BLOG POST:	**MILESTONE MAP-PLAN**
SUCCINCT.CO.NZ:	Business Planning Tip

Need to communicate your business plan to attention deficit stakeholders? … or perhaps just get smart feedback on your plan.
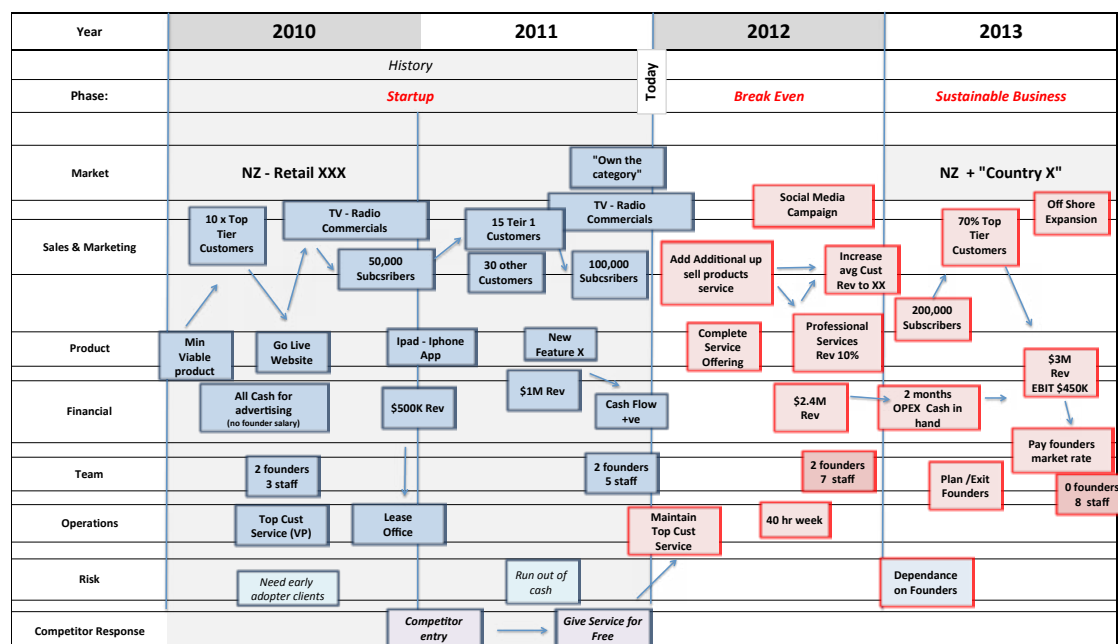
Creating a one-page milestone map-plan on a chart is a great way to keep you, your team and advisors focused. With a small list of tactics and key measures you have a far greater chance of achieving your desired end result.

Many business growth strategies fall apart at the transition point between creating key strategic themes and establishing a set of measurable tactical tasks and goals. Too many businesses end up with huge lists of tactics, most of which will only get token attention, with the end result being the plan never being executed.

This technique will force you up front, to prioritise and rationalise your tactical list of things to do. The milestone map-plan is a great way to succinctly communicate your business plan both past, present and future to all stakeholders of your business. Particularly when you are seeking intelligent feedback and buy-in from potential investors and staff whose attention spans are limited.

A fictitious example of a web company is shown below to illustrate the technique. (click the chart image for larger view)

Coy XYZ - **Milestone Map-Plan**

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013
	History (Today →)		Break Even	Sustainable Business
Phase:	*Startup*		*Break Even*	*Sustainable Business*
Market	NZ - Retail XXX	"Own the category"	Social Media Campaign	NZ + "Country X" / Off Shore Expansion
Sales & Marketing	10 x Top Tier Customers; TV - Radio Commercials; 50,000 Subscribers	15 Teir 1 Customers; 30 other Customers; TV - Radio Commercials; 100,000 Subscribers	Add Additional up sell products service; Increase avg Cust Rev to XX	70% Top Tier Customers; 200,000 Subscribers
Product	Min Viable product; Go Live Website	Ipad - Iphone App; New Feature X	Complete Service Offering; Professional Services Rev 10%	$3M Rev EBIT $450K
Financial	All Cash for advertising (no founder salary); $500K Rev	$1M Rev; Cash Flow +ve	$2.4M Rev; 2 months OPEX Cash in hand	
Team	2 founders 3 staff	2 founders 5 staff	2 founders 7 staff; Plan /Exit Founders	Pay founders market rate; 0 founders 8 staff
Operations	Top Cust Service (VP)	Lease Office	Maintain Top Cust Service; 40 hr week	
Risk	*Need early adopter clients*	*Run out of cash*		Dependance on Founders
Competitor Response		*Competitor entry*; *Give Service for Free*		

Tips on using the milestone map-plan:

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- Limit yourself to max of 10 milestones per year – prioritise the top 10 that will influence or measure success
- Split your milestones across different functional areas. Add rows to suit your business but make sure you include at least finance, market, process and people.
- List the last 1-2 years to help provide flow
- Include additional boxes on key risks and your competitor's response, both historic and forecast.
- Do not fill the chart with activities that will naturally happen unless they help with the understanding of the plan
- This is not a product roadmap –list only major product releases/events
- Put it up on the wall by your desk for daily review

The milestone map-plan is great for helping all staff members focus on tasks that will help you achieve your goals, as well as showing the dependencies of tasks.

If you find yourself or your staff overtime not executing tasks on the plan then its time to challenge the map-plan and test out whether "the plan is still relevant". If not change the map-plan o**therwise re prioritise your work.**

Put your plan up for continual challenge with advisors and staff. Do not be afraid to throw it out when the environment changes. Do not fall into the trap of "the law of committees"

"If a committee is allowed to discuss something long enough, it will inevitably vote to implement their idea, simply because so much work has already been done on it."

If the plan is no good say so and do something about it.

Succinct visual tools like this and the business model canvas, create powerful discussions very quickly and maximise interaction time.
More importantly they increase the probability of success.

For More on this and Related Topics: check out Mark Robotham's blog www.succinct.co.nz.

In particular the top tips category: http://succinctstories.wordpress.com/category/a-gmc-top-tip/