A plan is defined as “anything that involves selecting a course of action for the future.”

Within the field of management, you can find a considerable body of knowledge pertaining to planning. You may have seen management textbooks and articles that emphasize a particular aspect of the planning process. All in all, it can be a very confusing topic for many reasons, among which is the use of terminology such as goals, objectives, strategies, tactics, plans, policies, and procedures.

In this book, we’re going to develop plans based on a simple three-tiered model. The definitions we will use will make sense as you work through the development of your own plan, but here is a word of warning: don’t get too hung up over the definition of a particular term. If, for example, you find that the use of the words goal and objective is the opposite of the way you have previously used them, by all means, interchange them. Just don’t let your definitions block you from taking the action steps necessary to work your plan. Frankly, it does not matter what you call these steps as long as you develop a plan for yourself. However, having said that, I would like to emphasize that I will use these terms as they are commonly used in the art and science of strategic planning. It would certainly help you to adopt the current use of these terms.

There are at least five major reasons why it is absolutely necessary for you to develop a planning document for your practice.

1. Planning enables your practice to cope with change, and we have certainly all seen many significant changes in practice in recent years.

2. Planning creates adaptability for your practice, allowing you to ensure that your organizational objectives are reached or changed as necessary.
3. Success is sometimes defined as “moving toward a worthy goal or ideal.” Notice the two components: a worthy goal and movement (or action). Strategic planning helps your practice to succeed because you will actually define your specific goals (or ideals) and the specific action steps to take to move you toward your goals.

4. Planning helps you with the day-to-day decision making in your practice.

5. Planning enables you to maintain an effective control process. Your statistics will now accurately reflect your progress toward your specific goals.

Our three-tiered model is based on traditional organizational planning and can be used in military, educational, industrial, and professional practice planning (Figure 1–1). As you will see, even nature uses this structure for planning.

At the top of our planning diagram is Mission. Actually, another step called Vision is above this, but we’ll have more to say about vision statements later. For now, the top of your planning pyramid is your mission statement. This is the most important step, without which the rest of the structure is random at best and meaningless at worst. For this reason, it is also dangerous to use a packaged mission statement or to copy someone else’s mission statement. Using a copied mission statement is probably better than having none, but you will end up achieving someone else’s results, not your own (if you achieve anything at all—it’s not easy to get passionate about someone else’s mission).

Developing naturally out of your mission are your goals. Goals are broad areas of mission accomplishment and constitute the strategic level of planning. Ordinarily you will have only three to five goals, although the number can vary somewhat. Each goal will be subdivided into objectives. We will discuss objectives later in detail, but for now, it is important to know that each goal will be broken down into two to five objectives. This constitutes the tactical level
of planning. Finally, each objective (which is a specific and measurable target) is carefully analyzed and broken down into a number of necessary action steps. This constitutes the *operational* level of planning, and the steps are called operations, tasks, or plans. You could have any number of operations for each objective, but on average, you will have four to six.

My first strategic plan for my own practice many years ago had 1 mission, 4 goals, 14 objectives, and 81 operations. So you can see how this process creates a pyramid of planning levels, giving you a number of very specific tasks on which to concentrate.

To get a better concept of these planning levels and their utility, let me give you a number of examples in other fields.

**Military Planning**

Clearly, the specific interests and concerns of the various personnel are related to their planning level. Successful achievement of the mission can only occur when all members of the planning unit are working effectively on their portion of the overall picture.

As a specific example from World War II, a mission might be to “successfully liberate Europe.” One goal of that mission would be to “stage a successful landing of forces in Normandy.” An objective of that goal would be to “establish a beachhead at Omaha beach.” That objective would be achieved by a number of plans, among which might be to “land a squad of troops at coordinates AB123 and disable the enemy bunker adjacent to the beach at that point.” You can see that each successive level lower on the planning pyramid has a more specific task. Also, each level is only concerned with its specific target. Planning for your practice is no different, and you can see why specific targets are not achievable without proper planning. In your practice, for example, you may find the general (you) worrying too much about something the sergeant (your chiropractic assistant [CA]) should be concerned with.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Planning Level</th>
<th>Military Level</th>
<th>Officers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goals (strategic)</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>General staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives (tactical)</td>
<td>Regiment</td>
<td>Colonel, major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations (plans)</td>
<td>Squad, battalion</td>
<td>Sergeant, lieutenant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Educational Planning

In the case of chiropractic education, a board and other executive officers oversee the mission. This mission is given as a strategic directive to the dean’s level for planning. Tactical objectives are fulfilled by each of the various divisions and departments, and ultimately the individual professors are responsible for delivering the necessary information in their courses. Using this model, you can see how confusing the process would be if, for example, individual professors took it on themselves to deliver information that did not fit within the parameters of the overall strategic plan. Again, you can see parallels to your own practice.

Industrial Planning

The overall strategic direction of the company is determined by the board of directors and/or the owner of the company. This mission statement is then brought to life through the strategic goals of the company, overseen by the vice presidents. Various managers are responsible for particular tactical areas of production and marketing, and the plant supervisors marshal the efforts of the individual workers toward accomplishment of specific tasks.

The challenge for you is to begin thinking of your practice as a much larger operation than it may be at the present time. You are now the president and CEO of your practice, and your first step is going to be the clear enunciation of a meaningful mission statement, motivated by your vision of how you see
yourself contributing to the world. Once this is done, you will be planning all
the necessary steps to ensure successful achievement of your goals. At the
beginning, it may only be you wearing the hats of all the various officials and
managers. Your goal may (or should) include growing your practice to the point
where you can properly use your skills at the strategic level, with subordinates
charged with the responsibility of fulfilling tactical and operational roles.

Survival of the Pioneers in the New Land

I added this unlikely example to show that even life-oriented activities can
follow a strategic structure. Also, this particular example illustrates the time
lines of the various portions of the strategic plan. In this case, survival is an
ongoing process, and the strategic goals all relate to the process, or mission,
of survival. They are long-term goals. In fact, strategic-level plans are typi-
cally in the 1- to 5-year time period. The original Soviet Union was known for
its 5-year plans, which were simply strategic initiatives.

Tactical planning for the achievement of objectives usually has a time period
of 60 to 120 days. Interestingly, in this example, the seasons are appropriate
tactical-objective periods. Most organizations develop their strategic plans
around the achievement of quarterly objectives, and this is an excellent basis
for planning your own objectives.

Operational activities (tasks, plans, and operations) are usually daily or
weekly activities. This example is a useful metaphor for helping you develop
your own strategic plan.

Finally, within the scope of operational plan-
ing are the routine activities of running a prac-
tice. Among these are the activities that can be
classified as policies, from which are derived
procedures, from which are derived rules.

To be in hell is to drift, to
be in heaven is to steer.
—George Bernard Shaw

Table 1–4  Pioneer Planning Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Planning Level</th>
<th>Company Level</th>
<th>Time Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goals (strategic)</td>
<td>Conquer new lands, build log cabin, clear land for farming</td>
<td>Lifetime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives (tactical)</td>
<td>Prepare for winter, sow crops, harvest crops</td>
<td>Seasonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations (plans)</td>
<td>Prepare meals, fetch water, chop firewood</td>
<td>Daily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>