

For a strategic plan to be successful, it needs to have buy-in, aim at a realistic set of goals and be a working document almost like a game plan for a football team. Unfortunately, the strategic planning process has developed a bad name. Many organizations that claim to provide strategic planning assistance create convoluted company goals and tactics without a clear and attainable method for reaching a company's vision. The ISBDC approach avoids these downfalls by using creative problem solving methods to develop a realistic and easily understood strategic plan.



"It's not often that you walk away from a strategy session with actionable, tangible elements. The process felt natural and intuitive, and provided me with a concrete plan to follow my company's vision." Phil Daniels, President, Tactic Marketing.

ISBDC Business Advisors across the state have been trained in a variation of the Simplex Creative Problem-Solving Process developed by Min Basadur and popularized in his book *The Power of Innovation*. Originally used as a product development brainstorming process, Simplex has grown into a strategic planning tool used by small businesses, Fortune 500 Companies and government agencies alike.

### How It Works

There is a time for brainstorming and there is a time for decision making. A strategic planning facilitator's job is to ensure nothing is lost during the brainstorming sessions and every voice is heard when building consensus. This principle guides our strategic planning sessions. ISBDC facilitators walk the company's key stakeholders through specific questions focused on the company's future, providing everyone in the room a chance to be heard and, as importantly, hear others.

Once the team has found consensus around the company's vision, strategic plan facilitators continue using the Simplex process to determine what may be preventing the company from attaining their objectives. This sequence allows the team to identify goals and tactics to draw a clear path to achieve growth, or whatever the organization's vision states.

### Strategic Implementation

A strategic plan will only drive results if it is implemented. Consequently, helping a business develop a strategic plan is only the beginning of the ISBDC's service. The ISBDC advisor assists clients by holding them accountable to the tactics they develop during the strategic planning process as well as to retune any objectives that may need to change with unforeseen disruptions.

### What Businesses Are Saying

To hear how the ISBDC has helped businesses develop and implement their strategic plans, visit our Success Stories page on the ISBDC website: <http://links.isbdc.org/stories>.

"As a small business owner, one of the challenges is the time mismanagement that can occur while trying to manage every facet of the business – and manage it well. The strategic planning session does a great job of breaking down distractions and charting a course - supplying a method to the madness. The training isolates areas, that when approached correctly, will lead to measureable objectives and goals. The session support received is unmatched; an extremely solid resource that I look forward to staying close to!" Chip Heberden, President of Netlink Inc.