

# GREAT LEADERS HAVE GREAT GAME PLANS

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October is a great time of year, and not just because of Manufacturing Day or because football is in full swing. After all, in our industry, every day is manufacturing day, right? No, October is great for a lot of reasons – from the crisp fall air and changing of the color of the leaves (especially our Colorado aspens) to local Oktoberfests, Halloween hijinks, and, of course, the World Series.

Metaphorically speaking, business leaders at most manufacturing companies this time of year are rounding third and heading for home in the hope of bringing home an operational, financial, and cultural victory once again.

There are many parallels between leading a manufacturing company and coaching a sports team. Even the language and terminology are interchangeable: leadership, owners, coaches, teammates, facilities, training, performance, playbook, blocking, and tackling – the list goes on and on.

No matter what stage your company is in, what you produce, or which players you have on your team, savvy leaders know the great game of business starts and ends with one vitally important strategy: a great game plan. When it comes to running a winning shop, you need a great business plan.

If your goal as a leader is not just to win the numbers game this year, but rather to build a culture of winning (a manufacturing dynasty, if you will), the value of strategy can't be overstated. A solid business plan is not only the best mechanism to formulate that strategy, but also to guide its tactical implementation and measure its effectiveness.

Here are our top five reasons why we believe a well-constructed business plan is essential to both short-term profitability and long-term success:

## 1. GOAL SETTING

If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there – and fast. One of the most important benefits of a business plan is identifying where you want to go, what you want to accomplish, and how you're going to get there. Additionally, organizational goals help set the vision for the company so that the entire team understands the drivers to success, which leads into number two.

## 2. TEAM ALIGNMENT

We've all seen teams that are loaded with talented superstars struggle to win championships. (As Nuggets fans, we're looking at you, Lakers). Even well-intentioned motives and outstanding individual contributions can work in opposition to the greater goal when the players either don't understand the plan, fail to operate as a team, or choose to focus solely on their individual performance. Recruitment, training, coaching, skill positions, team management, and operational dynamics all depend on a solid plan in order to achieve success.

## 3. IMPLEMENTATION

Your business plan is comprised of five key components: Marketing, Sales, Finance, Operations, and Management. These fundamental planks contain both strategies and tactics associated with achieving the goals for the entire platform—in other words, everything your team needs to know in order to focus their time, energy, and talents to bring home whatever trophy your business hopes to win.

## 4. ACCOUNTABILITY

Even the best strategies are prone to failure if they lack accountability. A solid business plan spells out the who, what, where, when, why, and how associated with each strategic initiative and gives every buck a clear place to stop when it comes to results. Defining and communicating expectations is not only fair to the business, it's also essential for individuals to feel a sense of ownership and know whether or not they are performing at the level required for the entire team to succeed.

## 5. EVALUATE YOUR SUCCESS

Whether it's short-term victories like winning new customers and servicing key accounts or long-term goals like dominating your market or leading your industry segment, keeping score is an essential part of this game we call business. Scorecards are valuable tools to help you review performance in light of your goals, pressure test and/or adjust your strategy, optimize your roster, and set realistic objectives for growth going forward.

There are many other compelling reasons to have a solid business plan in place, but in our view these five rise to the top. Of course, your priorities are subject to change depending on your goals, where you are in your business leadership journey, and what issues your business is facing at any given time. Start-up funding is practically impossible without a solid business plan, while more established companies lean heavily on their plans in the areas of forecasting, thriving in a competitive environment, and talent recruitment and retention. Suffice it to say, the list is as long and as unique as your business.

Investing in the leaders of our industry is EBITDA Growth Systems is hosting our second annual "Double Your Value" Business Planning Summit on November 9 and 10 in our hometown, Golden, CO. This summit draws business owners in the advanced manufacturing space from across the country for a powerful two-day business planning workshop. NTMA members who attended last year gave our Business Planning Summit rave reviews. Featuring timely insights from leading industry experts and powerful, practical tools that significantly increase profit and double company value, participants learn the vital skills they need to develop, construct, and emerge from the workshop with a sound business plan to lead their company to victory – not just on Manufacturing Day, but on every manufacturing day of the year.



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