

Strategy models and frameworks

The Separation Model of Strategy

Strategy |  Strategic planning

A compelling vision
of the future

Development of a transformational
change programme

All about destination
and path

All about people, priorities, resources
and deadlines

*Strategy remains
the same*

*Strategic plans can
change*

The **Separation Model of Strategy** is a model proposing that strategy and strategic planning need to be forced apart so that they can serve their different purposes within your organisation.

The Separation Model of Strategy features in Goal Atlas Director, Mike Baxter's book '[The Strategy Manual: A step-by-step guide to the transformational change of anything](#)' and is also covered in our [Strategy Workshops](#).

The Separation Model of Strategy

How to use it:

The Separation Model of Strategy can be used to demonstrate the different roles that strategy and strategic planning play, and the purposes they serve. This provocation can be used to prompt deeper conversation on the roles of strategy and strategic planning within your organisation.

Explanation:

The essence of the Separation Model of Strategy is that strategy and strategic planning need to be forced apart so they can serve their different purposes within the organisation. Whilst strategy provides a compelling vision of the future, strategic planning devises the transformational change programme to get there. Whilst strategy is all about destination and path, strategic planning is all about people, priorities, resources and deadlines. Perhaps most critically for the practicalities of managing strategy, strategy doesn't change, but strategic plans can, and usually do, change.

A key feature of strategy is its endurance. Strategy is a big investment involving lots of people that acts as a constant, long-term navigational beacon to align action and guide decisions across the organisation. Strategies, however, need to adapt in response to changing circumstances. This reveals a conundrum: how can strategy be a constant, long-term navigational beacon yet still adapt in response to changing circumstances? The Separation Model of Strategy provides the answer. Strategy defines the destination that your organisation has committed to reach and this remains constant and unchanged over the lifetime of the strategy. The strategic plan defines who is going to do what by when to make progress towards the strategic destination. This needs to adapt to changing circumstances.

Henry Mintzberg, Professor of Management at McGill University, distinguished between:

- a. *Strategic ways of thinking*, which are intuitive, creative and designed to produce synthesis; an integrated perspective on the organisation, a vision of the future you seek to bring about;
- b. *Planning ways of thinking*, which are analytic and designed to break a goal down into steps, formalise them for implementation and anticipate their outcomes so progress can be measured.

He concluded that:

"Strategic planning isn't strategic thinking. One is analysis, and the other is synthesis."

Mintzberg's argument was that planners should not create strategies. Instead, they should supply data, facilitate strategic thinking by strategists and, once the strategy is decided, planners need to program and monitor the activities needed to achieve strategic success. His intention was not primarily to constrain the work of planners but rather to leave a clear space for strategists to be strategic: to be creative in synthesising a coherent, integrated vision of their organisation's future. Strategy, he claimed, was not primarily a matter of calculation and deduction but rather a matter of imagination and commitment.

The Separation Model of Strategy: Downloadable Image Asset

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