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REPORT ABUSE

northern ireland's business magazine  
**businessfirst**

June 2012  
volume 8 issue 3



**CHANGE OF CONDUCTOR**  
Mark Nodder is new routemaster at Chamber

**FOCUS ON THE GREAT NORTHWEST**  
open for business and ready to shine

**LAUGHTER IS THE BEST MEDICINE**  
why you shouldn't be too earnest at work

ni 2012  
our time  
our place

## Commentary

One of the key problems I've found running a small business – and working with lots of clients doing the same – is figuring out how to manage the huge amount of stuff that needs doing, across the whole business.

In a large company, you've got the scale to specialise resources and reduce the scope of individual roles. That creates its own problems – not for this article – however, the amount of juggling that any one person has to do of lots of things with conflicting priorities, is reduced.

Earlier in my career I spent over 10 years in the auto industry, and a significant chunk of that in production management. It seemed to be constant fire-fight at the start and took massive discipline to steer things onto the improvement track.

As I started my own business, it struck me how similar the situations were. So I started to use the approaches I had developed before, and have continued to use these with other SME clients.

So, how to navigate your way through the jungle of stuff to do and move the business forward?

The key is to develop a clear vision on a specific improvement you want to go for, and build a short-term plan to deliver it. I'd recommend 100 days as your timescale. I first became aware of the concept when I was in Germany running a car component company. Gerhard Schneider had been recently elected as Chancellor and there was a lot of comment and discussion in the press about what he had actually done in his first 100 days. It struck me as a useful timescale.

Typically strategic business plans and the action plans accompanying them have a twelve-month focus. What I notice is that there's a kind of polarisation: actions tend to bunch in the first and last months, with little in between.

People have grand ideas about what they can achieve, but are quickly sidetracked into the day-to-day activities just to keep things running. It's very easy to say 'Oh well, we'll do it next month, because the end of the year is still a long way off. But suddenly it's year end and not so much has been achieved. Sound familiar?

This is why I've found the 100 day time frame works so well. It's long enough that lots can be achieved, and yet short enough that things can't be put off for too long. It sets a framework to build momentum and discipline.

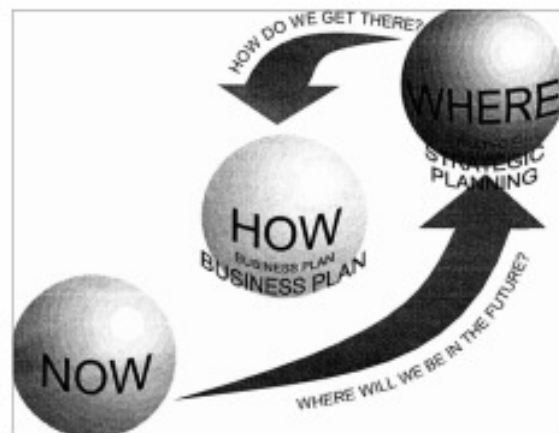
### How to get started?

Think about your short-term vision of where you'd like to be in 100 days. This could be a sales goal, the launch of a new product or service or perhaps a more ill-defined challenge.

For instance, if you're grappling with a big issue such as whether to acquire a company or not, the first 100 days might be simply to research the pros and cons, to scope out the criteria relevant to your sector and situation.

Once that's done, the next step could be to actually work it through and reach a decision about whether to do it or not. Then, if you decide to proceed, the next phase would be to start researching target companies etc.

So break the elephant into bite-sized chunks.



## Create urgency and results through 100 day planning

Hilary Briggs, managing director, R&P Ltd

The important points to cover are:

- What are the key actions that are needed to make the 100 day vision happen?

- Who needs to be involved? It strongly suggests involving them in creating the plan.
- What other resources might be needed – and what needs to happen to secure them?

I use a simple spreadsheet to capture the information – there's a free template and guide available on my website [www.hilarybriggs.co.uk/resources/deliver-100-days/](http://www.hilarybriggs.co.uk/resources/deliver-100-days/).

Here's an example of the sort of things that can be achieved.

One client in the market research sector, about £3-£5 million turnover, was approaching 1300 months before the end of the year below revenue and profit targets.

From their sales cycle history there seemed little prospect of turning things round at this stage.

However, we set about creating a 100 day plan. It involved doing what they had been doing – calling up companies they'd done business with before, but being up on proposals that had been out a while and so on. But in addition, the targets were more focused and the review process more rigorous.

It got everybody excited and built a sense of urgency. Weekly reviews – even daily reviews – became the focal point to drive new actions. 'What else could we try?' became the approach rather than 'Oh dear, such and such hasn't worked, we're not going to make it.'

End result – over £100k of business came in within the period and an additional £100k worth of business came in during the next quarter as a consequence of the momentum.



built up. Because of their cost model, these amounts were pretty much straight onto their profit line and allowed them to hit their targets.

So the plan doesn't have to be the most amazing document – just good enough to provide focus and direction, involve the people who'll have to deliver it, create some buzz around it and you'll be amazed at just what is possible!

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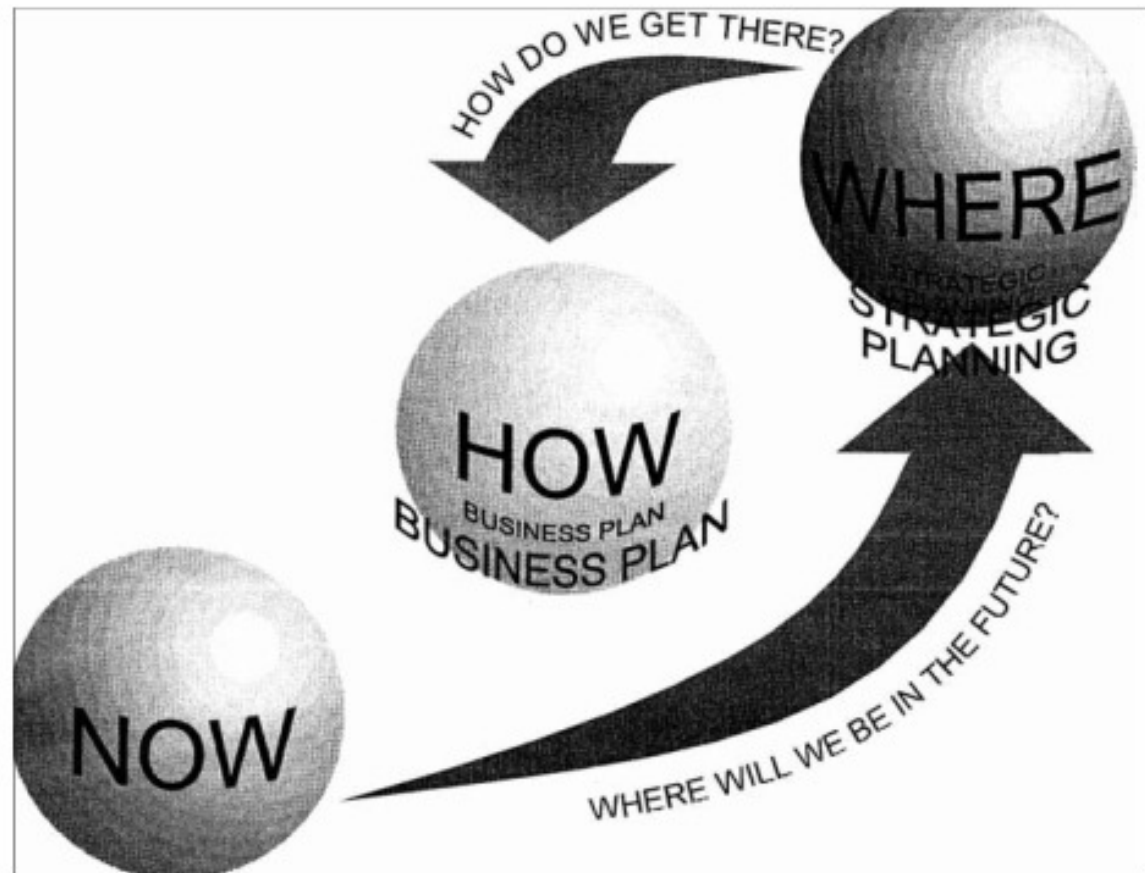
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### Here's an example of the sort of things that can be achieved.

One client in the market research sector, about £3-£3.5 million turnover, was approaching three months before the end of the year below revenue and profit targets.

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