

## Strategy, a Story of Horse and Cart

“What a great idea! Let’s roll it out now!”

If that’s how your organization approaches each idea that comes along, let me suggest an important criterion against which to measure tactics: does the tactic satisfy your strategic objectives?

Ideas live through strategy. But you see it in business, you see it in non-profits and community organizations, you even see it in government – no strategic plan. How can you measure the effectiveness of your tactical ideas if you are not sure what the objective is?

At Make Hay we are often asked by clients to develop a new web site, a newsletter or a PR campaign. It always works best when the organization has a clear idea – not of what *we* should do – but of who they are and what they want to accomplish. *Our* job is creatively meeting those goals – mobilizing your Strat Plan into a successful process – not just a 20 pound binder. Advertising, PR, social media, sponsorships – any marketing or communications activity – must support the strategic goals of the organization – otherwise the tactic is just so much noise.

Tactics are necessary to roll out programs and engage your stakeholders – and great ideas should never be unwelcome. But do they fit with your organization’s strategic goals? How does each tactic actually help to accomplish your objectives?

Typically a Strategic Plan covers a fixed number of years, often from two to five, and more often, we see organizations moving to a “Plan on a Page” approach. There are scads of “how tos” and lots of examples of the content and process for Strat Planning on the internet.

But why does every good tactic need strategic support? Strategy and tactics form a mutual admiration society, because, if a good fit, the strategy is ultimately supported by the tactic, too. Even if you think you have a barn-burner of a “tactical idea” – it needs to be measured against your objectives. If the idea is indeed valid, then evaluating it through the lens of your strategic objectives will only make the idea more effective – because it validate ideas that are a good fit.

For small organizations or one-off projects, such as a new web site, street festival, or logo design, the same process of determining who you are, what you’re doing and why will give you a solid base for determining future activities and tactics that have a better chance of success as they are grounded in meeting the strategic objectives of your organization.

When an organization is lacking a strategic plan its members are lacking a clear sense of what is it they are supposed to be “doing.” They take minutes, they hear reports and briefs, they discuss and debate. But how can they evaluate A from B if they don’t know what their [SMART objectives](#) are?

Grey County, according to its web site, is undertaking a Corporate Strategic Plan right now and will be conducting a research phase: “Specifically, the Plan will identify what the County does, why it does it, and what it is striving to achieve.”

The county is seeking public input in a few ways: through random household surveys, community visioning sessions and a series of topic-based meetings. Public presentations will be scheduled to present the draft and get public feedback.

Plan on!