again
and expecting different
results.

”

- Albert Einstein

79. Proof read your emails. While your spell check feature won't catch every mistake, at the very least it will catch a few typos. It is always worth proof reading before you hit 'send', in order to see if what you are saying, actually makes sense.
80. Your email Signature should include at least the following: your name, who you work for, your contact details, what you do and your web address.



“

Good communication is as stimulating as black coffee, and just as hard to sleep after.

”

- Anne Morrow Lindbergh

81. **Start the meetings on time, every time.** Practice good time keeping habits by starting on time, keeping to time limits for agenda topics and ending on time. This means that sometimes you will need to begin your meetings before all the participants are present. Don't accept comments from those who are late when they arrive. If you get into the habit of waiting for people to arrive, you will encourage regulars to come late, as they know the meeting will not start on time. Ending on time is respectful to all participants of the meeting. People will learn soon enough to be on time.
82. **Keep track of time,** or appoint a timer and make sure s/he does the job effectively. If contributions are to be time-limited, enforce the limit. If one person regularly ignores that limit or has a tendency to meander on discussions, a timer must call time. In some meetings, a bell or tap on the table with a pen, has proven to be effective. Overstepping the time boundaries is seen as taking advantage over those who respect the meeting's structure and can cause the meeting to run late, so affecting other people's schedules.
83. **Define the purpose of your meeting.** Take a step back and think about why you need to have the meeting. A clear definition of purpose will lead you to a clear structure for the
84. **Stay focused.** Send out an agenda before every meeting, no matter how small. This allows attendees to prepare for an effective contribution. Irrelevant topics will always crop up, especially as the number of attendees increases. Stay in control of the meeting and keep everybody focused on what you're trying to do.
85. **Create a 'parking lot' for other issues.** Some issues, while not appropriate to your specific meeting, do need to be dealt with. When these issues come up, take note of them and handle them after the meeting.
86. **Start your meeting with the most important items.** Often, particularly in regular meetings, reports take up the first part of the meeting – even if the reporters have little to say – leaving too little time to discuss the most important matters.
87. **Set the tone.** As the leader of the meeting you set the tone and model the desired behaviour. Are you formal or informal, light hearted or serious? Each of these styles will set a different tone. The leader needs to show each participant, that they are being listened to and respected. A warm genuine approach will facilitate cooperation and collaboration.



“

In any moment of decision the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing.

”

- Theodore Roosevelt



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88. **Don't tolerate side-talking.** For some reason, some people believe that when they speak to their neighbour during a meeting, no one else can hear them. In fact, this behaviour is both rude to whomever is legitimately speaking at the time, and is distracting to other participants in the meeting. It is the job of the person presiding over the meeting - not necessarily the person who is speaking at the time - to stop this. Examples of appropriate comments at such a time include, "One meeting at a time, please." "If this is urgent, can you take it outside, please?" "No side-taking allowed." Another response can be for the speaker to stop speaking and simply look at the offenders while waiting for the side-talking to end before resuming the meeting's official business.
89. **Balance control and flexibility.** Run the meeting, but do it with balance. Your role is to keep the meeting on track, moving towards achieving its purpose and agenda. But be flexible enough to explore a new idea or approach even if at first it does not seem to move towards achieving your objectives. Have fun and encourage people to communicate in an appropriate but playful way. A serious idea does not have to be heavy hearted and morose. Laughter is an energising force. Contrary to old-school beliefs, time is not necessarily wasted by adding levity and humour.
90. **Review and evaluate.** On a regular basis review and seek feedback on how well the meeting is being received and if it is achieving its purpose. If it is not, try a different approach using the techniques above. Alternatively consider bringing in a professional coach / facilitator to intervene.



“

You must do the things
you think you cannot
do.

”

- Eleanor Roosevelt

Search the Internet Effectively

TOP 100 TIPS
KEY BUSINESS TOOLS

91. **Be Specific.** Choose keywords that are as descriptive and specific as possible such as *E240 Mercedes* rather than just *Mercedes*.
92. **Use Quotes.** In order to find the exact term that you are looking for enclose your search keywords in quotation marks such as "*E240 Mercedes*".
93. **Use the Stop button.** When you access a website, what you are actually doing is downloading digital files. You can see how the download is progressing by looking at the status bar located in the lower left-hand corner of your web browser. If you get tired of waiting, click the Stop button to view the files that have already downloaded. Then you can decide if you want to continue. If you do, click the Reload or Refresh button.
94. **Save Keystrokes by using Bookmarks or Favourites.** Web addresses or URLs can be unwieldy. Worse, if you type them wrong, you get an error message. To avoid these problems, save the addresses of sites you want to revisit. [*Click on Favourites > Add to Favourites*].
95. **Use the Find feature of your web browser.** Once you've accessed a web page, use the Find feature under the Edit menu to quickly locate a particular term that you are looking for, rather than scroll through the entire document.
96. **Pick two search engines and learn how they work.** The difficulty of finding specific information is by far the biggest complaint. Although dozens of search engines are available, pick two, and then take the time to learn them well.
97. **Choose your own home page.** Set your default home page when you launch your web browser to be your most used website or search engine. [*Click on Tools > Internet Options > General and then in the Home Page section click on Use Current*].
98. **Open a new window.** While you are downloading one web page, you can access another by opening a second browser window.
99. **Surf during off-peak hours.** Most commuters experience rush hour, when roads bog down with traffic. The same phenomenon happens occasionally on the Internet, although not as often as in the past, usually in the late afternoon and early evening, when people log on to check email, chat and play games. If you want to avoid the slowdown, go online in the morning or late at night, when traffic is lighter.
100. **View sites in text-only mode if you have a slow connection.** Sure, web designers spend a great amount of time creating wonderful graphics, but it can take quite a while to download large graphic files. If you must use a slow connection and you want to speed things up, turn off the images in your web browser. [*Click on Tools > Internet Options > Advanced then scroll down to Multimedia and un-tick the relevant boxes*].



“

Nothing is particularly hard if you divide it into small jobs.

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- Henry Ford

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