

# Keys to Creating a Strategic Plan That Positions You for Success

Are you ready to plan? Before you jump in, Michel Hudson, owner and founder of 501(c)onsulting (Round Rock, TX), suggests four strategies to set yourself up for a winning plan:

1. **Don't begin without buy-in.** "Make sure you have everyone's support before you even begin the planning process," Hudson recommends. "You don't want to invest in a great deal of planning that will ultimately be rejected." Involve those who will need to be a part of drafting your plan and those who will help accomplish your goals. Designate a "plan champion" up front who will keep the group on track and motivated and will oversee the reporting process as you move forward with your plans.
2. **Use feedback to get a baseline.** Surveys and focus groups can help you understand where your organization stands. Use these tools to discover how your organization is perceived by internal and external audiences, how it has achieved past goals (or failed in its efforts) and how it communicates its message.
3. **Don't try to microwave it.** "A strong plan can't be completed in one day or even one weekend," notes Hudson. "Build an action plan that is both manageable and achievable. Break it into logical sections like fundraising, programs, and marketing, and allow enough time to really figure out the best ways to accomplish your goals for each one."
4. **Designate the who, what and how.** Specify roles and responsibilities for each part of the plan — who will be responsible for each task and who has ultimate accountability for each goal or strategy. "Make sure they have the resources they need," adds Hudson, "and that they participate in setting the success measures and timelines." ♦

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