



# Take the helicopter view

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Every business, whether it is large or small, needs a long-term strategy. Failing to plan is planning to fail.

This article explains why you need to take the big picture 'helicopter' view of your bakery and why it's important to work on your business, rather than always just being in it.

Whether we are grappling with the big problems of the world, from achieving peace in the Middle East to reducing our carbon emissions, or attempting to solve minor personal issues, we are always advised to develop a plan or a roadmap to show the way.

US presidents talk of a roadmap to peace in the Middle East, while politicians constantly talk of long-term plans to make the planet a happy place for future generations. They are all talking about a complex set of issues that cannot be solved overnight, however, based on the concept that the longest journey starts with the first step, a business such as a bakery needs strategy and direction based on what the owners would like to achieve in the future.

I recall a World War I documentary that illustrated the benefit of obtaining a clear picture of what is happening in your environment. In the documentary an Allied General frustrated by his hazy view from the trenches (trench view) and not being able to understand what was actually happening on the whole battlefield, went up in a biplane to survey the frontline. The German and allied trenches were laid out for him below and he was able to form a holistic (helicopter view) of the battlefield and devise a strategy to break the stalemate and attack at the enemy's weakest points, which changed the outcome of that battle.

As was the case with the WWI general, all bakery owners and managers need to have as clear an overview as possible of what is happening in their competitive environment. Every business/bakery needs a long-term objective. Running a business is like driving a car on a long journey; you need to read the road ahead and respond to the prevailing conditions and read the gauges on the dashboard. The driver also needs a rear vision mirror to see what has happened in the past and look through the windscreen to see what lies ahead – the here and now with a hint of the future.

Every business needs a strategy – a long-term



direction. It's great to travel along with your team reading the gauges and responding to the current environment, but everyone needs direction and an ultimate destination, so you're not just driving around without a particular long-term destination in mind. In the past we relied on roadmaps to find our way. Modern technology makes it easier with satnavs which helps drive the driver (owner) along the path to the ultimate destination.

Every bakery should have a strategic business plan to provide direction and include a two-,three-,five-year plan with details of the destination and how to get there, i.e. where or what the bakery wants to be, the map of where you are headed, and a timeframe stating when you will arrive at the ultimate destination, having achieved all the goals and ambitions.

In previous articles I outlined the eight-steps to program your bakery's satnav along with how to read the gauges and get the best out of your team. It is powerful stuff and it

really works. Set goals, measure them and reinforce accountability with your team. Develop your KPIs and share the scoreboard and results with your key co-drivers.

It all starts by occasionally taking the helicopter view. Work on your business, take a look at where your business has come from where it is now, how you are travelling, what your competitors are doing and look ahead to the horizon to see where you would like to go. Work out your critical numbers to determine your success, identify the blockages and roadblocks that stand in your way and figure out how to remove or unblock them.

If you stay in the trenches working in the business head down dealing with all the day to day issues you will be like the car driver without a plan and spend your time driving around town all the time stuck in traffic and never actually getting anywhere.

Don't follow Spike Milligan's quote, "We can't fail as we don't have a plan." ■