

Mission vs. Goals vs. Objectives vs. Strategy vs. Execution vs. Tactics

There is always a lot of discussion and confusion about the terminology used to set direction and appropriately deploy resources for a business. This is most specifically true around the differences in definition of mission, goals, objectives, strategy, execution and tactics.

Some of these terms are interchangeable and some definitely are not. Some reflect the difference between “WHAT” and “HOW”. And some are similar, but are somewhat different because of scope or scale. Let’s explore the following terms together and then discuss how you will use them to develop your Business Plan.

MISSION

A mission is a very big, long-term, end-result or achievement. There may be objectives, goals, strategies, executions and tactics all used to achieve the mission, but the mission is the biggest and most important thing to be accomplished. It ultimately drives your “Purpose” which hopefully leads to achieving your goals.

Mission statements are usually the non-financial achievement that a CEO either develops for his company or is hired to achieve. The mission is a *what* versus a *how*, and is very similar to a vision statement in that it has a future orientation.

OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

For the most part objectives and goals are interchangeable. They are the ends or outcomes toward which effort and action are directed or coordinated. Although it is the aim or an end, it is not necessarily the final achievement. That’s the mission.

Objectives and goals are also *whats*, not *hows*, but they are *smaller* in scope or size than the mission. There can be a number of objectives and goals to be achieved in order to accomplish a mission, but there is usually only *one* mission for an organization.

STRATEGY

Strategy is *how* to achieve an objective, goal (or even a mission). It is a thoughtfully constructed plan or method or action that will be deployed to achieve a desired result.

We often talk about people who are good strategists. These are people who excel at devising schemes and plans and courses of action to achieve the organizations desired result(s).

As you advance in the ranks of an organization or business you move from being more of a “doer” (execution, tactics) to being more of a “thinker” (developing strategies to achieve objectives and solve problems).

EXECUTION

Executions are what is done to deliver on or coordinate a strategy. They are definitely a *what*, not a *how*.

In our vernacular, they are the print ads, TV commercials and direct mail pieces, web sites, etc. that are developed from the creative brief/strategy statement.

Although execution is more about doing than thinking, it is still critical, as poor execution will prevent us from delivering on the strategy that will achieve our objective.

TACTICS

Tactics are devices or actions taken to achieve a larger purpose. They are also a *what*, not a *how*, but they are on a smaller scale and more specific than an execution.

When we say that someone is a good tactician, we mean she/he is good at making the smaller moves, gestures and acts that help achieve a strategy. Many people often confuse tactics with strategy and also confuse tactics with execution, but there are differences, even if they are subtle.

Here's an example to demonstrate the use of these terms

XYZ Company – Specializing in Information Technology Sales and Service

Mission - To make the XYZ company the largest Information Technology (IT) Services company in Central CA

Objectives/Goals – Achieve a leadership share of our market in the IT/Computer Services segment within 24 months.

- Be known as the very best yet affordable solution to IT/computer related needs.

Strategy - Convince our target market that XYZ company is the best by associating with high-end people and entities.

Execution - TV and Print ads using well-known professionals and local business owners as endorsers.

Tactics – Promote a maximum of 4- hour response times for critical computer emergencies.

- Gain affiliation with at least 2 major computer hardware/software manufacturers as a dealer/authorized servicer.