

BUILDING FORWARD BETTER

ACTION TOOLKIT

A GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE PLANNING

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Image: Maj N P Barton 19 Sept 2013 © MOE

INTRODUCTION

This toolkit is a guide of fundamental principles to assist in effective planning. It is based on my experience as a Chief of Staff of a Joint Aviation Taskforce on exercises in NATO and on operations as an Apache Squadron Commander in Afghanistan. It represents the critical parts of what is taught and assessed within military training.¹

'Nothing is more difficult, and therefore more precious than to be able to decide.'

Napoleon

The current context of a global pandemic has created an environment of fear, uncertainty, pressure and exponential change. These characteristics are familiar to what the Armed Forces can experience on operations. The military tries to tailor its training and assessments to ensure that its personnel thrive under these demanding conditions. In particular, it focuses on an organisation's ability to plan and execute operations. The force that can react more quickly to a situation is likely to seize the initiative.



THIS GUIDE'S PURPOSE

This guide is designed to compliment the Business Fights Poverty COVID-19 Response Framework and the Rebuild Better Framework. The Guide forms part of the Business Fights Poverty - Business & COVID-19 Response Centre. Where the Frameworks support organisations in their decision-making, this Guide helps plan out what to do, how, where and when. Though this Guide can be applied in a number of different planning scenarios, it is specifically tailored to assist with navigating planning during crisis; when traditional corporate planning processes may take too long or require too many certainties.

- Business Fights Poverty COVID-19 Response Framework:
- Rebuild Better Framework:
- Business Fights Poverty Business
 & COVID-19 Response Centre:

¹ It references several military doctrine publications. Most notably, "Leading Through Crisis, A Practitioners Guide," which is an excellent document available open-source from the <u>Centre of Army Leadership</u>.

SCOPE

This toolkit aims to provide the key principles of a planning process that can be applied to any problem.

In practice, Planning is just one part of a continuous assessment cycle of Assess-Plan-Prepare-Execute.² Generally, people may be more familiar with the OODA loop: Observe-Orientate-Decide-Act, by Col John Boyd, US Air Force Colonel during the Korean War.

Individuals or groups are tasked with making decisions every day, ranging from simple to complex problems. Throughout this decision-making process, planning can be simplified into four key stages:

Basic Planning Steps

- 1. Define the problem.
- **2.** Gather and consider information.
- **3.** Identify possible solutions.
- **4.** Select and develop the best solution.

The military has built on this logic to form a deliberate planning process of six or seven steps, depending on the level of consideration. It is known as a Tactical Estimate, Combat Estimate, or



KEY LEARNING POINT

"Mission Command and Empowerment" is a powerful implementation methodology because it flattens the decision-making structure and makes organisations more agile and responsive.

It is founded on a clear expression of intent by commanders, and then empowers others to have the freedom to act to achieve the objective.

Operational Planning Process.³ These processes are standardised, taught and assessed to ensure a common understanding of the process by all staff and therefore increases timeliness, efficiency and quality of the plan.

The British military operates under a Mission Command and Empowerment philosophy. This philosophy empowers individuals to exploit an opportunity and seize the initiative within the higher commanders' intent.⁴ It allows concurrent activity and promotes unity of effort, mutual understanding and trust. I highlight this point of leadership practice because it enhances the ability of people in the organisation to react to a situation while understanding the overall intent of the organisation.

3 Planning and Execution Handbook - 2018, Chapter 2, Tactical Estimate. Army Field Manual Command, Chapter 6, Overview of

the Operational and Tactical Planning Processes

Planning and Execution Handbook - 2018. Chapter 27 Doc
4 British Army Leadership - Leading through

⁴ British Army Leadership - <u>Leading through crisis</u>, a <u>practitioners</u> guide. <u>Leadership</u> philosophy, page 5.

² Planning and Execution Handbook - 2018, Chapter 27 Doctrine Aide Memoire.

This approach promotes decentralised command, freedom and speed of action, initiative and focus on the achievement of intent. It is particularly applicable in a context of friction, uncertainty and chaos. It requires Higher Commanders to articulate their intent clearly and empowers others with the freedom of action and resources to act on their initiative to achieve success. Timely and precise communication up and down the chain of command is critical to this success. Mission Command relies on trust, mutual understanding and initiative at all levels, all nurtured by intelligent leadership.5

5 Throughout the document references to the Commander as the decision maker but for a business this may be the CEO, Senior Leadership Team or the Board.



KEY LEARNING POINT

The planning process is a means to an end. The plan is more important than the process (albeit the process creates a shared understanding of the problem).⁶



KEY LEARNING POINT

Golden Thread products products that are produced
during the planning process
at the different stages which
capture your analysis must
feature all the way through,
be easily referred to, and
appear in the final plan.



A formalised planning process and standard output formats will ensure commonality across the staff and improve efficiency.

Plan Collaboratively. Use the talent, experience and knowledge that surrounds you. Exploit the subject matter experts. Break down the hierarchy – it is the value of the input that counts, not the rank. Exploit this. Collaborative planning also invests others in your plan, thus creating shared ownership.⁶

There are defined products that should be produced at each stage of the process, all against a timeframe that ensures sufficient time available for personnel to prepare for the subsequent action.

6 British Army Leadership - Leading through crisis, a practitioners guide. Leadership philosophy, page 6.



KEY PRINCIPLES & STAGES

O. PREPARATION

SETTING THE BASELINE AND COMMON UNDERSTANDING.

Prior to starting to plan, a certain amount of preparation is required to ensure that you have the correct personnel present and the tools required to plan (whiteboards, IT, etc.) Careful preparation ensures that everyone is effectively brought up to speed with the current situation.

TOP TIPS AND KEY ACTIVITY:

- Roll call to ensure your key personnel are present and understand their roles and responsibilities including finance, logistics, operations, personnel, infrastructure. Who is the scribe and who is coordinating all of the activity? In practice, managing planning teams larger than 8-10 personnel takes more time and can lack coherence.
- A timeline analysis consists of two timelines. Firstly a Planning Timeline, how much time is available to plan and deliver the plan. Secondly, a Situation Timeline of actual events showing when things happen. In terms of the breakdown of planning time, a rule of thirds is useful as a guide. Of the total time before any action must take place, 2/3 should be allocated to the organisation's sub units to turn any plan into action, leaving 1/3 of the available time to the core team planning the activity. Of this, the planning time now



KEY LEARNING

Allowing time to test the plan is worth its weight in gold.

available to the core team should also be broken into thirds. One third for understanding the problem and what you need to do; one third to develop possible courses of action (COA) and select the best COA; and one third to refine, test and deliver the best COA in a detailed plan for the rest of the organisation to then deliver. From experience, teams that allocate sufficient time testing or wargaming their plan will produce a much better final solution. Planning advice should focus on an 80% solution delivered on time, rather than a 100% solution that is late.

problem. In the military, this often comes on receipt of new orders or as a result of a recent incident. The aim here is for all staff to have a common understanding of the latest situation with all of the facts you have to hand. This insight, should, if required, give an update on the relevant organisation details. In the military, this would include a friendly force laydown and missions and tasks. It enables everyone to plan using the same baseline.



KEY OUTPUT:

Timeline. Planning timeline and situation timeline.



1. UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION AND HOW IT AFFECTS YOU

Within a military estimate, situation analysis examines terrain, battlespace, weather, human terrain and threat groups. Whilst it goes into detail, particularly with the level of risk and enemy presence, it also highlights the most likely scenario and the worst-case scenario. It identifies areas of interest, and decision points. Furthermore, it captures critical risks and vital information requirements.

In terms of a business analysis of the situation it is likely that instead of enemy activity the focus is about cash flow. A SWOT analysis or a centre of gravity analysis is expected to be useful, whereby company centre of gravity would revolve around selling points, customer service, cost, quality and ethics. Also, in identifying an organisation's centre of gravity, it becomes easier to identify its critical vulnerabilities. The most likely and most dangerous scenarios are about a reduction in cash flow, market share, confidence in the business, competitors.

ANALYSIS AND PLANNING TOOLS

There are various templates to help analyse external factors and considerations for planning. The size and complexity of an organisation will drive which toolkit is the most suitable. In practice, the *first FOUR tools* tend to be the most useful and coherent.

- PESTLE Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental.
- TEPID OIL Training, Equipment, Personnel, Intelligence, Doctrine, Organisation, Infrastructure, Logistics.
- Manning, Equipment, Training, Support (Logistics) and Finance.
- People, Process, System and Data.
- PMESII Political, Military, Economic, Social, Infrastructure, Information.
- ASCOPE Areas, Structures, Capabilities, Organisation, People and Events.
- SWOT Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.
- Centre of Gravity analysis COG, Critical Capabilities, Critical Vulnerabilities, Critical requirements and Conclusions.



KEY LEARNING POINT

Be clear with what is being briefed. Is it a statement of fact? Or is it an assessment or an assumption?



KEY OUTPUTS:

- Most likely and worstcase scenarios.
- Key risks.
- Key information requirements.

2. MISSION ANALYSIS

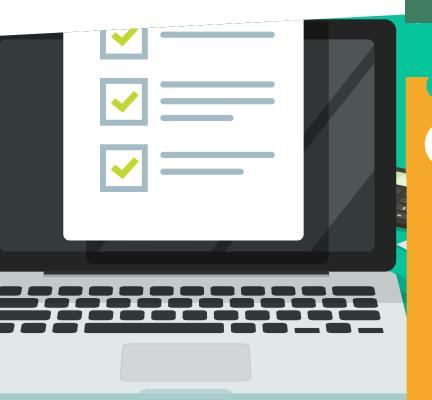
efine the task to understand the precise requirements you must meet and why. This analysis includes your part in the bigger picture, constraints and where the main effort lies.

In terms of applying a process, this is best done by looking at the intent two levels up and then one level up. What are they trying to achieve? What is your role in this? Are you critical to the success of a bigger plan?

This could also be the intent of the board and the shareholders. Understanding these answers will leave you well placed to look at your specified tasks, as well as any implied tasks. It will also help to assess how much support you can get, what will happen if a delay occurs, and the possible tasks that may be generated as you progress with your plan.

Communicating this to your team helps them to understand why they are being asked to complete a given task and supports buy-in and ownership.

It will also help to assess how much support you can get, what will happen if a delay occurs, and the possible tasks that may be generated as you progress with your plan.





KEY LEARNING

Communicate to your people, your bosses, your customers and your suppliers. By this stage it will be clear if some change will occur to your organisation and it is always better to be on the front foot communicating with your people.

3.INTENT AND END-STATE - PLANNING DIRECTION

This stage is perhaps the most important and the commander considers the following question. What actions/effects do I need to achieve and what direction must I give to develop the plan?

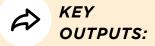
A military planning process focuses on effect-based guidance based on Outcome, Objectives, Effects and Actions. What does that mean? A military force conducts an action to generate effect on the understanding, physical capability, will and cohesion of the audience. Organised into attainable objectives, these effects ultimately influence people's decision making to achieve the desired outcomes.⁷

The intent statement is a statement of the outcome that the business or the commander wants to achieve and why and is written in simple language. In essence, it is a vision statement.

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A commander provides clear direction that the team understands their intentions, the desired end-state, their goals and the context of those goals.

Having understood the situation and the demands placed on the organisation it is the commander who gives the direction for future planning. Usually, in an effects schematic, including the mission and end-state. It will also include which enemy scenario to plan against (i.e. most likely or worst-case) and the draft courses of action (COAs) to develop. It will also define which factors the COAs will be assessed against and the necessary risk analysis. To save time, some commanders will use their experience and judgement to give direction in certain areas.



- Intent, end state and effects schematic
- Warning order to your people. Inform your organisation of the impending task/direction to allow them to carry out concurrent planning and activity.
- Back brief to the command chain. Best practice sees a back brief to the command chain of your intent, and COA guidance for development. This ensures that your planning guidance is on track and there has been no misunderstanding of your commander's direction.

⁷ ADP Land Operations https://assets.publishing.esvrice.gov.uk/government/uploads/ system/uploads/attachment_data/file/605298/Army_Field_Manual_AFM_A5_Master_ADP_Interactive_Gov_Web.pdf

4. DEVELOP COURSES OF ACTION (COA)

or most problems there is frequently more than one way of achieving a successful outcome.

It is recommended to develop a minimum of two different Courses of Action(COA), but there could be three if required. This flexibility allows for greater initiative and opportunity. Two equally balanced planning teams should try to develop their assigned COA to be the best.



KEY LEARNING POINT

Empower your people and involve them in the problem-solving process to help decide what the best solution for the business is.

From experience depending on the complexity of the problem a planning team of 3-5 people works well with a mixture of capabilities/branch experience within the team. For a business this is likely to be Finance, Operations, Logistics, HR, Communications but adjusted to suit the business as required.

Developing the COA should start at the main effort (i.e. the most important and critical effect task), then assessing what would be the best way to achieve that effect. For each task, they would apply a similar The best analysis and plans develop when analysed from different perspectives, challenging any group-think.

process. In short, each planning team will be asking themselves 'What? When? Where? How? Why?' to build a complete plan. The planning teams should be encouraged and empowered to be bold and innovative.

Throughout the planning stage, teams should ensure that their plan is still valid and that the situation has not changed. A useful framework to consider if a plan is suitable is FACES – Feasible, Acceptable, Complete, Exclusive, Suitable.

The best analysis and plans develop when analysed from different perspectives, challenging any groupthink. Equally, seeking subject matter expertise at the required time provides more accurate assumptions. For those who are naturally optimistic, potential downsides might not be considered, and equally, those who are very cautious might not focus on opportunities that could be available.



KEY LEARNING POINT

Be aware of group-think and assumptions. Ensure plans are assessed from different perspectives.

5. WHAT RESOURCES DO I NEED TO **ACHIEVE EACH ACTION/EFFECT?**

The planning teams then look to see which resources they need to complete a particular task. They should begin by resourcing the main effort.

> This process starts to build the mission statement for the different sub units that will be tasked to deliver the effect or action. In addition this question may force a slight change to the task organisation of a unit. For example, to achieve this action/ effect a unit may need to have an engineer detachment assigned.

The question allows you to think about the other factors needed to

This in practise starts to build the mission statement for the different sub units that will be tasked to deliver the effect or action.

support your team. For example, do the Legal or HR departments need to review any of your documentation? A valid question depending on the task you are undertaking. This is the time when you will identify what support you want (and are likely to get) from the task giver.

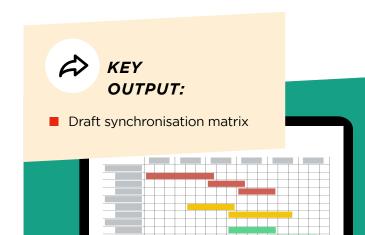
6. WHEN AND WHERE DO THE **ACTIONS/EFFECTS TAKE PLACE** IN RELATION TO EACH OTHER?

elivering the detail is best completed as a synchronisation matrix.

> By working chronologically, you can see when each action takes place and which resources are required to achieve that action or effect.

More often than not, your resources will be limited. By assessing chronologically when such a resource is needed, the resource is therefore available for different tasks at different times. Some of the key areas I like to consider include: How much time

does each resource need to deliver? Who is dependent on me? Who is dependent on someone else? Do I need to review the outputs? Do some tasks involve more than one element? If so, who owns this/these?



7. SELECT AND REFINE THE COURSE OF ACTION.

The two or more COAs should be presented in an identical format and should be assessed and scored against set criteria, the advantages and disadvantages of each COA and key risks being highlighted.

With military plans, the COAs will be tested against some of the military's fighting principles such as principles of war or tactical functions. A business may use any number of the following criteria: cost, quality, service, reliability, training, location, supply chain. For specific criteria, one can also add a weighting if, for example, cost or service is the most important criteria.

Whilst briefing skill can still play a part, the decision should be based on objective analysis.

Whilst briefing skill can still play a part, the decision should be based on objective analysis. This is, in effect, a decision matrix analysis – a useful tool for analysing and scoring multiple factors. With the support of the COA analysis, the commander will decide which course of action will be selected and may also want to adopt some parts of the COA which were not chosen for the primary plan.

8. WHAT CONTROL MEASURES DO I NEED TO IMPOSE?

At this stage, the planning coordinates the key activity and helps to manage and mitigate risk. It goes into the details of integration and deconfliction of forces, how the command and control will work, measures to protect the mission and how it will be sustained.

It also gives due consideration to the decision points, measurements of effectiveness, and where the commander should be to influence key activity.

The size of your team and how well you know it will affect the level of control measures, to avoid either micromanaging (more common) or macromanaging. Clear communication is key, providing astute guidance on what, when, how, and who allows each element of the task, giving a clear understanding of their individual roles in the overall delivery.

9. WARGAME

I hilst the military refers to this as a wargame, other organisations may refer to this stage as a tabletop exercise.

> The aim is to refine and test the plan and identify any remedial action required. It will also identify the need for contingency planning.8

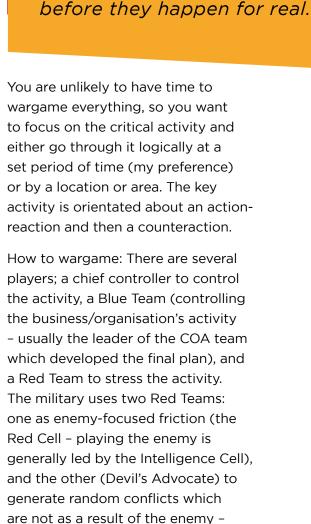
Whilst key risks should have already been identified the wargame will help to confirm the mitigation for those risks. In the military we manage the risk through Tolerate. Treat. Terminate or Transfer the risk.

For most organisations, difficult plans are likely to be required in response to an emergency or a crisis. They may involve working with many different organisations that perhaps your normal line managers have not had any experience with.



KEY LEARNING POINT

Time spent testing your plan in a wargame/tabletop exercise is invaluable and will ensure a much better final solution.



vehicle failures, fuel contamination,

minor disease breakout, etc.

KEY LEARNING

thinking among leaders

under near-real conditions

and helps to uncover issues

Wargaming increases critical

POINT

Planning and Execution Handbook - 2018, Chapter 10 Warga-



The Blue Team carries out the action (first move). The Red Team then carry out the reaction. Their aim is to stress the plan. Whilst the Red Team should be free to seize the initiative with their reaction, it should still be plausible and in line with the most-likely and/or most-dangerous scenarios identified earlier in the analysis. Having then seen this reaction, the organisation must then decide on the appropriate counteraction to try and resolve the situation. This process should be applied to all of the highest risk or key activity areas.

You are unlikely to have time to wargame everything, so you want to focus on the critical activity and either go through it logically at a set period of time (my preference) or by a location or area.

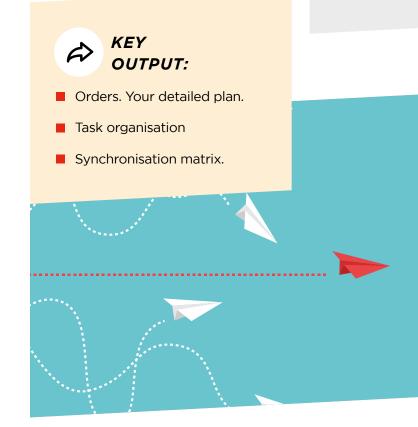


Risk and risk mitigation

10. DELIVER AND COMMUNICATE YOUR PLAN

The plan is useless if it cannot be communicated and understood by your team. Organisations should consider how to deliver the plan and understand the types of communication that they respond to well.

Face to face is likely to be best but must still be backed up with necessary level of detail for accuracy and accountability. This level of engagement is particularly important when delivering bad news. A useful mnemonic when communicating is POWER: Plan, Organise, Write, Evaluate, Refine.⁹



SUMMARY

our people can help enormously to produce good plans, but ultimately someone needs to make a decision. That decision should be the best decision available within the timeframe and utilising the available resources. The tenstep planning process should help to produce an effective plan.

'Plans are nothing; planning is everything'

Dwight D Eisenhower (1890-1969)

DO THE RIGHT THING AND TELL THE TRUTH.

What is critical is that you make decisions based on the best information you have available at the time, and you do so in good faith - in line with your morals and your values. Do the right thing, and you will live well regardless of the consequences. A crisis is a time of heightened confusion and uncertainty. People crave certainty. A leader must tell the truth, conveying the best information available at that time. Be honest with your people and stick to the facts.



OVERCOMMUNICATE.

Crisis is defined by change; more specifically, the speed of change.10 To resolve a crisis, you need to ensure speed of information. Information feeds shared understanding, decision-making, prioritisation, and allocation of resources.

PREPARE TO ADAPT.

'No plan survives contact with the enemy.' Things will go wrong. Events will not turn out as you predicted. Expect this. With luck, some of the steps above will help your plan to arrive at an 80% solution, and you will be able to assess, adjust and adapt accordingly.

LONG TERM.

In terms of final observations, crisis tends to focus people on the 'here and now', the immediate task in hand, so organisations become reactive. This is inevitable and, to an extent, justified. Great leadership not only deals with the current crisis but also has one eye on the situation around the corner and prepares accordingly.11

¹⁰ British Army Leadership - Leading through crisis, a practitioners guide, page 12

¹¹ British Army Leadership - Leading through crisis, a practitioners guide, page 12.



10 STEPS

PREPARATION

AND BASELINE

UNDERSTANDING.

6. WHEN AND WHERE DO THE ACTIONS/EFFECTS TAKE PLACE IN RELATION TO EACH OTHER?

1 UNDERSTAND THE
■ SITUATION AND HOW IT
AFFECTS YOU.

7 SELECT AND REFINE COURSES OF ACTION.

MISSION ANALYSIS WHAT HAVE I BEEN TOLD
TO DO AND WHY?

WHAT CONTROL

MEASURES DO I NEED TO

IMPOSE?

3. INTENT AND END-STATE -

9 TEST THE PLAN WARGAME/TABLETOP
EXERCISE.

4 DEVELOP COURSES OF ACTION.

10 DELIVER AND COMMUNICATE YOUR PLAN.

5 WHAT RESOURCES DO I NEED TO ACHIEVE EACH ACTION/EFFECT?

Great leadership not only deals with the current crisis but also has one eye on the crisis around the corner and prepares accordingly.



TIME

1/3 PLANNING

2/3 PLANNING TIME

10 STEP PLANNING PROCESS **OUTPUTS** Planning timeline and situation timeline 0. Preparation and baseline understanding. 1. Understand the situation Key risks and how it affects you. Key information requirements 2. Mission analysis - what have I been told to do and why? Most likely and worst-case scenarios **3**. Intent and end-state - planning direction. ☐ Intent, end state and effects schematic ■ Warning order Develop courses of action. Back brief to higher leadership 5. What resources do I need to achieve each action/effect? 6. When and where do the actions take place in relation to each other? Draft synchronisation matrix 7. Select and refine courses of action. 8. What control measures do I need to impose? Risk and risk mitigation 9. Test the plan - wargame/ tabletop exercise. Orders. Your detailed plan **10.** Deliver and communicate your plan. ■ Task organisation Synchronisation matrix

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Publication AC71940, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/605298/Army_Field_Manual_AFM_A5_Master_ADP_Interactive_Gov_Web.pdf

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