



Title	Turning Objectives into Actions
Version	V1.0
Date	January 2014 (Updated Nov 2015)

Turning Objectives into Actions

An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory. Ralph Waldo Emerson

We have set our goals and turned them into objectives. Now we need to work out what actions we need to take, and who is going to take them in order to achieve our objectives. What does this actually mean? What will we have to do to be able to achieve our objectives.

The way I like to approach this task is to mind map or brain dump my thought process, however, I don't just throw it all down on paper, I like to approach my brain dumping in a structured way – I am an accountant after all!

So I tend to approach things in terms of departments. I am the finance department, the sales and marketing department, the manufacturing department etc of my own business. Each department has a purpose or a function and so each has a role in achieving my objective...each will have a set of actions.

Start by work out which 'departments' are relevant to your business, you might be surprised how many hats you wear or how many areas you are responsible for.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Purchasing | > Do you have to buy stock or materials? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Production | > Do you have to build/create your product? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Distribution | > Do you deliver your product to your customer? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing | > Do you have to 'market' your product? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sales | > Do you have to 'sell' your product? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Customer Services | > Do you deal with customers, returns, complaints? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quality | > Do you have to measure or manage quality? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Finance | > Do have costs to pay or income to collect? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compliance | > Do you have any regulatory or compliance considerations? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> IT | > Do you have computers, systems, websites to manage? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> HR | > Do you have staff to manage and pay? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health & Safety | > Do you have to consider H&S regulations in your business? |

There would be no point in creating a wonderful product if you forgot to go out and sell it, or if there wasn't a market for it. You can't sell stock you haven't bought or products you haven't created – you can book ahead of delivery of course, but at some point you have to deliver. Once you have sold it, you have to bill it. Once you've billed it you have to collect payment for it. If you employed staff or bought stock from suppliers you have to manage them and you have to pay them. You have to make sure the goods you buy or the work being done by your staff is quality controlled before it is delivered to your customer. Your systems and processes are all interlinked and create a business life cycle that ultimately delivers your product to the customer. So I try and structure my goals objectives and action plans in that way, with the customer in mind.

The happy customer stays with you, buys from you and pays what you ask on time and in full.



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Challenge Your Objectives

Take your list of objectives from your previous session, and start working out at high level what actions you might need in each area in order to achieve each objective. Consider the implications, considerations, costs or benefits across the other areas of your business. Challenge each objective before you commit to it. Complete this exercise for each objective.

Objective

Think about the actions, implications, considerations, costs or benefits on the other areas of your business

<p>Purchasing</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Production</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Distibution</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Marketing</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p>
<p>Sales</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Customer Services</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Quality</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Finance</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p>
<p>Compliance</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p>	<p>IT</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p>	<p>HR</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p>	<p>H&S</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p>

For example, my objective is to increase sales to £X, which means I would have to increase staff by £Y, which would increase costs by £Z, and I'd need to recruit and train the staff which might take me away from developing new products or customer service . My sales might increase, but if I increase sales by £10,000 and employed new staff at £20,000, and spent an extra £1000 on training them, then I'd fail to meet one of my other objective of increasing my own wages because I would be paying someone else's instead! This isn't to say the objective is wrong, we just need to think about the implications.

Once we have challenged our objectives and revisited them to make sure they make sense, we can start to turn them into action plans and business plan.



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Creating your Action Plan

Each objective can be broken down now into a series of actions that must be taken to achieve that objective.

You might want to break the objectives into smaller objectives for example an increase in turnover might be broken down between new customers and old, or new products and old. Each would have it's own action plan. The outcome of each action plan would help you to achieve your overall objective.

Consider how you are going to measure it's success, and what risk factors there are. What if this doesn't work, how will you know and what will you do about it. Anticipating risks now will greatly improve your chance of getting it right in the long term.

Master Objective	Measure of success	Risks	Target date	Est Costs	Owner

Objective 1	Measure of success	Risks	Target date	Est Costs	Owner

Actions:	Measure of success (How will you measure success)	Fisk factor (what might stop this happening)	Target date	Est Costs	Owner

Objective 1	Measure of success	Risks	Target date	Est Costs	Owner

Actions:	Measure of success (How will you measure success)	Fisk factor (what might stop this happening)	Target date	Est Costs	Owner

Now we have goals, objectives and action plans. We have not stopped there. We now need to tie this together in a business plan. We will start getting to know our numbers and making sure we can afford to implement our action plans. Action planning and business planning can sometimes be a bit of a chicken and egg, you need to know the costs of the action in order to achieve the objective, but if it's not financially viable, you have to come back and cut your cloth accordingly. Business plans don't fail because of the bits that were right, but the bits that were forgotten or overlooked. Skip this step at your peril!