
A SURVEY ON STRATEGIC PLANNING PRACTICES¹

Rafael A. Rodriguez²

The study describes the results of a questionnaire survey on strategic planning practices among 36 companies in the financial services, manufacturing, utilities, and other service sectors. The study describes planning practices in terms of process, linkages, administration, timing, and outputs and also provides data on the length of experience with formal strategic planning among firms in the sectors. The study shows both similarities and differences in planning practices among the sample companies.

Strategic planning in business organizations is generally understood as a process which defines the broad objectives of a firm as well as the means for achieving them (Chandler, 1962). The latter are usually expressed in the form of competitive "strategies," hence the term strategic planning.

The use of formal strategic planning processes, or what may be called strategic planning systems, became common practice in large U.S. business firms since the early seventies with the General Electric Company being among the well known pioneers (Bower, et al., 1991). Advocates emphasize two advantages of strategic planning over the traditional annual budgeting process. These are:

1. the use of longer planning time horizons; and
2. explicit and more systematic assessment of future external conditions as a basis for current planning decisions.

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²Rafael A. Rodriguez is Manuel Villar Professor at the College of Business Administration, University of the Philippines.

Although some published literature on strategic planning practices among Philippine firms exist (Soriano and Nehrt, 1989), these are in the form of case studies and describe neither the extent of practice nor the variations in practice among Philippine firms. This paper describes the results of a questionnaire survey, conducted in 1991, on strategic planning practices among companies represented in the Corporate Planning Society of the Philippines (CPSP). The paper provides descriptive information on strategic planning practices in a somewhat diverse (in size and industry classification) sample of firms which make up the membership of the Society.

Survey Methodology

Since the survey was limited to the member companies of the CPSP, the choice of the aspects of corporate planning practice to study was partly determined by the interests of the membership of the Society. Nevertheless, a broad descriptive framework proposed by Calingo and Camillus (1985) was used in drawing up the questionnaire to ensure the inclusion of aspects of strategic planning practice which are of general interest. In this framework, strategic planning systems are described in terms of five main aspects:

1. Process
2. Linkages
3. Administration

4. Timing
5. Outputs

The first refers to several characteristics of the planning activity which include the planning scope, the extent of involvement of various organizational levels, and the formality of the process. Planning scope in this survey was viewed in terms of the comprehensiveness of the analytic process used and the coverage of the planning outputs. Vancil and Lorange (1976) have suggested that the strategic planning process tends to be less formalized and less comprehensive in scope in smaller firms, as well as in large firms new to formal strategic planning.

The second aspect is concerned with the tightness of the linkage between strategic planning and operations planning. A "tight" linkage emphasizes realism in the plans, whereas a "loose" linkage encourages more creative ideas among planners (Shank, et. al., 1973).

"Administration" refers primarily to the role and influence of the strategic planning staff in the planning process. This can vary from being in the nature of a purely technical support function, at one extreme, to that of decision making on substantive aspects of the plan, on the other. Intermediate roles (Camillus, 1985) were also included in the questionnaire.

"Timing" refers to the length of the planning time horizon and the frequency of the review of the plan. In this survey, only the former is included since the survey focuses on the planning rather than the implementation phase.

The last characteristic describes the extent to which the elements of a complete strategic plan, e.g., mission statements, long term objectives, strategies, strengths and weakness, opportunities and threats, etc., are included in the written strategic plan of the firm.

The survey questionnaire (Appendix A) was pretested among a number of member companies selected by the CPSP Board of Directors. The final questionnaire was mailed to the highest ranking individual³ representing each of the 53 corporate members of the Society in August, 1991.

Profile of Respondents

Thirty-six (36) firms returned usable responses, reflecting a 68 percent return rate. The respondents may be grouped by industry sector as follows:

Industry	Number of Respondents	Percent
Financial Services (banking, insurance and investment)	14	39
Manufacturing	10	28
Utilities	6	16.5
All Others (retail/trade, consultancy and training, and other sectors)	6	16.5
Total	36	100

The large representation from the financial services sector is reflective of the profile of the CPSP general membership where 40 percent belong to this sector.

The firms are preponderantly Filipino-owned, with some foreign-owned and joint venture companies as well, viz:

Ownership Category	No. of Companies	Percent
Filipino-owned	25	70
Foreign-owned	6	16
Joint venture b/w Filipino and foreign interests	5	14
Total	36	100

In terms of size, the respondent companies are heterogeneous. The range in 1990 revenues is from a low of P20 million to a high of P44 billion. The size distribution of the respondents is shown by clusters below:

1990 Revenues (in million pesos)	No. of Companies	Percent
20 - 597	12	33
1,000 - 4,139	11	31
6,000 - 12,839	5	14
17,000 - 44,000	4	11
No answer	4	11
Total	36	100

³Some companies were represented by several individuals in the Society.

The size variation is also reflected in the employment measure which ranges from a low of 18 employees to a high of 36,000 employees. The respondents are distributed by clusters, as follows:

Size of employment	No. of Respondents	Percent
18 - 100	5	14
200 - 700	11	30.5
834 - 2,400	11	30.5
3,300 - 36,000	9	25
Total	36	100

The larger firms tend to be in the manufacturing, utilities, and financial services industries as shown in the table below.

Industry	Ave. 1990 Revenues (in million pesos)	Ave. 1990 Employment
Manufacturing	11,586	5,326
Utilities	9,548	7,102
Financial Services	2,467	1,610
Others	230	361

Extent of Practice of Strategic Planning

As may be expected, the majority of the respondents (30 firms or 83 percent) practises formal strategic planning. The Manufacturing sector accounts for three of the remaining six firms which reportedly did no formal strategic planning. Of the three, two are relatively large firms with revenues of P3 billion and P6 billion for 1990. The third manufacturer and the other three firms are medium-sized companies with revenues ranging from P318-P545 million.

Over sixty percent of the companies which conducted strategic planning practised it for only five years or less:

Years of Planning Practice	No. of Companies	Percent
1-3 years	7	23
3-5 years	10	34
5-10 years	6	20
Over 10 years	7	23
Total	30	100

The companies in the Financial Services and the Manufacturing sectors generally reported longer experiences with strategic planning when compared with those in the other sectors (bottom table).

The companies which reported more than ten years of strategic planning practice were all among the larger firms in the sample.

Main Study Findings

The questionnaire responses are described below under the five aspects of strategic planning systems design

Years of SP Practice	Sectors					
	Financial		Manufacturing		All Others	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1-3 years	2	15	1	13	4	40
3-5 years	3	23	2	29	5	50
5-10 years	4	31	2	29	—	—
over 10 years	4	31	2	29	1	10
Total	13	100	7	100	10	100

previously discussed, not necessarily in the order in which the questionnaire items appear in the survey instrument.

A. Process

The survey items which are covered in this section include Questions 1, 2, 6, and 10.

As previously mentioned, the majority of the respondents indicated that they conducted formal strategic planning (refer to bottom table).

However, if one takes the presence of a *written* strategic plan as the indicator of the formalization of the process, a smaller proportion of the respondents (27 firms or 75 percent) can be said to practise formal strategic planning.

Taking the number of planning steps used by the firm as a measure of "comprehensiveness" of the planning activity, we find that most firms report "comprehensive" planning processes. This is somewhat surprising given the large difference in size among the firms in the sample. Nevertheless, firms in Manufacturing and in Financial Services appear to use relatively more comprehensive planning processes, and this is consistent with the longer planning experience reported by these firms relative to the others.

Sector	Ave. Number of Planning Steps Reported
Manufacturing	9.5
Financial Services	8.9
Utilities	7.2
Others	8.75
All Firms	8.74

The ranking of the different planning steps in terms of the frequency of inclusion in the firms' planning processes is shown below:

Planning Steps	No. of Companies	Percent
Annual Company Budget	27	100
Annual Departmental Goals	26	96
Company Mission	25	93
Strategies	25	93
Long Term Programs	25	93
Opportunities and Threats	24	89
Long Term Objectives and Goals	23	85
Environmental Forecasts	22	81
Strengths and Weaknesses	21	78
Policies	21	78

As may be expected, the more traditional planning activity (annual budgeting) is included in the strategic planning process of all twenty seven companies.

Turning now to the participants in the planning process, Question 10 lists three phases in planning, namely: 1) preparation of the plan, 2) review of the plan, and 3) approval of the plan. The frequencies on the reported involvement of the different organizational levels in each of these are shown on the following page.

As is readily seen, the President/CEO and the Top Management Committee or Task Force are the most actively involved in the strategic planning process. Top management involvement is generally in the review and approval process whereas that of middle management (including the strategic planning staff) is in the plan preparation phase.

There are important exceptions, however. In nine companies belonging to all size and industry categories, fewer organizational levels are involved in the planning process.

	Undertakes Formal Strategic Planning	Percent	Has Written Strategic Plan	Percent
Yes	30	83	27	90
No	6	17	3	10
Total	36	100	30	100

Organizational Level	Planning Phases			
	Preparation	Review	Approval	Total
Board of Directors	1	6	19	26
Chairman of the Board	1	9	17	27
President/Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	2	23	24	49
Top Management Committee/Task Force	14	23	10	47
Top and Middle Management Committee/Task Force	17	6	0	23
Corplan Staff	15	10	0	25
Department/Division Heads	26	6	1	33
Department Staffs	25	2	0	27

In these companies, the phases of plan preparation, review, and approval take place largely at the level of the President/CEO and the Top Management Committee or Task Force. Moreover, the Board of Directors has no reported involvement in the process, not even at the plan approval stage.

The companies in this group are generally among those which reported fewer years of experience in strategic planning, as shown below.

This suggests that in the earlier years following the adoption of strategic planning, the planning process tends to be less broadly participative than in later years when strategic planning is more established in the firm.

B. Linkages

In this survey, the "timing linkage" (Shank, et al., 1973) between strategic planning and budgeting was explored. This refers to the question of which comes first in the planning sequence- strategic planning or budgeting? The tight-

est linkages occur when the annual budget is set before strategic planning takes place. This is so because the strategic planning process is constrained by the targets already set in the annual budget. On the other hand, the linkage is considered "loose" the longer is the time lag between strategic planning and the subsequent annual budgeting activity. This dimension of linkage is addressed in Question 5.

Budget-Strategy Sequence	No. of companies	Percent
Budget Set before Strategic Planning	3	10
Budget Set during Strategic Planning	2	7
Budget Set after Strategic Planning	24	80
No answer	1	3
Total	30	100

Years of Reported Practice of Strategic Planning	Companies in the sample	Companies where Board is not involved in Strategic Planning	Percent where Board is not Involved
1-3 years	7	4	57
3-5 years	10	4	40
5-10 years	6	--	--
Over 10 years	7	1	14
Total	30	9	

As shown, among the respondents, the large majority reports annual budgets which are set after strategic planning. Although this would indicate a "loose" linkage, this can not be taken as conclusive since there are means for linking budgeting and strategic planning other than through the planning sequence, i.e., "structure" and "content" linkages (Shank, et. al., 1973). As an example, job descriptions for the "Corporate Planning Officer" position which were submitted by several respondents in the survey indicate that the corporate planning officer participates actively in setting annual budget targets and in reviewing budget performance- a structural approach for linking the strategic planning and budgeting functions.

C. Administration

The survey questions which provide data on this aspect are Questions 7, 8, and 10.

Twenty-one firms, or 70 percent of the companies which conducted formal strategic planning, reported having a staff officer position for strategic planning. As shown below, it appears that the presence of a staff strategic planning officer position is related to company size.

In all twenty one companies, the staff planning officer reported to top management:

Corplan Officer Reports to:	No. of Companies	Percent
Chairman	4	19
President/CEO	13	62
Executive Vice President/ Senior Vice President	4	19
Total	21	100

Size of Employment	Companies in the Cluster	Companies with Corplan Staff	Percent of Companies in the Cluster
18- 430	9	2	22
567-1,200	10	8	80
Above 1,200	11	11	100
Total	30	21	

Question 8 asks the respondents to indicate which of six role descriptions provided (See Appendix A) best describes the function actually performed by their strategic planning officer. Below is a ranking of the role description in terms of the frequency of check marks:

Role Description	Checked as "Primary"	Percent of Respondents
Planning Facilitator	17	81
Technical Support	14	67
Planning Integrator	14	67
Internal Consultant	10	48
Instigator/Devils' Advocate	9	43
Decision Maker	5	24

This suggests that the "corporate planner" is seen largely as a facilitator of the planning process. He is also seen as performing technical support and plan integration functions. He is least frequently seen as performing a decision making role. The larger companies, including those in the government sector, were more likely to describe their corporate planning officer as performing a decision making role in strategic planning.

D. Timing

Question 2 asks the respondents to indicate the longest planning time horizon contained in their written strategic plan. The reported planning horizons ranged from one year to twenty years:

Longest Time Horizon (Yrs)	No. of Companies
1- 3	2
3- 5	7
5	13
10 - 20	3
No Answer	2
Total	27

The planning time horizons cluster in the 3-5 years range, with nearly half of the companies using five years as their planning frame. When segregated by industry, the Utilities firms show the longest planning horizons:

Industry	Ave. Planning Horizon (years)
Utilities	8.75
Manufacturing	5.9
Financial Services	4.4
Others	2.7

The rankings might be explained by the differences in the length of the economic lives of the fixed asset investments in the above industries.

E. Outputs

In Question 11, the respondents are asked to mark which of the eight elements of a strategic plan suggested by Calingo (1988) are contained in their written strategic plan. The tabulation below shows the ranking of the eight elements:

Plan Elements	No. of Companies	Percent
Objectives and Goals	27	100
Strategies	27	100
Company Mission	25	93
Environmental Forecast	25	93
Opportunities and Threats	23	85
Strengths and Weaknesses	21	78
Resource Allocation	18	67
Policies	17	63

The two most critical elements of strategic plans, i.e., objectives and strategies, are contained in the written strategic plans of all the reporting companies. "Policies" is the least frequently included item in the written plans. Notations made by respondents in some of the survey forms indicate that they regard "Policies" as part of operations planning.

Question 12 covers the extent of dissemination of the company's strategic plans within the organization.

Plan distributed to	No. of Companies
Top Management	12
Top and Middle Management	17
All Managers and Supervisors	4
All Employees	1
Total	34 ⁴

Industry practice, however, seems to differ as shown in the table at the top of the next page. Financial Services industry firms appear to be more restrictive in the dissemination of their strategic plans within the organization when compared to firms in the other industries, particularly in Manufacturing.

Possible explanations for this include more centralized decision making in firms in this industry and/or a greater need for secrecy concerning strategic plans because of the geographic concentration of competition in the Metro Manila area.

Other Survey Findings

The majority of companies listed "environmental uncertainty" as the major constraint to greater planning effectiveness.

Key Constraint on Planning Effectiveness	No. of Companies
Uncertainty in the environment	21
Lack of support from top management	4
Lack of participation from line management	1
Others	6

The "Others" responses included inconsistent government policies, inadequate follow-through on strategic plans, and unsupportive attitude of top management, etc.

Companies chose different venues for their strategic planning activity with most choosing a venue outside the company.

⁴Adds up to more than 27 because of multiple check marks.

Firms in the Sector								
Lowest level of Dissemination of Strategic Plan	Financial Services		Utilities		Manufacturing		Others	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Top Management	7	64	1	20	--	--	1	20
Middle Management	4	36	3	60	5	71	3	80
All Managers	--	--	--	--	2	29	--	--
All Employees	--	--	1	20	--	--	--	--
Total	11	100	5	100	7	100	4	100

Venue of Planning Exercise	No. of Companies
In-house	9
Not in-house but in area	12
Out of town	13
Total	34 ⁵

Slightly more companies report not using the services of outside consultants or resource persons during their strategic planning process compared to those who report using such resource persons.

	No. of Companies	Percent
Use outside resource persons	14	47
No outside resource persons	15	50
No answer	1	3
Total	30	100

The respondents who report using outside resource persons during their strategic planning exercise generally fall into two groups- those which use external resource persons to assist in content issues, and those which use resource persons to assist in process issues.

The former use external resource persons to provide external environment analyses or to provide external validation (e.g., "an objective outsider's view") of the company's own analyses of the environment or industry. The latter, on the other hand, use external resource persons as

"facilitators", or to provide guidelines on the planning process to be used during the planning exercise. A number of respondents use external planning resource persons to perform both functions.

Summary and Conclusions

Among the respondents, the majority reports practising formal strategic planning. Except for some of the largest firms in the sample, most, are however, relatively new to strategic planning, having adopted it only in the last five years or less. As a group, the CPSP member firms report using generally comprehensive and participative planning processes.

There are differences in planning practices among the survey respondents. These differences could be related to company size, length of planning experience, and certain industry characteristics.

Large size appears to lead to earlier adoption of strategic planning (except for the Utilities sector) and to the use of more comprehensive planning processes and outputs. Large size also tends towards the creation of staff strategic planning positions in the firm.

The later adoption of strategic planning by firms in the Utilities sector may be explained in terms of the lower environmental uncertainty and/or the extent of competition in the industry, factors which Lindsay and Rue (1980) found to be correlated with the use of strategic planning in a study of U.S. firms.

The length of the strategic planning experience appears to influence mainly the extent of participativeness of the planning process with firms having shorter planning experiences reporting less participative planning processes.

⁵Adds up to more than 30 because of multiple check marks.

Certain industry characteristics may explain other differences observed in the survey. Geographic concentration of competition (possibly coupled with centralized management) may explain why Financial Services firms appear to be more restrictive in the dissemination of strategic plans within their organizations. In addition, industry differences in the length of the economic lives of fixed asset investments may explain the apparent differences in the length of the planning horizons reported in the different industry sectors.

These are indicative findings which may be validated in larger surveys among say, the top one thousand corporations in the Philippines. In addition, it may be worthwhile to explore in future surveys the extent to which the strategic planning officer participates in the annual budgeting process, traditionally the domain of the Controller (Anthony, et al., 1989), among companies which have made the transition from annual budgeting to long term strategic planning.

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APPENDIX A

Question No.1

Does your company conduct a strategic planning process which it formally recognizes as such?

Yes

No

If your answer is no, please proceed to **Question No. 12**

If yes, please proceed to the next question.

Question No. 2

Does your company prepare a **written** strategic plan?

Yes

No

If your answer is yes, please indicate the longest time horizon covered in the plan: _____ years.

Question No. 3

How long has your company practiced strategic planning?

- a. 1 year or less
- b. 1-3 years
- c. 3-5 years
- d. 5-10 years
- e. Over 10 years

Question No. 4

Select which of the following most closely describes the sequence of strategic planning and annual budgeting in your company.

- a. The annual budget for the succeeding year is set before strategic planning takes place.
- b. The annual budget is prepared during the strategic planning activity.
- c. Annual budget preparation is regarded as a distinct activity occurring after strategic planning.

Question No. 5

Listed below is a typical sequence of activities that may be involved in the formulation and implementation of a firm's strategy. Which of these activities does your firm perform in an organized way: that is, a specific individual or organizational unit is responsible for performing that activity? (Please circle the appropriate response for each statement).

	Yes	No
a. Establishment of a firm's <u>mission</u> or concept of business	1	2
b. Preparation of a profile of the company's <u>strengths and weaknesses</u>	1	2
c. Preparation of an <u>environmental forecast</u>	1	2
d. Identification of the <u>opportunities and threats</u> the firm faces in its environment	1	2

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| e. Formulation of <u>long term objectives</u> in pursuit of the firm's mission | 1 | 2 |
| f. Statement of the firm's <u>strategy or strategies</u> for achieving its objectives | 1 | 2 |
| g. Formulation of <u>policies</u> and "standard operating procedures" to support strategy implementation | 1 | 2 |
| h. Establishment of <u>annual goals and action plans</u> for the firm's functional areas (finance, marketing, operations, personnel) | 1 | 2 |
| i. Preparation of <u>long term and/or annual budget</u> | 1 | 2 |
| j. Others (please specify) _____ | | |

Question No. 6

Is there a staff support unit or person for strategic planning in your firm?

Yes

No

If your answer is no, please proceed to Question No. 8.

If your answer is yes, please indicate to whom (e.g., President, EVP, Chairman, etc) the highest staff corporate planning officer in your company reports: _____

Question No. 7

The following statements describe various roles performed by staff officers for strategic planning. Please indicate the extent to which these roles represent the primary functions actually performed by the staff planning officers in your company. (Please circle the appropriate response for each role description).

Primary of Function

- | | Primary | Secondary | Not
Applicable |
|--|---------|-----------|-------------------|
| a. Provides technical support for strategic planning by preparing studies, forecasts, and analyses for use by line management. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| b. Serves as facilitator by scheduling the planning effort, consolidating unit plans into a company plan, and assisting management in monitoring plan execution. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| c. Acts as an internal consultant providing advise on substantive as well as process issues to unit managers. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| d. Acts on an "instigator" by serving as an idea generator, by identifying key issues, and acting as the "devil's advocate" in the company's planning process. | 1 | 2 | 3 |

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| e. Acts as planning integrator by coordinating the planning effort in the company, serving as channel of planning communications, and ensuring that there is a meeting of the minds on company goals among the planning units. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| f. Acts as a decision maker on business strategy issues assigned to him. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| g. Other (please specify) _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |

Question No. 8

Please indicate which organizational unit prepares, reviews, and finally approves your firm's strategic plan. (Check as many columns as necessary.)

	Prepare	Reviews	Approves
a. Chairman of the Board	_____	_____	_____
b. Board of Directors	_____	_____	_____
c. President or CEO	_____	_____	_____
d. Management Committee or Task Force consisting of top executives	_____	_____	_____
e. Management Committee or Task Force involving Managers at all levels	_____	_____	_____
f. Corporate Planning Office	_____	_____	_____
g. Division or Department Managers	_____	_____	_____
h. Division or Department Staff	_____	_____	_____
i. Others (please specify)	_____	_____	_____

Question No. 9

Which of the following are contained in your written strategic plan? (Circle as many as appropriate):

- Mission Statement
- Objectives and Goals
- Strategies
- Policies
- Resource allocation
- Environmental Forecasts
- Strengths and Weaknesses

- h. Opportunities and Threats
- i. Others (Please specify)

Question No. 10

Who is given a copy of your company's written strategic plan? (Circle only one)

- a. Top Management only
- b. Top and middle management
- c. All managers, including first line supervisor
- d. All employees of the company

Question No. 11

What do you see to be the major constraint on the greater effectiveness of strategic planning in your company? (Circle only one).

- a. Lack of support for strategic planning from top management
- b. Uncertainty in the environment
- c. Lack of participation of lower managers
- d. Other (Please specify) _____

Question No. 12

Please circle the industry sector to which your company belongs.

- a. Manufacturing
- b. Construction
- c. Utilities
- d. Mining
- e. Financial Services (Banking, Insurance)
- g. Other Services (Consulting, Research Advertising, Real Estate, etc.)
- h. Agriculture

Please indicate your company's total revenues for 1990 (approximate figure in million pesos). _____

Please circle the ownership category to which your company belongs.

- a. Filipino owned
- b. Foreign owned
- c. Joint Venture between Filipino and Foreign interests

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If there is a staff corporate planning unit or officer in your company, may we request a copy of the job description for your highest ranking staff corporate planning officer? You may delete any information contained in the Job Description which you feel may identify your company.

Thank you for your participation in this survey.