

[Planning: the Key to Success](#)

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## Planning: the Key to Success

When problems arise, rather than restructuring your buildings, look to your business and family planning

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A new trend in hindu communities around the world is the widespread, one could even say faddish, application of the principles of the ancient Hindu science of vastu to the design of businesses and homes. Vastu has always been used in the construction of Hindu temples and in village home design. In theory, the widened use of vastu in the Hindu community and beyond is a positive development.

Vastu unfolds the scientific principles and models of spiritual art and architecture to yield a harmonious flow of energy in the physical environment, giving rise to good health, wealth, intelligence, happiness and attunement with the wider universe.

Renowned Indian architect and Vastu Shastra expert Dr. V. Ganapati Sthapati explains: "In literal terms, vastu means 'to dwell' or 'to exist' and shastra means science. The main aim of vastu science is to create building spaces to live in harmony with subtle nature."

Following vastu principles of design can certainly make businesses more successful and homes more harmonious. However, the problematic trend is to emphasize it above all else - thinking that the sole cause of obstacles and lack of success is the flawed layout of one's home or office. For example, the sales of a business drop precipitously, and a vastu expert is consulted. He asserts that the cause is the poor layout of the space and advises: "Rebuild the structure according to my vastu design and your problems will quickly disappear!"

We know of many Hindus who received such advice over the last few years, some who inadvisedly spent large sums of money taking down and rebuilding parts of their home or office - or moving to a new location - in anticipation that this would solve all their problems. The truth is that in most cases it did not.

Designing one's home and business spaces according to vastu principles is an excellent goal. When asked, we encourage Hindus to have their new home or business designed in this way. The traditional, all-granite hand-carved Iraivan Temple we are building here in Hawaii follows the guidelines of vastu as interpreted by Dr. V. Ganapati Sthapati, whom we quoted above. Regarding vastu remodeling, he observes, "Modifications of a building lead to a disturbance of energy inside the enclosed space. Hence the shastras do not recommend any post-construction alterations... As our modern age has created a lifestyle crisis, many architects and designers are now turning to the ancient traditions of vastu for inspiration. Sadly, this has led to a lot of exploitation and misinterpretation."

Common sense tells us that there are many causes for not being successful. In my experience, the most common one is lack of proper planning. In the words of French author and aviator Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, "A goal without a plan is just a wish."

## Planning in Business

Let me share a story. A young couple who had pilgrimaged to our Kauai monastery told me of their ambition to give up their current employment and open an ice cream shop in Florida. I encouraged them to develop a solid business plan before starting and suggested working with their local Small Business Administration (SBA), a government agency that gives sound advice to small businesses for free. They opened the shop soon after but never took the time to develop a business plan. A few months later they e-mailed me lamenting that the new business was not doing well. Little wonder, I thought.

My guru strongly counseled devotees on the importance of planning. He wrote a sutra expressing the relationship of planning to success: "Siva's devotees approach each enterprise with deliberate thoughtfulness, and act only after careful consideration. They succeed in every undertaking by having a clear purpose, a wise plan, persistence and push."

The quality and comprehensiveness of our plan is a major factor in our ultimate success. Thus it is wise to draw on all the planning resources available to us. There are many good books and software programs on business planning. However, it is essential to also seek out first-hand advice from experts in the field. Ask them key questions about the opportunities and challenges. In large ventures, it is advisable to hire a professional consultant. Creating a plan when starting a business is crucial. That plan must then be updated every few years to keep up with our rapidly changing world.

Once your plan is complete, inaugurate it through prayer. Go to the temple on an auspicious day and worship Lord Ganesha through attending puja, having an archana or a special abhishekam or homa beseeching His blessings for a grand success.

## Personal and Family Planning

Of course, the benefits of planning are not limited to the business or financial side

of life. Personal life can also benefit, for a plan keeps us focused and motivated toward specific goals in life's various departments. Though the connection may not be immediately apparent, having an up-to-date personal plan is quite helpful for our spiritual advancement, as it helps us maintain a balanced approach to living.

To help you create a business plan, there are scores of resources available. You can find web listings of specialized software for business plans. Search engines give you hundreds to choose from. But if you google "Personal Plan Software" or "Family Plan Software," how many do you find? Zero. A search for books to buy on the subject? Again: countless titles on business planning but none on personal planning.

It is clear we have to create our own approach in this area. We can, however, draw a few important points from business plan resources. They all start by listing the objectives, then outlining the strategy to accomplish them, including financial considerations.

A business develops goals for its various departments, such as production, sales, marketing and finance. For our personal plan, it is useful to divide life into its major departments. My guru designated a five-fold division that encompasses all aspects of life - spiritual, social, cultural, economic and educational - to which we have added a sixth: physiological.

Our first step is to list our goals or objectives in each of the six areas. Ask six questions and write down the answers to each. What are the family's (or individual's): 1) spiritual goals? 2) social goals? 3) cultural goals? 4) economic goals? 5) educational goals? 6) physical and health goals?

As you begin this process, the question will sooner or later arise of how many years ahead to plan: one, two, three, six, ten? Gurudeva recommended a six-year time frame as ideal, then each year adding one more year to the plan to keep it always six years into the future. However, if six years seems a bit daunting at first, a good minimum period to start with is three years. Here are some sample goals in each area.

**Spiritual:** Yearly pilgrimage to a temple or holy place, even if it's just a few hundred miles away. For example, Singapore devotees enjoy group pilgrimages to temples in neighboring Malaysia.

**Social:** Extended-family gatherings. Special family outings. When is the last time your family went horseback riding?

**Cultural:** Children taking dance and music lessons. Attending cultural performances as a family. Adults taking time to paint, play music and sing.

**Economic:** Saving for the children's education. Saving for retirement.

**Educational:** Children's secular education. Adults acquiring new skills. Training to advance career. Learning about herbs, healing, making preserves; arts and crafts.

**Physiological:** All health goals, diets, pancha karma and other therapies and fasting regimens, exercise and care of one's physical environment, including clothing and hobbies, can be included in this category.

As with a business plan, it is necessary to revise your personal plan periodically to adjust to major changes in circumstances, such as moving to a new community, job change, retirement, caring for an elderly parent, children leaving home when they marry or go off to college, large inheritances, and severe illness or accident.

When challenges arise, it is important to act swiftly, tactically and responsibly to find the cause and apply the proper remedy. Don't listen to those who would solve your problems, and build their own business, by rebuilding or rearranging your house or offices. It's not, in my experience, an effective solution. Work instead on your plan. Who knows, you may become so successful that, as your plan manifests your aspirations, five years from now you can put up a new building designed according to the venerable wisdom of vastu!

