



Strategy for Personal Success

Discovering Your Purpose | Rich Horwath

In its simplest form, strategy is a bridge for getting from where you are today to where you want to go.

Whether in business or in your personal life, strategy is how you plan to get from your current position to your desired goals. There's a good chance you have a strategy for your business—whether it's effective or not will determine how long you'll be around. But tell me—do you have a plan for your life?

If you answered “no,” you're not alone. In a study I conducted with Harris Interactive, I found that while 82 percent of business executives have a written strategy for their business, a mere 22 percent have a written strategy for their lives. The research involved more than three hundred Fortune 1000 business executives, consisting of chief executives, presidents, executive directors, general managers, and vice presidents representing more than twenty-five industries across the United States. These dismal numbers showed that the practice of developing a strategic plan for our businesses is not being carried over into our personal lives.

Data has shown that organizations without a sound strategy go bankrupt. In the long run, they fail. Despite the overwhelming evidence that a business needs a strong strategic plan to survive, by far the majority of people working in business haven't applied those same strategy principles for success to their personal lives.

Just as we need strategy for business success, we need to plan for successful lives. Without one, we allow all kinds of forces to push, pull, twist, and turn us into mental and emotional pretzels. Our inability to say "no" pushes us into time-wasting activities; a lack of strategic direction allows us to be pulled down a career path we never wanted; good intentions to volunteer in the community are twisted into negative comments when we're not able to meet the time commitments; and we're emotionally turned around when the relationship we let wither finally ends.

With a solid strategy in place, however, we can harness the everyday forces to lead us where we want to go. I like to think of strategy as a bridge—a way to get from where you are to where you want to be. A bridge provides passage over a gap—something that's missing. For many of us, there are gaps in our lives—things that are missing, things that we'd like to have more of, such as more time with family and friends, more purposeful work, a healthier lifestyle, and greater spirituality. Strategy can help us fill those gaps.

A bridge also spans barriers. Think about the barriers you face, the obstacles and adversity—a difficult coworker, making your financial numbers at work, weakening relationships with your kids, high cholesterol, and so forth. Strategy can help us span and overcome these obstacles.

Without a strategy, we have no clear way to get to where we want to go. Without a strategy, we risk falling into the gaps and being held back by the barriers. Without a strategy, we are powerless to create the life we want. But with a strategy, there are no limits to how far our bridge can take us. We can build a bridge to the greatest days of our lives.

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The Five-Step Plan. My work as a business strategist is to help managers develop the strategies that will, in essence, create the bridge to their greatest business performance. During the past ten years working as a chief strategy officer and founder of the Strategic Thinking Institute, I developed tools and frameworks to help multimillion- and even multibillion-dollar organizations identify their business goals and the strategies for reaching them. I had

never helped people apply these business strategy principles for success in their individual lives—until now.

I've created a five-step plan for creating a bridge to the life you want. This framework takes the foundational principles of business strategy and helps you apply them to your life. The result is a simple plan you can follow to become effective, successful, and happy at work and at home. The five-step plan includes the following elements:

- 1 } **Discover — Selecting Your Bridge's Location.** Just as you can't build a bridge without first determining the starting and finishing points, you can't build a strategy for your life without understanding where you're starting from and where you want to go. The Discover step is the process of uncovering your purpose—what you want and why. Purpose takes the form of a mission, a vision, goals, and objectives.
- 2 } **Differentiate — Imagining Your Bridge's Style.** Bridges come in all shapes and sizes, from small, wooden covered structures to shiny, sweeping waves of metal. Their differences begin in the mind of the designer. The Differentiate step requires you to identify the unique characteristics of your personal bridge. These elements include your individual combination of strengths, weaknesses, background, and abilities that set you apart from the pack. To differentiate means to deviate from the norm in ways that people value.

- 3 } **Decide — Choosing Your Bridge’s Materials.** Before a bridge can be built, the designer must decide which materials to use, based on functional needs, the size of the span to be crossed, and desired aesthetics. All these choices require trade-offs. The Decide step involves the process of allocating your resources—time, talent, and money—to achieve your goals. The act of deciding requires you to make trade-offs, choosing what to do and what not to do.
- 4 } **Design — Building Your Bridge.** It’s one thing to think about a bridge. It’s another to actually build that bridge. While natural bridges like logs over streams exist, the majority of functional bridges are man-made. The Design step asks you to develop an action plan that will help you reach the goals you’ve set, using the appropriate resources. Just as a designer creates a blueprint for a bridge, we can design a StrategyPrint for life.
- 5 } **Drive — Crossing Your Bridge.** Once the bridge has been designed and built, the true test begins. Can you move across this bridge, from one side to the other? A bridge that looks good but crumbles when used is of little value. The Drive step guides your actions and moves you forward on a daily basis according to the strategy you have designed. It includes the ability to execute your plan without becoming distracted and taken off task by “urgent” but unimportant things that eat away at your time.

For the purposes of this manifesto, I am going to focus on the first of these steps.

Discover — Selecting Your Bridge's Location.

The Discover step is where you embark on the journey of uncovering your purpose—what you want out of life, and why. It's an intense undertaking, but one of the most rewarding things you'll ever do.

Over the past 20 years, I've developed a process for finding one's purpose and creating a link

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between that purpose and one's work. In fact, I used the process myself 14 years ago to lead me into the roles I have today: entrepreneur, author, strategist, professor, and speaker. I don't look at it as having a “job.” Rather, I have identified my purpose and continually find new outlets in which to use it. The outlets have been both for-profit and not-for-profit, both short-term and long-term. The common denominator is that these outlets have allowed me to develop, enjoy, and serve my purpose in life.

The following exercises will help you figure out where you are, where you want to be, and why.

Individual Survey. First, determine the starting point of your bridge—where you are today. Develop an individual survey by recording what’s happening in four key areas of your life: mind, body, relationships, and finances. As you work through this exercise, it can be eye-opening to get feedback from coworkers, family members, and friends on how they perceive the key points in each of those areas for you.

Creating Your GOST Framework. Once you have a clear view of what’s happening in your life as a whole, it’s time to figure out the end point of your bridge—where you want to be. Develop an understanding of your goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics (GOST):

- 1 } Identify your top three goals and write them down. This is what you’re trying to achieve in general terms (i.e. lose weight).
- 2 } Just below the goals you recorded, write down your top three objectives. Each objective should directly relate to one goal. These are what you are trying to achieve in specific terms (i.e. lose 15 pounds in 6 months).
- 3 } Now create strategies and tactics to reach the goals and objectives you listed earlier, and write them down. Each strategy and tactic should directly relate to a corresponding goal and objective. Strategies are general, while tactics are specific and tangible (i.e. create weight-reducing behaviors vs. purchase a treadmill and strength bands to exercise 30 minutes a day, five days a week).

Purpose Channeling. After surveying the beginning and end points of your bridge, you can turn your attention to ensuring you're establishing the right bridge in the first place. This is done through determining your purpose. Complete the following seven-stage Purpose Channeling exercise to determine the ideal outlets for your purpose:

- 1 } Ask yourself, What do I want?
- 2 } Ask yourself, How will I know when I get it?
- 3 } Describe the key happenings in the time frames in your life (birth-age 9, ages 10–19, etc.).
- 4 } Recall moments when you were fully engaged and deeply excited.
- 5 } Determine the themes running through your moment of full-engagment and excitement.
- 6 } Identify potential channels—roles, responsibilities, jobs, vocations, and volunteer opportunities for channeling your talents, passions, and dreams.
- 7 } Prepare your channels—research the risks, rewards, and realities of what it takes to reach and live these channels.

Mission Statement. Once you've identified your purpose and the potential channels, you've uncovered where you are going and why. Understanding why is perhaps the most motivating and success-driving reason for realizing your full potential.

In business, why takes the form of a mission statement. A mission is a clear, concise, and enduring statement of the reasons for an organization's existence. A mission statement directly or indirectly answers five questions:

- 1 } What do you do?
- 2 } How do you do it?
- 3 } Whom are you serving?
- 4 } Why are you doing it?
- 5 } What's different?

Use the themes you identified in Stage 5 of the Purpose Channeling exercise to craft your own individual Mission Statement. This will help you stay focused on what's important in your life, and can also serve as a strategic filter to help you make better decisions.

Vision Statement. Building on your current purpose, or Mission Statement, now think about what your purpose will look like five, ten, fifteen, or even twenty-five years from now. If a goal is what you want to achieve, the vision is what you want to be.

Start by writing down what you'd like to be, using the four areas of Mind, Body, Relationships, and Finances as a guide. The Vision Statement can be specific to one of those areas or can represent your overall future purpose. It should align with your strategies and your current purpose, and it should provide you with the motivational boost you need to get excited about the journey. The important thing is to dream big.

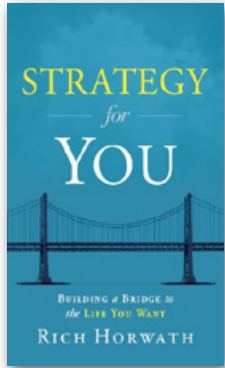
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the vision is what you want to be.”*

Values Statement. Engrained in the current and future purpose are values—the ideals and principles that guide your thoughts and behavior. Because values represent your core beliefs, they are a powerful shaper of an individual's strategies. Values influence the decisions you make, the attitude you carry, how you interact with others, and inevitably, who you are as a person.

Begin by creating a laundry list of the traits or characteristics that you believe best describe you. Ask others around you—people you trust—what they perceive to be the values that best describe you. Once you’ve developed a comprehensive list, begin to whittle it down to approximately five values that you truly believe represent you and who you want to continue to be. This is your Values Statement—it represents your ideals and principles; it guides your actions and decisions; it provides a foundation for your mission and vision; and it is true to you.

Engaging in this Discovery process isn’t easy—it requires enormous amounts of introspection and honesty, and it can’t be done overnight. But I guarantee, it’s one of the most rewarding investments you can make in yourself. Once you’ve determined where you’re going and why, you will be able to take the next steps in creating your personal strategy. **And a sound strategy will give you direction, confidence, and the ability to create the life you’ve always wanted.** 📌

Info



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR | Rich Horwath is a New York Times, Wall Street Journal and USA Today best-selling author on strategy. As the CEO of the Strategic Thinking Institute, he leads executive teams through the strategy process and he has trained more than 50,000 managers around the world to develop their strategic thinking skills. Rich and his work have appeared on CNBC, CNN, CBS, NBC and FOX TV. As a former chief strategy officer and professor of strategy, he brings both real-world experience and practical expertise to help groups build their strategy skills. For additional information, visit strategyskills.com.

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