

Plan vs Strategy: What's the difference?

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What you see in the images in the sidebar with complex LEGO constructions are teams using the LEGO SERIOUS PLAY method to develop a **strategy**- not a **plan** - for their organization's future. A plan is a document used to communicate the organization's goals and the actions needed to achieve the goals. A plan is very concrete in nature and doesn't allow for deviation. A strategy, on the other hand, is a blueprint, layout, design, or idea used to accomplish a specific goal. A strategy is very flexible and open for adaptation and change when needed.

• Plan vs. Strategy on the Soccer Field



A soccer team with a **plan** to score a goal after a throw-in might begin with a designated player throwing the ball to another specific player. The ball would then be passed to a designated offensive player who would be responsible for shooting the ball into the goal. The succession of moves would be deliberate and would not be adjusted when risks or obstacles to the plan are presented. If their plan doesn't work, they will make a new plan.

A soccer team with a **strategy** to score a goal might begin their play with a throw-in from a few different teammates. The main idea would then be to move the ball forward and pass to an open offensive player who would then shoot the ball at the goal. The succession of moves would be open to adaptation and change if the ball were intercepted or if other players were open to receive the ball. Over time the team will learn what works well, what doesn't work and refine their strategy.

[Click image for larger view.](#)

• Planned Strategy vs. Learned Strategy

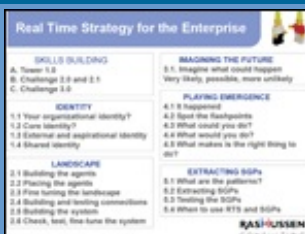
Henry Mintzberg

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More relevant than ever before.

Scholars within the field of strategic thinking talk about either having a planned strategy (Porter) vs. having a learned strategy (Mintzberg). Porter's thinking begins with planning, planning... before doing and works well in a stable and predictable environment. Mintzberg's thinking begins with doing, doing to learn what works and then follow the pattern formed by your past successful "actions/decisions" moving forward. This works well in a changing and dynamic environment.

• Developing a Learned Strategy with LEGO SERIOUS PLAY



Each strategy workshop is customized to meet specific needs. A standard

To do well in today's constantly changing world there is common agreement that Mintzberg's thinking is more suitable than Porter's. However, starting from zero on a learned strategy journey - just doing whatever seems right at the moment - is not a good idea.

To have success with a learned strategy approach you need to build it on a solid foundation of knowing who you are now and what your aspirations are for the future. You need to heed where you are, analyze the opportunities and risks, and find the right questions to

strategy workshop is a 2-day event, where you typically can accomplish what in a traditional process takes 2 to 3 months of sometimes painful meetings.

ask. You need to strategize in a safe mode and play out how your system will react to changes, when future events impact you and your strategy.

Last but not least, you need to have full commitment to strategy. Once this is in place you can "go live" with your strategy and continue to learn what works the best.

The images from the LEGO SERIOUS PLAY strategy workshop show teams building a strong strategy, and also one everyone is committed to implementing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Rasmussen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

[Check out the latest facilitator training schedule](#)

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Rasmussen Consulting specializes in using LEGO SERIOUS PLAY to effectively harvest an organization's collective intelligence to enhance strategic behavior for better and faster decision-making. We are based in Denmark with offices in US, Japan and Singapore. www.rasmussenconsulting.dk.