

Start-up Mega Planning—A Case History

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ABSTRACT

Social Responsibility is becoming a key issue for organizations today. They talk about it and they make social contributions, but how do we know if anything is being achieved? A framework is required and has existed at least since 1992. Roger Kaufman's Mega Planning has slowly gathered momentum in organizations worldwide. For a faster take-up we propose Start-up Mega Planning. This uses Kaufman's original model,

which is more easily communicated, and fast tracks any organization into much of the benefits of Mega: stakeholder involvement, innovative approach, improved client relations and success beyond "sustainability." Australian case history shows the simplicity this brings to planning, and the benefits of having all stakeholders aligned. In addition, the more sophisticated Mega model awaits as the next step, with further benefits.

Introduction

While among organizations worldwide there is a growing movement towards social responsibility, there is minimal acknowledgement of the requirement for a framework that could define societal good in performance terms, and measure the real progress that comes from good aims and intentions. Nor is there much awareness that a fully developed framework for social responsibility has existed at least since the publication of Roger Kaufman's Strategic Planning *Plus* (Kaufman, 1992). Kaufman first wrote on this question much earlier (Kaufman, 1972), later suggesting the framework and term Mega (Kaufman & English, 1979). As enthusiasts for Mega Planning since

our first meetings with Kaufman in 1988-90, we have frequently asked ourselves what is the blockage? Why doesn't Mega Planning, which offers better ways to invent the future and new hope for the world's problems, gain adherents more rapidly? Why is this approach, which is both ethical and practical, not easily seen as an organizational imperative? Nevertheless, the model has been successfully introduced into a number of organizations both private and public, spanning different countries and continents. But nobody claims that it has been easily or widely taken up.

Objections

We have found that consultants talking to their clients encounter three major points of opposition:

(1) “We’re focusing on the bottom line right now and don’t have time to think beyond that”; (2) “It’s too hard/complicated/impractical, too ‘big’” and (3) “We can’t see the payoff that would justify it.” In response to this we offer what we call Startup Mega Planning—a simpler form that derives directly from the Kaufman model that Ronald Forbes and Dylan Forbes first knew, and that leaves aside the complexity of the full model as it has since developed (Kaufman, 2000; Kaufman, Oakley-Browne, Watkins, & Leigh, 2003). This approach gives all the benefits that you should expect from the early phase of a full Mega Planning program, and ensures that an organization is results-driven, innovative, and fully aimed at a better future—for everyone.

What then happens after Start-up? There are two choices: (1) stay with it—it will never run out of steam, or (2) raise the bar and move, when ready, to the more sophisticated model where you will find further benefits.

Start-up Mega Planning

To show you the simplicity of our approach, let us go straight to the heart of all Mega Planning.

Ideal Vision

Mega Planning begins from the belief and assumption that the primary purpose of every person and every organization is to create a better world for the Child of Tomorrow—The Ideal Vision. We follow Kaufman’s Minimum Ideal Vision, which states:

All people will live in a healthy, positive, safe, and satisfying environment where all things both

survive and thrive. There will be no losses of life or elimination or reduction of levels of well-being, survival, self-sufficiency, quality of life, livelihood, or loss of property from any source. Poverty will not exist, and every person will earn at least as much as it costs to live (unless they are progressing toward being self-sufficient and self-reliant). No adult will be under the care, custody, or control of another person, agency, or substance. All adult citizens will be self-sufficient and self-reliant as minimally indicated by their consumption being equal to or less than their production.

Is this too idealistic? Only if we assume we get there immediately. Not if we choose it as an ideal towards which we aim. The following is what we call “Kaufman’s question”:

What is the world you want for tomorrow’s child? If your organization is not contributing to create that, then what is it doing?

This has to be one of the most powerful questions you can ask yourself. We know people who, having considered this, immediately changed jobs.

Is this Ideal Vision merely a construct of the Western mind? Will it work in other cultures? Kaufman has tested and refined it on five continents with many cultures, political orientations, and religions, and has found broad acceptance (Kaufman, personal communication, March, 14, 2002). Some want to add to it, and that is fine.

Moreover, the Ideal Vision is measurable. We can legitimately aim to increase positive indicators of wellbeing and reduce every negative indicator to zero: disease, accident, murder, rape, war—even death.

The Differences

Starting from this agreed Ideal Vision, we proceed to plan at the five levels of Kaufman's Organizational Elements Model (Kaufman 1992, 2003). The differences in Start-up Mega Planning are found in relation to the Ideal Vision and first three levels. A full comparison is provided in Table 1. We would like to make it clear that we do not disagree with any aspect of the full Mega model. Our aim is to present the essential elements of Mega Planning in a way that can be most easily understood and put into practice.

Mega Planning

Having agreed on the Ideal Vision, you now consider what part of it your organization will commit to contribute. It might be in the field of communication or transport, education, health or self-sufficiency. In our case study, it is mainly shelter (work areas). Whatever you select, your plans and your success will fit within this Ideal Vision and therefore your actions can only serve to create it, such as improved levels of education and health. Likewise, you agree that nothing you do will detract from it—you will not contribute to ill health or accidents, poverty, pollution or environmental degradation.

Will your organization be able to significantly affect these indicators for the whole world? Usually not, ex-

cept in so far as you set an example and others eventually follow. However, you can certainly influence these indicators for a part of the world: your organization, your town, your state, perhaps even your country.

In regard to the public sector, it is our belief that organizations can only justify their existence by the contribution they make at the Mega level. What other justification can they have? (Kaufman, 1992; Forbes, 1998).

Start-up is generous in what it is willing to include at the Mega level. It is our view that this approach links with the concepts of Positive Psychology and Appreciative Inquiry (Case Western University, 2001-2005) in that our aim is to focus on the positives and strengths and build from them. Start-up is also prepared to operate with the language of the client. In our case

study, sometimes even the term "Mega" is not used, nor Ideal Vision! In general, Start-up puts a premium on communicating simplicity.

Similarly, in the case study, the Australian Defense Department preserves heritage buildings—this is very important in a country that has only two centuries of European settlement. Heritage is a contribution to both the education and the pleasure of citizens, hence we accept it as Mega. In Start-up Mega we are

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also willing to accept the growing research into the measurement of happiness and its importance to humans. Happiness, too, we accept as a Mega Outcome.

Macro Planning

At this level you are planning for your organizational success. What Objectives will your organization set for its own success (always within the Mega framework) and how will you measure them? These objectives may include such factors as market share, profitability, geographic reach, and anything about which you can say (and measure) “When we reach this, we are successful.”

Micro Planning

Within the organization there are many Objectives and Targets to be met by divisions, teams and individuals—production and sales targets, staff development targets... Because these are set within the Macro and Mega frameworks, every one of them also contributes to the Ideal Vision. Having such integrated Objectives limits the possibility of internal misunderstanding and conflicts, and realizes a synergy of effort. It is this alignment that assures that the contributions of individuals and organizations add value to external clients and our shared world.

While full Mega Planning carefully delimits its Micro objectives, the Start-up approach accepts that any product that makes a contribution to society and the environment may be worthy of specific mention at the Mega level. For example, in our case study, the Australian Department of Defence increases employment in the community, and through training, increases the skills levels of its employ-

ees. We regard both these as having Mega components though they are obviously Micro objectives.

Process

This is the level of “doing” in the organization—what will you be doing to achieve the three levels of planning? Production plants, IT, Financial controls... None of this activity has value to the organization unless it is justified and designed for the purpose of meeting the agreed Objectives.

Inputs

What will you require to succeed with this—people, finance, material resources? The resources available are allocated according to prioritized needs at the three levels of planning.

Integration

Objectives and results at each of the lower levels will contribute at the Mega level. However, this is not always obvious to clients, their staff, customers or to the community. To make clear what you are really doing, Start-up recommends that you specify and proclaim any significant Mega impacts from your activities at the other levels, in order to increase the sense of morale, purpose and unity at every level of your organization.

The Challenge of Mega

It is too much to expect that an organization can immediately create and operate with the perfect Mega Plan. A factory could be currently polluting, or using non-sustainable resources such as old growth timber. A government entity could have non-ergonomic facilities or unhealthy premises or poor focus on its clients’ wellbeing. The challenges now come into view. Strangely enough, compa-

nies that have taken on such challenges have amazed themselves by finding how quickly they can better their ways—and how profitable that can be! As an example, we refer you to the literature of Natural Capitalism (Lovins, Lovins, & Hawkins, 1999-2004). We are not just talking about sacrifice (though initially there may be some), we are talking about innovation and discovering greatly improved ways to operate and hence be successful.

Competitive Advantage

Let us consider your competitive advantage. Rather than trying to create a market for your product, from the outset you are identifying the problems of society and the environment that require solutions. This puts you ahead of the game. You are providing the things that people have to have if they are to live better—without sacrificing other qualities of life in order to obtain them (for example, providing the benefits of affordable transport without associated pollution/accidents).

Impacts

There are several levels of impact arising from this process. Firstly, the employees love it. Why? Because people everywhere are concerned about the consequences of pollution and accidents and poorly directed education, and all of the issues that make a difference in achieving the Ideal Vision. When they understand that in their work they are contributing to this Vision, their enthusiasm for the organization increases, their pride in what they do, their willingness to contribute effort and ideas, to support your customers and to be your PR agents.

Secondly, the customers appreciate that you go beyond the written contract and contribute to them as people, as well as to the organization and its overall success. They prefer your services and become more loyal. Furthermore, they like dealing with your happy employees.

Thirdly, the community. They are heartened to know that your organization cares in the same way that they do. They are glad to be involved through consultation processes and to offer their ideas and support.

Fourthly, the regulators—they devote their efforts to the regulation of pollution, working conditions and quality. And you are right there with them—even ahead of them. You are a model for modern industry and organization (Humphries & Forbes, 1993).

But perhaps the greatest success bonus of all in Mega Planning generally is that you can, in most cases, plan in partnership with your stakeholders and show everyone how they can be more successful. The simplification of Start-up Mega Planning, makes it a great deal easier to do this. It becomes simpler to communicate across boundaries and to convince others of what you are doing.

It should be clear now why the organization that begins to Mega Plan has the greatest chance of being sustainable—and thriving—in a fast changing world. It will also become an employer of choice which means that it can recruit the best people to carry it forward to success.

Is that all there is to Start-up Mega Planning? That's the heart of it. We believe it is enough to convince others to begin and to accelerate the take up. There are issues of detail such as writing good objectives with measurable results, cost-conse-

quence analysis, stakeholder meetings, brainstorming, feedback loops, and so forth, but ISPI members will have some familiarity with those.

Table 1 summarizes the differences between Start-up and full Mega Planning.

Startup Mega Planning Case History: WB+

We now turn to the story of one of our clients. Woods Bagot is an international architectural design and consulting firm providing design

and project management solutions to both the public and private sector. The company has grown and been successful for over 135 years. It has offices in the capital cities of Australia, and in Singapore, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Dubai, and London. In 1994, the company obtained ISO 9001 accreditation.

Peter Hoskins was a Lieutenant Colonel with the Australian Defence Force. As Manager of large areas of New South Wales for the Facilities Branch, he experienced Leaderskill

Table 1
Start-up Mega Planning vs. the Full Model: The Differences

Level	Full Mega	Start-up Mega
MEGA	Defines Mega as the Ideal Vision.	Keeps Mega as a specific contribution selected from the Ideal Vision .
	Defines Society to include Environment “as it affects society,” thus refers to Societal Impact only as forming the “Second Bottom Line.”	Recognizes the independent existence of Environment and its interdependence with Society by always using the two words in conjunction.
MACRO	Integrates Mega (Ideal Vision) as part of the organization’s success measures, thus creating the Organization’s Mission.	Keeps Mega and Macro levels as related sets of Objectives that can be more easily understood, thus retaining the separate identities of Ideal Vision, Mega and Macro.
	Does not identify as Mega any contributions whose main focus is the organization’s success.	Is flexible in accepting as Mega any implied contributions from Macro objectives that make demonstrable and measurable contributions to society and environment, and that will have significant importance to stakeholders, <i>i.e.</i> recognize and build on strengths.
MICRO	Defines the “building-blocks of success.” Leaves their contributions to Mega to be implied by the model.	As above, also accepts any implied contributions to Mega from Micro objectives that will have significant importance to stakeholders.
ALL LEVELS	Teaches and applies the full model, tools and terminology.	Uses the client’s existing strategic planning tools and language where desired and possible, making it easier to get “ownership” while staying always within the model.

Group's Customer programs. As a result, he attended one of Roger Kaufman's workshops on Mega Planning and was immediately converted to the concept.

In 1998, Peter left the ADF to join Woods Bagot as their Manager Defence Consulting, later becoming Manager of the WB+ Property Solutions Division formed in 2001. Peter was given the brief to provide strategic planning, project management and related services in the areas of capital works and facilities management. The road was open for him to consider Mega Planning, and Leaderskill was invited to present a one-day workshop to the WB+ team on 14 November 2002.

First Attempt

The management team responded enthusiastically to the workshop and immediately began to apply ideas from it, yet the concept was not fully grasped and was felt by some to be "woolly." However, Peter had not expected to achieve everything in a day, and a second workshop was held in April of 2003. This time, the ideas hit home and everyone began to see benefits.

In what follows, Peter Hoskins describes the experience of introducing Start-up Mega Planning.

Our Preparation

We all began to see the simplicity of it. As we go through our own planning in advance, we describe the client's situation as it is now (the *What is*), we describe clearly the future that we want (the results/pay-offs—the Desired Outcome or *What should be*) and we don't talk about the Means (how we will get there) until

we are clear about the gaps in results to be closed. By focusing first on the Outcome or Mega level—the broad societal and external clients' results that we are aiming for—we steer everyone in our team right away from the more conventional starting point: the means and resources that are going to be required. We also define how we are going to measure our results (our Measures and Indicators).

Meeting With the Client

Our next step is to meet with the client and workshop the same thing, and they get really enthusiastic about the fact that we have a clear agreement between us about what they will have at the end of the work, and how they will measure it and ensure that they really got delivery.

As we go through this process with them, we sort the Results they want into Mega, Macro and Micro. In the past, the client would have jumped straight to nuts and bolts—how were we going to do it and how much would it cost, and where could we cut costs. Now, as they think through the Mega level with us, they realize that in practice a lot of it means areas in which they are legally obliged to comply.

Mega With the Public Sector

For our Australian Defence contracts, the basic areas they have to consider are:

- **Environment**—many Defence properties are of significant environmental value, and Government requires sound environmental management.
- **Heritage**—many Defence facilities are in old buildings with historic worth to our nation and

culture that must be protected for both the learning and the pleasure of future generations.

- **Safety**—a key issue (e.g., death or illness from asbestos, spread of disease, workplace OH&S). In general, the health and well-being of all stakeholders (Defence personnel, contractors and the community) must be considered.
- **Equity**—Defence is an EEO employer and also must consider community issues and the needs and wants of other stakeholders—equity of results and consequences for all parties involved.
- **Security**—here we have to think both global and local, so that we are not under the “custody, or control of another person, agency...” (Minimum Ideal Vision).
- **Defence capability**—we are seeking to protect the peace.

All of these contribute, if properly managed, to our Ideal Vision of the Future, and make up the questions that have to be thought through before we can do anything.

We then move on to Macro, success measures for the client, and then to Micro, the objectives that the client groups and individuals must attain in order to succeed at the Macro and Mega levels. We make sure that these three levels are aligned to assure both the effectiveness and the efficiency of everything we do, use and deliver.

Talking About Means

Once we have done all that, we talk Means with the client: first the Processes they will use and then the Inputs they will require. They are delighted when they realize that we have provided them with a simple

structure that describes exactly what they will get, what will be required, and that guarantees and measures results at every stage. Both they and we can prove that there is value for money for all stakeholders involved.

When we first saw how this was going, we thought “We can put this into Report Writer and automate the whole thing.” However, that turned out to be too “bureaucratic” as a way of working. Instead we found a much freer style. We brainstormed each project as a mind map using MindManager[®] software and then, when we had come up with all the imaginative ideas, we used the software conversion process to turn it into an Excel spreadsheet. We could then take the spreadsheet to the client and sit down with them and fill in all the boxes.

We felt that we couldn’t talk to every client about “Mega Planning” as such but rather talked just about the “broader implications” with some. Even our own people sometimes have said “Mega could be too much for the client” but in fact, almost all our clients have listened attentively and found it a very productive framework. Still, we haven’t talked to any of them about the Ideal Vision—but when the time is right, we will.

The Private Sector

The approach has been equally successful for us in the private sector. The aviation industry, for example is bound by a large number of regulations, including health and safety (Mega contributions). This results in the necessity of gaining agreement between human resources and industrial relations areas. In addition, there is a requirement to develop facilities without interrupting the flow of passengers, something that

would negatively impact on sales. As economy airlines come into existence, the quality of service for full fare-paying customers becomes even more important (Macro). Security is also an issue and workers must not be able to enter secure passenger areas (Mega).

In the case of Darwin International Airport in the Northern Territory, there is an additional factor in that runways must be shared with military aircraft, and markings have to be managed correctly. These two examples show results at all three levels of planning.

At the University of Wollongong, NSW, it is a requirement that facilities be planned in new ways that will deliver off-campus technology. There are also key environmental issues such as waste handling, maintenance and whole-of-life cost, including lighting and air conditioning. There are community impacts, such as kinds of research, links to community and local infrastructure and gaining industrial support for research. All of these areas have implications at the Mega level and cascade easily down to success of the University (Macro) and to teaching standards, lighting, facilities sharing, and so forth (Micro). The approach has obvious similarities to the Defence examples above.

Bringing it Together

Once these issues are identified, we take them along to a Stakeholder

Workshop and have everyone think through the part of it that concerns them. When we have the Objectives all clearly defined, we have a framework that we can give to the designers and say “Now give us your idea of how you can create these Results.” This structured briefing places new challenges on designers while providing them with a strong review framework.

Since we have taken up this approach fully, we have found that all

the bits and pieces of project and design work that used to lie around unconnected and unresolved suddenly have a place and a priority. The approach gives real insight into what has to be achieved, and is a great way of communicating to contractors and suppliers what they have to do. In quality terms, we

create an “agreed plan” and work to it. Or we can see where we should add to it.

It is worth noting that for most of the companies working in our field, the submission (response to tender) is thrown away as soon as the tender is won, and then there follow long and difficult discussions about what are the best processes to use. Using Mega Planning, the submission *becomes* the plan, containing the restraints and opportunities, and the measures of Results to be achieved. This provides a valuable framework for performance evaluation at a time when our clients are moving towards formal performance reporting.

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It has been really interesting for us to discover, as we map out work with our clients, that Mega often turns out to be almost one half of the project! Instead of it being something we have to find space for to fit in at the end, it becomes the set of drivers for the entire project. At the end of the day, it is as much “good project management” as it is socially and environmentally responsible.

Results

Critical to success of the process has been the holding of workshops with clients, suppliers and other stakeholders in order to agree objectives at each level. Response from these groups has been very positive. Furthermore, having agreed objectives at the Mega level, everything else falls into place—including the “how” (Process) and the “how much” (Inputs) that used to have the most immediate attention.

Although the approach is relatively recent, some results from projects can already be reported as follows:

1. Project to identify a new Army training area in Western Australia:

- Community concerns and environmental restraints were identified first in order to meet objectives at the Mega level
- This led to increased cooperation between the three levels of government—Federal, State, and Local (Mega and Macro objectives).
- A key discriminator was discovered—proximity to hospital support—that had not been recognized by the client—meeting safety objectives at the Mega level.

2. Country Fire Authority of State of Victoria:

- Potential savings of 20% of fire station construction costs through focusing on identification of delivery of useful services rather than on equipment and building requirements (Mega and Macro objectives).
- Work practices identified as the most significant impediment to reduced building costs. In this case, the solution is long-term (Mega, Macro and Micro objectives) with resources saved available for investment in other areas.

3. Property redevelopment for Department of Defence at the historical Randwick Barracks site in Sydney:

- Planning process considered Mega and Macro objectives to identify the needs of community and local council stakeholders. This resulted in a cost saving of between AU\$5 and 8 million by (1) avoiding conflict when the project was submitted to the State Land & Environment Court for approval and (2) capital works savings.

Closing Thoughts

Using the Start-up approach, the WB+ team is doing so much Mega Planning now that there are moments when we ask ourselves “Are we really doing this? It’s so simple. It’s all just a process!” And of course, it *is* just a process, a way of thinking that sorts everything into a usable order and priorities, gets everyone the results they wanted, and aims towards the Ideal Vision—the World for Tomorrow’s Child—that we all want.

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*Recommended reading

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