BICYCLES TO BOARDROOMS

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Gearing up your business for success through effective strategic plans and powerful execution tools.

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“A bicycle ride around the world begins with a single pedal stroke.”

— Scott Stoll, US author and cyclist

WHAT DO BIKES HAVE TO DO WITH BUSINESS?

Everyone has something they love to do. If you don't have a hobby in your life, it's time to think about what you're missing out on. For me, bicycles have always been one of my passions.

When I was seven years old, I desperately wanted a bike. I watched my friends riding, and I wanted to be part of the fun. For my eighth birthday, my mom—who had lost my dad to cancer just two years before—brought home a box from JC Penney. Inside was a brand-new bike, waiting to be assembled. As a single mom, she didn't have the time or the energy to help me build a bike, so she pointed me to my dad's old tools and simply said, **"Just don't use anything that plugs into the wall."**

With just a crescent wrench and a screwdriver, I tore into that box and built my first bike. It was more than just a bike—it was something I had created! I couldn't wait to show my friends.

But just a few days later, I learned my first major life (and business) lesson—**every part has a job to do, and they're all important.**

This lesson was learned the hard way when during a race with my friends, I hit a small bump. Suddenly, my front wheel veered left while my handlebars stayed straight. Before I knew it, I was eating pavement. The culprit? A single bolt on the bike's stem that I hadn't tightened enough. Because that bolt wasn't doing its job, my entire bike—and my face—paid the price. For weeks, I sported scabs and ice packs as a reminder of that painful lesson.

As a leader, you and your strategy play the role of that crucial bolt. Together you are responsible for keeping your organization aligned, moving in the right direction, and ensuring that all the parts—your team, your staff, your board, and your resources—are working together. When things aren't aligned, progress stalls, and the results can be painful.

So, let's talk about how **strategy, execution, and the right tools can help you win the race**—rather than face-planting along the way.

WHAT CAN YOU TEACH ME ABOUT STRATEGY?

"I have been doing strategy for years, what can you teach me?"

You've been leading your organization for years, crafting your own plans along the way. So, what makes me think I can teach you anything about strategy?

After reviewing hundreds of strategic plans, I can tell you that most leave something to be desired. My goal with this book is simple: to help you **refine your approach so that your plans are faster to create, simpler to understand, easier to execute, and ultimately more impactful** for your organization.

Faster to Create
The less time you spend building the plan, the more time you have to execute it. Plain and simple.

Simpler to Understand
Time is wasted when a plan is difficult to recall or interpret. The clearer it is, the more time you can spend acting on it instead of rethinking it.

Easier to Execute
Many plans exist as nothing more than fragmented ideas or bullet points. A truly effective plan is **actionable from the start**, ensuring everyone knows what needs to happen and when.

More Impactful
Your plan should drive real progress, shaping a stronger, better version of your organization. If you aren't clear on what you want to achieve, reaching your goals becomes impossible.

Let's take a deeper dive into each of these strategic goals.

FASTER TO CREATE

I'm always amazed at how long some organizations take to develop their strategic plans. While it's important to consider every challenge, opportunity, and potential impact, **spending too much time planning can be just as harmful as not planning at all**.

I've seen organizations invest six months to a year in crafting the "perfect" plan—only to feel exhausted by the process. By the time the plan is complete, enthusiasm has faded, priorities have shifted, and in some cases, parts of

the plan are already outdated or irrelevant. Worse yet, leaders often find themselves so overwhelmed by the backlog of daily work that execution is delayed even further.

A **strategic plan must be timely to be effective**. With the right preparation and the right people in the room, **a strong, actionable plan can be created in just a few days**—allowing execution to begin immediately. And **if something was overlooked? No problem. Plans should be adaptable.** You can always adjust and refine as needed.

The key is momentum. The sooner you create the plan, the sooner you can start making an impact. The sooner you make an impact the more excitement around the plan.

SIMPLE TO UNDERSTAND

In my work reviewing strategic plans, I've seen everything from beautifully designed, professionally formatted documents to single-page summaries and multi-page reports. No matter how they look, every plan ultimately leads to two fundamental questions:

1. What do we need to accomplish?

2. How are we going to accomplish it?

The best plans answer these questions clearly. They share three essential qualities:

1. They have focus.

2. They have structure.

3. They are actionable.

Focus: Defining Your Destination

A great plan provides direction. It should clearly define what your organization will look like once the plan is fully executed. Without a clear destination, even the most detailed plan can lead to wasted effort.

Structure: Organizing for Clarity

Many plans use terms like strategies, tactics, objectives, goals, and projects, but the terminology itself isn't as important as the way these elements fit together. Here's a simple structure that ensures clarity:

- **Strategic Objectives** – The broad categories that organize your plan (ideally 4-5 key areas).

- **Goals** – The major milestones that help achieve your Vision and Strategic Objectives.

- **Tasks** – The specific actions needed to accomplish each Goal.

- **Sub-Tasks** – The detailed steps required to complete each Task.

This type of structure—regardless of the specific labels you use—ensures that everyone understands what needs to be done and how each action contributes to the bigger picture.

Actionable: Turning Plans into Progress

A well-structured plan naturally becomes actionable. By breaking it down from Strategic Objectives to Goals, Tasks, and Sub-Tasks, you create a clear path that keeps you and your team focused on execution.

However, **a common mistake many organizations make is treating the plan itself as the goal**. Once a plan is completed, there's often a tendency to sit back and assume the work is done. But **building the plan is just the beginning—real success comes from acting on it.**

A simple, clear, and structured plan doesn't just sit on a shelf—it drives meaningful progress.

STRATEGY IS NOTHING WITHOUT EXECUTION

"What's wrong with your bike?"

One day in my 20s, I was out on a ride with a friend. We both rode the same size bike, but he had just purchased a brand-new aluminum road bike—at least two pounds lighter than my older steel-frame model. In what I assume was an

attempt to show off, he offered to let me ride his bike for a few miles.

As we switched bikes and started riding, the first thing out of his mouth was: *"What's wrong with your bike?"*

I knew my bike was in perfect working order, so I asked what he meant. He said that despite being heavier, my bike felt faster and more responsive than his. That bike—a 15-year-old Colnago—was a legend in the cycling world. Many of the top teams in the world had ridden Colnagos for years. They had a huge reputation for building the best bikes for the best athletes.

Colnago, The World's Fastest Art!

Around that time, Colnago ran an ad in a bike magazine calling their brand "The world's fastest art" because of their beauty and their winning success.

But no matter how beautiful that bike was, no ad or reputation alone would make me a better cyclist. **Owning a great bike wasn't enough—I had to actually ride it, train, and put in the work.**

Now, consider your strategic plan. You've built a focused, detailed, and actionable strategy—one that might even make other CEOs jealous. You distribute it to your team, and you see admiration in their eyes as they scan its pages. But much like my Colnago, **a great strategy sitting on a shelf won't get you across the finish line.**

Just as I needed a training plan and the right tools to keep my bike in peak condition, **your organization needs the right execution tools and habits to ensure your strategy turns into results.**

Execution must be top of mind for everyone responsible for bringing the plan to life. If you're training for a race, you need to ride consistently—not just think about riding. Likewise, if you want to execute your strategy, you need to meet regularly, track progress, and adjust as needed.

Remember, **a great strategy is only as good as your ability to execute it.**

THE POWER OF TEAMWORK

If you'll allow me to digress again to my cycling analogy—cycling is one of the most unique team sports in the world. While only one rider from each team can win the race, **success is never a solo effort.**

Every cyclist on a team has a specific role, but they all share the same overarching goal: getting their team captain

across the finish line in first place. The following list gives you some inside into their roles.

- **Sprinters** specialize in short, powerful bursts of speed to help win stages and reduce the team captain's overall race time.

- **Climbers** excel at scaling steep inclines, working to position the team for success in mountainous sections of the race.

- **Domestiques** (French for "servants") are the workhorses, ensuring the team stays organized, setting the pace, and reeling in competitors who threaten the team's lead.

No single rider can win alone. Each team member must understand their role and execute it to the best of their ability. But cycling, like business, is unpredictable. There are moments when team members falter, plans need to change, and quick decisions must be made. What keeps a cycling team moving forward is clear communication and the ability to adapt—shifting responsibilities when necessary to keep the team on track.

Your organization operates the same way. **Each team member has a role to play in executing your strategy.** But when obstacles arise, **the key to maintaining momentum is having a strong system for communication and course correction.**

A great team, just like a great plan, isn't about individual effort—**it's about alignment, communication, and execution.**

Your written plan serves as that system—it keeps everyone aligned, ensures accountability, and allows your team to work together efficiently. While some organizations use Excel, Word, or other tools to track progress, I've found that these often create more work than they solve.

At Cycle of Business, we offer a tool designed to keep your entire plan in one place, ensuring that everyone knows what they need to do, when they need to do it, and who needs support. It also provides a simple way to flag potential risks and open communication lines so that the team can quickly adjust and keep pushing toward the finish line.

STANDING ON THE PODIUM

Every aspiring cyclist dreams of standing on the podium, basking in the glory of a race well won. But in reality, **the true victory lies in simply crossing the finish line**—in knowing you put in the work, executed the plan, and gave it everything you had.

I challenge you to take a hard look at

your strategic plan. Does it have what it takes to carry your organization across the finish line? Will it drive you toward the future your team envisions and deserves?

Winning isn't about the fanfare—it's about execution, persistence, and progress. Make sure your plan is built to help you win!

I hope this book has give you new thoughts about your strategy, how you create it, and how you execute it. I would love to hear your thoughts on your own plan and how you plan on succeeding in your business.

If you would like see how your communication and execution could improve through the use of our strategy management tool feel free to reach out.

You can reach me at: david@cycleofbusiness.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Sandberg has degrees in both in Psychology and Business. Over the years, he has worked in roles that allowed him to stay connected to the things he loves most; **Building Things, Fixing Things, and Making Things Better**—whether for individuals, businesses, or communities. David has combined his skills and passions to help organizations succeed, **focusing on strategy, execution, and meaningful impact.**

Above all, David is devoted to his wife, family, and faith—striving each day to serve and uplift. He considers himself deeply blessed, crediting the many mentors and role models who have guided him along the way.

"Life is like riding a
bicycle. To keep
your balance, you
must keep moving”
-Albert Einstein-