

Message from the President, August 2017 Urban Planning: Hint--It's Not the Plan



Kathy Simons (WTSLA Chapter President), Photos © John Livzey, 2017

When it comes to planning, there are two schools of thought: 1) it's a complete waste of time; and 2) it's the most important thing you'll ever do. Here's the rub. They're both right. Don't you hate that? As President Eisenhower advised, plans are dispensable, but planning is not. Now that's not just conceptual dexterity, it's the truth. That's because in contemplating a strategic plan for your life, your career, or the armed retaking of Europe, you are forced to strategically examine virtually every aspect of the endeavor and determine what's important, set priorities, and devise a method for action. Fortunately, Europe was retaken, so we can check that box. That leaves our careers and our lives. Have you got that covered yet?

Some of us do have a plan. And some of us like to think we thought about making a plan once, but forgot to write it down because the Uber arrived, the kettle whistled, or, Ooh!, I got a text. Then again, some of us just have no clue. The good news is that no matter where you fall on that continuum, it's not too late. So, what is the silver bullet, golden panacea, or magic-elixir planning tool that's going to answer all of life's questions, advance my career, and find me a cheap Craftsman in the Hollywood Foothills? Save your breath. There isn't one. Why is that? Because my needs are different than yours. We're all in different places in life and no one tool can possibly address all of the circumstances that WTS-LA members find themselves in. So, what am I on about?



Sorry, guys, this is all about the process. But there are some immutable truths that span nearly every criterion and circumstance. And I'm going to lay them on you. First, don't go it alone. As I've said in past missives, we have a wonderful, diverse group of people in this chapter. Work with them. Use them. And make yourself available as well. But don't only pick friends or people like you or people who agree with you. Reach out to someone new, different, and possibly contentious. Contact that annoying person who always seems to have an opposing viewpoint from yours. You might be surprised. Kites fly highest against the wind...



Next, write it down. Something happens when you write or type out your plan. I don't know why. It just does. It formalizes it. It commits you to it. It's no longer just electrical impulses traversing your neural pathways; it's real. So, write down your plan. Better still, type it, because your plan is going to change. And that leads to the next critical element, change.

This would all be a lot easier if nothing changed. Obviously, life doesn't work like that. So, flexibility is key. But be careful. Your plan shouldn't be so changeable that it's formless. You must have

definitive, decisive steps derived from honest analysis. But realize this. Not only will your life circumstances change for a whole host of reasons—life doesn't stop evolving just because you have a plan—but you will change. The you making a plan today will be a totally different person in one year, five years, ten years, twenty years...But fear not. That's how it's supposed to work. And you'll get to look back on how wonderful and precocious and inventive you were back then when you made the plan in the first place.

Okay, so what does all of this have to do with WTS-LA? Well, what is true for individuals is equally true for organizations. Whether it's a 50,000-person multinational corporation or a small non-profit, carving an effective path forward requires a group-sourced, flexible, strategic plan wherein all participants pull together to implement, amend, effect, and revise the plan. And that is exactly what we've done with WTS-LA. For months, the board has obtained input from the chapter and we're currently developing a comprehensive WTS-LA Strategy Business Plan.

Plans are dispensable, but planning is not. And what is good for WTS-LA is equally good for you. So, take the time. Make a plan. Determine what's important. And take action. Like our chapter, it will help you craft the future you want.