

The First Step to Effective Planning is Getting Started

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these three steps
can help you overcome
your planning inertia



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Humans struggle with inertia every day. Ask anyone who has tried to change their eating habits or get out of bed early for a morning jog. Physics teaches us that an object at rest tends to stay at rest absent an outside force. The same is true for human nature. And that can create challenges when it comes to running a family business.

Long-term planning, such as estate or succession planning, can be particularly dangerous areas for business owners because they often have no clear idea of where to start. That uncertainty can lead to inaction, which can leave a family business without the long-term planning important for its future success.

Going back to physics, we also know an object in motion tends to stay in motion. While taking the first step can be challenging, once you accomplish that task, it's infinitely easier to keep going. Here are three key ways you can overcome inertia and build the momentum you need to develop your long-term plans:

- 1. Find your inspiration:** Inertia often has more to do with uncertainty than a lack of motivation. Therefore, before you start any long-term planning process—whether an estate plan or a succession plan—the first step is to figure out what you want to accomplish. To determine those goals, start by asking yourself what's important to you, from family relationships to personal aspirations. If you're clear on your goals, it will be easier to make sure your planning efforts are heading in the right direction and stay in line with your values.
- 2. Earn some early wins:** Don't forget that big, ambitious goals rest on a foundation of smaller, incremental accomplishments. Start by tackling more modest planning steps to help you gain momentum. Plenty of planning measures are fast and easy to do, yet can meaningfully benefit your situation in the long run. For instance, review and update your beneficiaries on any life insurance or retirement accounts. Doing so will not only get you thinking about the broader future of your family and business, but it can create momentum to address more complex estate and succession planning questions.



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- 3. Keep the big picture in focus:** It's hard to move forward with a plan if there is too much information to process. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then illustrating how pieces of your plan fit together can help simplify things. For instance, consider building a flowchart that shows where your assets will go when you die. Then, you can apply different planning strategies to that chart to illustrate how the different plans can negatively or positively impact those results. These types of illustrations can make the complexities of a plan much easier to understand, which in turn can empower you to keep moving forward in the planning process.

Once you've overcome your initial planning inertia, take steps to maintain your momentum. Outside advisors can keep you moving in the right direction by answering questions that might otherwise impede your planning process. You might need insight on areas such as insurance, taxes, legal, philanthropy and investment banking, to name just a few. Consider appointing one advisor as the quarterback of the process to keep you from being overwhelmed by too much information. Leveraging these specialists and streamlining their advice can help you continue to make progress on a long-term plan that puts your company on the best path forward.

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