

Most people prefer root canal over writing a mission statement.

Every CEO we interviewed said the same things about traditional “strategic” planning:

- Confusing terminology
- Waste of time
- Analysis paralysis
- Complexity
- Hard to communicate

Focus, efficiency and financing

But they knew planning is a key to success:

- Getting managers headed in one direction
- Using money and time efficiently
- Motivating managers with a clear career path
- Being able to say yes or no to new ideas
- Allowing directors or family council to focus
- Securing and keeping financing

The #1 point all the CEO’s made was about the facilitator: “We don’t want them to tell us what to do; we just want them to ask us good questions.”

Question-Based Planning (QBP) asks good questions in plain English in a systematic way. It’s completed in five 2-hour meetings over five weeks and ends in a 1-page plan. It includes monthly progress reviews and updates.

What it’s not

A Question-Based Plan isn’t the long document a start-up takes to the bank. It isn’t a facilitation technique for a board retreat. Nor is it specialized to one industry or size of business.

Elegantly effective solution

QBP transforms planning from a frustrating, contentious exercise into a productive, positive and economical act of leadership.

It’s based in common sense:

- Asking questions is the best way to get a group onto the same page
- People are busy: every meeting has to be interesting and show progress is being made
- Unless the plan fits on one page, no one’s going to remember it
- Unless there’s review and accountability, the plan gets forgotten

Provides focus fast

QBP provides effective focus fast: the overall time commitment is 12 to 15 hours:

1. Outline all the big questions using the www.vanmell.com tool (diagram)
2. Ask each department about their accomplishments, challenges and tasks
3. Ask the keystone questions about competitiveness, the future, and purpose
4. Brainstorm a long list of goals and tasks
5. Distill the year’s goals and tasks onto 1 page
 - Systematically review progress every month

There is a better way

Traditional strategic planning works for less than 10% of businesses. Question-Based Planning gets people doing what they love: working together on something they find meaningful and rewarding.

Business Structure	Marketing & Sales	Operations
Purpose & position Business plans Family business Mergers & acquisitions Facilities Industry specialists	Brand & marketing plan Market research Communications & PR Internet/websites Customer relations Sales management	Work process Job design Quality Innovation Purchasing & inventory Supply chain & logistics
I.T.	Human Resources	Finance
IT planning Software Intranet Hardware & systems Security Telephones & other devices	Leadership Compensation Diversity & compliance Organization & culture Retention & recruitment Training & development	Analysis & financial planning Financing & fundraising Reporting & tax planning Wealth management Risk management Succession & exit planning

It’s time to try something that works.