

How to develop a strategy and plan

It's a question that has troubled armies, governments, moguls, arts practitioners and producers for millenia. Do I need a strategy? What kind of strategy? And while we're on the topic, what is a strategy? While the details vary hugely depending on whether you're planning a land war or a short film there are some constant principles you can apply.

Obviously I already know this, but just in case other people don't what exactly is a strategy?

A strategy is a big picture view that takes in where you are, where you want to be, the obstacles or opportunities you'll encounter and the paths and tactics you'll employ to ensure success in your chosen endeavour.

Do I need one?

You do.

It doesn't need to be elaborate. Some of the best strategies have been document on a scrap of paper or parchment, but you need to write it down. You need to be able to remind yourself what your activity is building to. If you're working in a team your strategy is also documentation that you're all on the same page when it comes to how you see your project or your work. It acts as the guidelines, helping you decide what is and isn't important, giving you a basis for prioritisation and keeping you on track. Future you will thank you for writing it down.

Okay. So where do I start?

Sit down with a cup of tea or a glass of wine and breathe deeply. You've got this. Strategies are just IRL puzzles and artists are by their nature resourceful problem solvers. You've got this. Then check out our marketing strategy document here. We also recommend a few other resources such as [insert link] and [insert link]. Don't get too elaborate and keep your objectives consistent (N.B. that doesn't mean you can't modify or refine your objective throughout the process, just be sure to update them across all your different pieces of work).

Objectives? Tell me more about objectives.

A good marketing objective is SMART. That means that they are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound. A bad marketing objective is “Get the world to appreciate my art in my lifetime”. A good version of that is “Hold a series of exhibitions throughout 2018/19 that receive an average of 3 pieces of coverage in industry press”. It should be ambitious but realistic and aligned with your professional and personal values.

So that’s my marketing strategy! And I’m done, right?

Well, not quite. A strategy is the definitely the King of the marketing chessboard. But you’re definitely going to lose if you don’t have your Queen ready for action. And by Queen we mean marketing **plan**. While your strategy should be the long term view, your plan is more of a 3 - 12 month logistical and operational view of what you’re going to do and how you’re going to get it done.

So I need a plan as well?

Of course! A strategy is a little bit lofty for everyday use. You need a document that gets its hands dirty. A marketing plan is your best day-to-day resource. You can share it with your team, with any consultants you’re working with, any funders who might need reassurance that you’ve got it together and your ACF manager so they know how and when they can support you.

Right. So how do I build a marketing plan then?

Much like the strategy, we’ve got a version of a marketing plan that we’ve built specifically for artists. We’d suggest starting with that but adapting it wherever you need to. The plan is a bit more painful to get through than the strategy— it means thinking hard about your budget, pulling out your calendar and plotting dates and allocating resources. But trust us, you’ll thank yourself when you realise the time and stress you’ve saved by making these decisions up front.

Good luck, fundraiser friends. Remember to contact us via hello@australianculturalfund.org.au if you have any questions, we’re here to help.