# STRATEGIC DOING™ vs STRATEGIC PLANNING

*Dr. Joseph N. Fratesi and Jeremy Murdock, Stennis Institute*

## OVERVIEW

Organizations, businesses, and communities are facing complex challenges and the environment in which they attempt to address these challenges is changing rapidly. Developing and implementing strategy in today's world is fundamentally different. The world is moving faster and is more connected than ever, and some of the old models for developing and executing strategy (i.e. strategic planning) are quickly becoming antiquated. Communities, organizations, and regions need to consider a new approach that allows for a faster return on investment, more collaboration across disciplines, and built-in flexibility. In other words, a more agile approach to strategy development.

Many of the challenges that organizations, communities, and regions face are rooted in a complex set of issues that no single person, entity, or organization is in charge of addressing. In order to be successful, communities and organizations must be able to collaborate with other groups rather than standing on their own.

While traditional strategic planning allows for leaders to think critically, especially about the future, these planning efforts do not account for the collaboration necessary to address complex challenges or the rapidly changing environment of today's world. In addition, traditional strategic planning efforts often spend too much time focusing on problems, crafting vague vision and mission statements, and result in plans that are often not connected to action steps. Since the focus is placed on critical thinking rather than action, plans rarely get implemented.

Strategic Doing™, developed by Ed Morrison with the Agile Strategy Lab at the University of North Alabama, represents an agile strategy discipline that is distinctly different from most strategy development processes. It is a fast, lean, and collaborative approach to strategy that allows organizations, businesses, communities, and regions to adapt, survive, and thrive in today's world. This process is an asset-based approach that focuses on the resources currently available rather than a "wish list" of dream projects. Rather than spending 18-months developing a plan, Strategic Doing allows groups to quickly identify opportunities and develop short-term projects and initiatives that will allow them to get started immediately. This process encourages groups to take action, test concepts, and make adjustments simultaneously. They can then use those quick successes to build momentum toward accomplishing larger objectives. The critical thinking and implementation are combined rather than what is typically done in traditional strategic planning models.
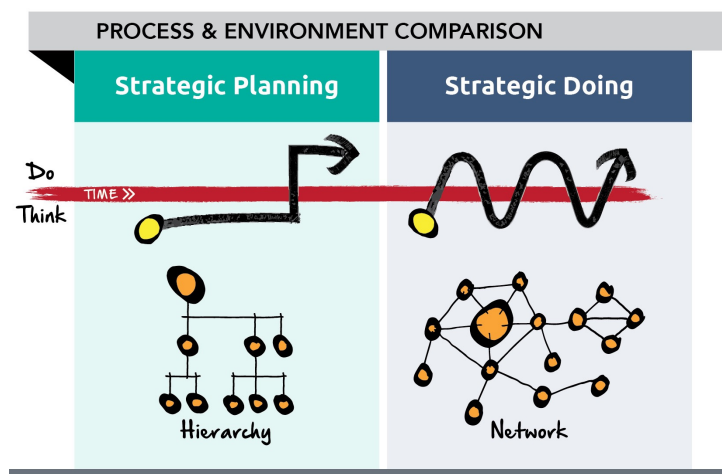


*Graphic Source: Strategic Doing Institute (www.strategicdoing.net)*

The following chart provides a comparison of a few key difference between Strategic Doing and the more traditional Strategic Planning approaches.

| | STRATEGIC PLANNING | VS | STRATEGIC DOING |
|---|---|---|---|
| Designed for... | Hierarchies | | Networks |
| Developed through... | Top-down approach | | Collaborative approach |
| Result in... | A plan | | Collaborative action |
| Best environment... | Stable & slow moving | | Complex, fast-paced |
| Best used for challenges with... | Clear problem / Technical solutions | | Multiple causes / No single solution |
| Who is in charge? | Single entity or group | | No single person or group |
| Focus on... | Problems *(fixing old systems)* | | Opportunities *(designing what is next)* |
| Critical thinking and action are... | Separate | | Combined |
| Result in initiatives/projects that are... | Long-term / Big picture | | Short-term / Achievable |
| Based on... | Wishes & dreams | | Current assets & resources |

While traditional strategic planning emphasizes the critical thinking portion of the process, Strategic Doing offers a balance of short periods of focused critical thinking followed by the group taking action on short-term projects aimed at testing ideas and concepts. This process allows for "quick wins" in order to build trust among the new collaboration, learn from successes, identify necessary course corrections, and capitalize on momentum moving forward. Strategic Doing offers an agile approach to strategy development when addressing complex challenges.

For more information on the difference between complex challenges and technical challenges please refer to the Stennis Spotlight entitled "Complex Challenges Require a Different Approach" (www.sig.msstate.edu/Stennis-spotlight/).

For more information on Strategic Doing please visit the Strategic Doing Institute at (www.strategicdoing.net)

strategic**Doing**™

MISSISSIPPI STATE
UNIVERSITY™

STENNIS INSTITUTE
MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY