

What is the 'What, Why, How' strategic tool and why is it important?

'What, Why, How' is one of the simplest and most effective strategic planning and communications tools that any social entrepreneur will use. It asks the three basic questions you and your team should be able to answer:

- What do you do?
- Why do you do it?
- How do you do it?

Its primary purpose is as an attention-directing tool for use during the business planning process. You need to have a good understanding of these fundamental questions and answers if your enterprise is to be successful. The tool will help define and refine your strategy by framing the key aspects of your enterprise.

'What, Why, How' is also a marketing and communications tool that can assist you in clearly defining, understanding and communicating what you do, why you do it and how you do it. This will help you feel confident when talking about your enterprise to potential customers or at networking events, which in turn can open up further opportunities for success.

How does the 'What, Why, How' strategic tool work?

You can use the 'What, Why, How' tool at the early stages of writing your business plan and when presenting your social enterprise in a few words. Answering these questions will help you to create your organisational vision and mission as well as define your products and services. It will also help you to think strategically about your enterprise's aims and objectives. 'What, Why, How' is also a particularly helpful and simple tool to come back to when things get complicated.

From the perspective of your enterprise, you should answer the following three questions as if your audience knows nothing about your business:

WHAT

Q: What do you do? Can you tell an investor or a customer precisely what you deliver as an end result? What is the outcome and social impact of your activity? Can you communicate this in a brief and compelling way? One punchy sentence is usually enough.

A: Answers might be "We increase the confidence and employability of young people" or "We decrease the tonnage of rubbish going to landfill".

WHY

Q: Why do you do this? What is your vision? Explain the purpose of your activity, and ultimately the aim of your organisation. This 'why' will inevitably centre on your passion and motivation, but keep it simple and to the point so that you don't ramble or bombard your audience with emotion.

A: Answers might be that you want to address an issue such as "The rate of unemployment amongst young people in social housing: more than 80% of young people between 18 and 24 in social housing are unemployed, and not in education or training."

HOW

Q: How do you fulfil the objectives you have set yourself? Describe the specific activities, products or services you deliver. What are the resources required and what are the outputs? Can you tell an investor or customer what activities, products or services you provide and what makes you different?

A: Answers might be “We offer courses in literacy, numeracy and CV preparation. We provide work experience in our furniture restoration workshops. We also offer counselling, advocacy and advice.”

Once you have the answers to these questions you can use them while:

- writing your business plan
- developing key messages and marketing strategy
- preparing a presentation, such as a sales pitch or asking for investment

Look out for

The ‘What, Why, How’ tool is a tool to help you start with the business planning process; it is meant to assist you in getting the simple things right.

Although this tool can be used on its own at the very early stages of writing a business plan it is meant to be complemented by other useful tools (such as the Balanced Scorecard and the SWOT/PESTLE tool). It can help you define or refine your strategy and other key areas of your business including marketing, operations and social impact.

Once you have covered the ‘What, Why, How’ of your business, you can also ask additional questions which will be of some help in further refining your enterprise ideas. Typically they are:

- **Who?** Who is involved? Who do you work with?
- **When?** What are the time frames involved?
- **Where?** Where do you work? Where is your market?

Further information

Read our guide to market research:

www.blondon.com/SocialEnterprise/Marketing/Salesandmarketing/Marketresearch.aspx

Read our guide on how to define your products and services:

www.blondon.com/SocialEnterprise/Marketing/Salesandmarketing/Definingyourproductsandservices.aspx

Read our guide on setting your aims and objectives:

www.blondon.com/SocialEnterprise/SettingUp/Settingobjectives/Settingaimsandobjectives.aspx

Read our guide on strategic tools: SWOT and PESTLE:

www.blondon.com/SocialEnterprise/Strategy/Strategictools/SWOTandPESTstrategicanalysistools.aspx