

# Strategic Planning for Solo and Small Law Firm Success: Building a Profitable and Sustainable Practice

By BY DARREN P. WURZ

**R**unning a solo or small law firm presents unique challenges and opportunities. As a small firm owner, you may wear a lot of hats—business owner, chief operation officer, chief financial officer, lawyer, etc. You don't have the infrastructure of a larger firm at your disposal.

As a result, it's easy to get bogged down in the day-to-day and lose focus on your long-term goals. This leads to staying stuck in the grind. Strategic business planning provides a roadmap to help you clarify your long-term goals, identify action steps to get there, and stay focused on execution.

This article explores two foundational components of strategic planning—developing a clear business vision and fostering a culture of relentless execution. Together, these elements empower solo and small law firms to grow, differentiate themselves in competitive markets, and achieve lasting success.

## Developing a Clear Business Vision

A strong business vision is the starting point for any strategic plan. It provides direction, inspires the team, and ensures that every decision aligns with long-term goals.

### 1. DEFINING YOUR PURPOSE

The foundation of a strategic vision lies in understanding your law firm's purpose. Why does your firm exist? What values

define your work? This is your higher calling. It should be big and inspiring—bigger than simply your practice area or making money. Establishing a purpose statement that reflects your firm's mission ensures clarity for your team and clients alike.

For example, Tesla's purpose statement is: *"To accelerate the world's transition to clean energy."* Notice how big and inspiring this purpose statement is. It's not about cars or making money, it's about impacting the world and making a difference.

Supporting this are your firm's core values, which shape your firm's culture and client relationships. Core values should be your first exercise in developing your business plan. Your core values should reflect your unique personality as a law firm owner and as a law firm. They should be things that truly set you apart from other law firms.

Dispose of the overly used words like integrity, hardworking, excellence. These are vague and uninspiring. Use phrases to make your core values more specific and unique to you. For example, replace integrity with something like "commitment to the truth." Your core values become your guiding principles for hiring, employee reviews, and how you interact with clients.

### 2. CRAFTING A BIG GOAL

Your firm's 10-year vision—or "Big Hairly Audacious Goal" (BHAG)—is the ultimate destination. This goal challenges the

firm to dream big while staying rooted in its core values. Your big goal should be huge—bigger than you think possible.

There is some special magic in crafting a big goal. In their book *10x Is Easier Than 2x*, Dan Sullivan and Ben Hardy make this case. When your goal is to multiple your business by 10, rather than 2, you start to think differently, you think less about how hard you have to work and more about the infrastructure you need to build. I challenge you to make a 10-year 10x goal for your business.

Achieving this vision is easier than you think. Take your 10x goal and break that down to 5 years, 1 year, and 90 days. What revenue and profit do you need to achieve at those intervals to be on track to your 10x goal? And what KPIs (key performance indicators) do you need to reach to achieve your goals at those intervals? These become the targets for your business.

## 3. TRANSLATING VISION INTO ACTION STEPS

A vision without action is merely a dream. Once you know your KPIs and goals, you can determine what action steps you need to take along the journey to your 10-year vision. Break it into achievable milestones:

- **3-5 Year Strategic Intent:** Define the key moves required to stay on track toward your 10-year vision.
- **Annual Goals:** Focus on measurable outcomes that align with your long-term objectives.



•**Quarterly Priorities (or “Rocks”):** Break down your annual goals into bite size chunks that you can achieve each quarter. These are not your ordinary business operations—these are things that will move your business forward toward reaching your 10-year vision.

## Building a Culture of Relentless Execution

While a vision sets the destination, execution ensures progress. Many business plans fail not because they lack ambition, but because they falter in implementation. For solo and small firms, creating a culture of relentless execution is essential.

### 1. ACCOUNTABILITY AND TEAM ALIGNMENT

Accountability drives results. Weekly team meetings help align goals, address obstacles, and ensure follow-through. Even in a small firm, clearly defined roles and responsibilities prevent inefficiencies and ensure everyone is rowing in the same direction. Have a clearly defined and timed agenda for these meetings to ensure efficiency.

### 2. Establishing Operational Rhythm

Consistency fosters progress. Implement regular reviews to evaluate performance and refine strategies:

•**Weekly Meetings:** Align the team, review KPIs and rocks, and solve immediate challenges.

•**Monthly Reviews:** Analyze key performance indicators (KPIs) and adjust tactics, review employee progress.

•**Quarterly Planning Sessions:** Assess broader progress and set new priorities, review employee performance.

•**Annual Leadership Retreats:** Reflect on the firm’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT).

These routines create a cadence of progress that keeps the firm moving toward its long-term vision.

### 3. MEASURING SUCCESS THROUGH METRICS

What gets measured gets improved. Establish KPIs that reflect your firm’s goals. Measure these weekly with your team so that you know where you’re heading. For example, a family law practice might track new client acquisitions, case resolution times, and client satisfaction scores. Use this data to inform decisions and identify areas for improvement.

### 4. OVERCOMING COMMON CHALLENGES

Execution is not without hurdles. Small firms often face limited resources and

competing priorities. Address these by focusing on efficiency: streamline processes, delegate effectively, and invest in tools that reduce administrative burdens. Mitigate risks by staying adaptable to market changes and client needs.

## Conclusion

Strategic planning is not just a tool for large firms. It is a necessity for solo and small law practices striving for long-term success. By developing a clear business vision and building a culture of relentless execution, solo and small law firms can thrive in a competitive legal landscape.

The journey begins with a single step. What’s yours? ■

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