

What is PATH Strategic Planning?

"PATH" is an acronym for *"Planning Alternative Tomorrows With Hope"*

PATH was developed by [Jack Pearpoint, John O'Brien and Marsha Forest](#) in 1994 as a planning and problem solving strategy for individuals and schools, and the process lends itself well to any group wanting to develop a collaborative and innovative strategic plan. The PATH process encourages participants to visualize a future based on shared values and beliefs. It includes the identification of specific timeframes and accomplishments as well as a description of current and potential resources.

PATH is a creative process for strategic planning. Using graphic facilitation, the PATH process helps individuals and organizations identify their vision of the "ideal future", and develop a plan for achieving it. The process emphasizes creativity and "dreaming big." It is energetic and interactive, involves all the key stakeholders, and challenges us to leave our assumptions about what is possible or impossible aside. Ideally, groups will allocate two to four hours to a PATH process.

A PATH Plan has 8 sections:

1. **The Dream.** This represents the "north star" or long-term goal, and provides direction to the plan. It is high level, and includes your ideals and values.
2. **The Goal.** This examines the dream, and builds a vision of what the dream would look like once manifested. We know that the more tangible a goal is, the more likely you are to achieve it. This is a creative process that encourages participants to imagine themselves in the future.
3. **The Present.** We create an honest description of the current situation. The outcome of this step is to identify the gap between the current situation and the goal; if there isn't enough of a stretch, we revisit the goal.

4. **The People.** This step identifies whom we need to include in the plan; who will support it and help us achieve success? Identify what their contribution can/will be. (As a follow up step, the individuals listed in this section must be approached for their support, and a plan around who will do that is developed.)
5. **Building Strength.** This step identifies what skills, knowledge and competencies will you need in order to achieve the work ahead?
6. **Next Steps.** We identify what needs to occur within the next 1-3 months to move us closer to our goal.
7. **Immediate Steps.** A specific plan identifying what will be done and by whom within the next month. This step identifies responsibilities and timelines.
8. **Commitment.** Individual identified in the last step explore what is needed for them to complete their task(s). This includes a discussion about potential barriers, supports, and blocks. This step is critical to ensure the work does not stall, and the group experiences success over the coming month.

The P.A.T.H. strategic planning process requires two to four hours of time and a safe, quiet, and comfortable space. It is vital that the time be free of distractions. Anyone who owns a beeper or cell phone must leave it behind and everyone must be beyond reach by the office!

- The space must have comfortable seating with refreshments freely available.
- Fifteen – twenty people is an optimal group size, but the process can work with fewer people, as well. With more than twenty, it is challenging to engage all the participants.

PATH

Planning Alternative Tomorrows With Hope by Jack Pearpoint, John O'Brien & Marsha Forest

How are you feeling now?
Use pictures and words to describe the "Now".

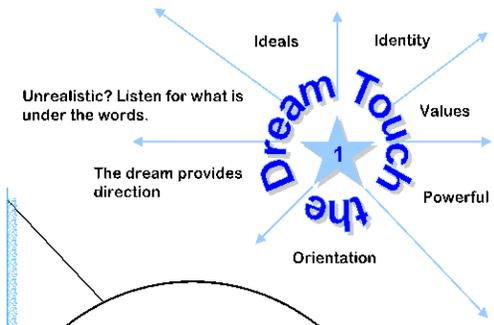
Feeling Summaries

<p>The energy to follow a path comes from the tension between where you are now & where you want to be in the future.</p> <p>3 Grounding in the Now</p> <p>Describe where you are now. What is the present like? "Now" versus the image of success in the future.</p>	<p>Who controls the resources necessary for success? Who do you need to help you?</p> <p>4 Identifying People to Enroll</p> <p>Negotiate an exchange with those who will not enroll or...find a way around them! Be specific!</p>	<p>What do you need to get strong & stay strong as you work toward creating what you want? What knowledge do you need?</p> <p>5 Ways to Build Strength</p> <p>What skills do you need to develop? What relationships do you need to maintain? To succeed, you must have the strength to endure the wait, the disappointments and to regroup & redirect.</p>	<p>Moving from THINKING to ACTION requires commitment to a clear 1st step. What is the biggest barrier to taking the step?</p> <p>8 Committing to the First Step</p> <p>Who will support you in this step? How will you ask for their support? Check for blocks.</p>	<p>Focus the process on action. What will you have to do? By what day? Who does what, when?</p> <p>7 Planning the Next 3 Months</p> <p>To accomplish what you want in the next three months, you will have to take action now—what will you have to do?</p>
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Talk about the differences between how you feel today and one year from now.
Feelings that describe your reactions when you are in the future you are creating.

6
Planning the Next 6 Months

Take action toward what you want to create.
What steps do you have to take over the next six months?
Who will do them?



Possible & Positive
Use the dream to sense the goal.
Imagine that you have worked toward your dream.
Describe the changes that have resulted as if they are real.
What has happened? What have you done?
What does your life look like?
How does it feel?

2
Sensing the Goal