

Quest

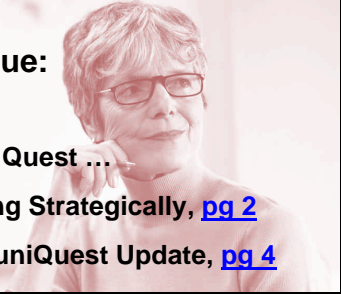
e-newsletter

Information and ideas for your quest

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On the Quest ...

Greetings Q Reader,

Someone once said that going through life without a plan is like a ship without a rudder – it drifts aimlessly at the mercy of the sea. I have found this to be one of the most sobering truths of life.

Millions of people are discontent because they lack a sense of purpose and direction. They operate on automatic pilot within the boundaries of loosely formulated plans, misguided notions of success and half-baked ideas. They drift from one year to the next, often secretly feeling anxious about the future.

It's time to wake from our lackadaisical existence and take a keen look at the world around us. Clues foreshadowing the future are everywhere. Look at the Internet and how it has changed our world -- the way we send letters, buy products, receive information, pay bills and market our businesses. Daily, the Internet and other factors influence our society and change the way we live.

Like it or not, we can't go back to the "good olde days." We can only move forward. The plans we made five years ago are likely not applicable today. It's time to move out of automatic pilot and get into the driver's seat.

In this issue of *Quest*, I want to challenge you to begin thinking strategically about every aspect of your life (career, family, education, spirituality, health, finances, etc.). Establish a habit of regularly investing time to reflect on the future, brainstorm, survey your environment and map out a plan. This month's featured article, "[Thinking Strategically About Your Life.](#)" will outline the benefits of adopting a strategic mindset and provide tools to get you started.

In a few weeks, we will usher in a new year. How much thought have you given to how you will invest your time, energy, resources and talent in 2002? When was the last time you reviewed your goals or personal mission statement? Perhaps it's time for you to inspect your rudder ... it's certain to make for smoother sailing on your voyage ahead.

Many successful quests,

Jennifer

"Progress has little to do with speed,
but much to do with direction."

— Anonymous

Visit www.communiquest.com each week for a new inspirational quote.

Thinking Strategically About Your Life

Who has time to develop a strategy? In today's "need-it-done-yesterday" society, it's easy to become preoccupied with pressing issues and skip the planning process. It's not until we find ourselves facing a significant problem that we stop and wonder what we could have done differently.

Thinking strategically is investing time regularly to think about the future. It's much more than an annual planning activity. Strategic thinkers use their minds to brainstorm, ponder the possibilities, hatch new ideas and chart an evolving course of action. As a strategic thinker, you are always surveying your environment and assessing how it impacts your plan.

No one can predict the future, but thinking strategically has advantages. It can:

- Increase your clarity and give you a more realistic glimpse into the future
- Provide focus and a sense of purpose
- Serve as a starting point and a roadmap for implementing your ideas
- Help you filter out unnecessary information and identify what is relevant
- Give you a framework for making better-informed decisions
- Allow you to adapt faster to change -- with fewer surprises
- Provide a process for organizing your ideas, communicating your vision with others and assessing your progress

Strategic thinking is a pro-active approach to living. You can apply it to any area of your life (career, family, spirituality, health, etc.). Here are several tools to get you thinking strategically.

Strategic Plan – Used widely in the business world, a strategic plan has all the elements you need to develop a personal strategy including: vision and mission statements, objectives, core values and goals. Completing the plan is only the first step. You will need to review it regularly and make modifications as needed. Once your plan is in writing, you can share your vision or solicit feedback from others (e.g. family members, an advisory committee, a mentor or supervisor). You can also create a family strategic plan. PlanWare offers a free on-line Strategic Planning Form at <http://www.planware.org/strategicplanner.htm#2>.

SWOT – A SWOT is a planning exercise used to examine strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. By identifying these factors, you can establish your priority issues. (See [Figure 1](#) on page 3)

- **Strengths** (internal) - What is your area of expertise (experience, abilities, etc.)? What makes you a leader in your field? (I would suggest reading the book "*Now, Discover Your Strengths*" by Marcus Buckingham and Donald O. Clifton. The book includes a web-based component called StrengthFinder that identifies your dominant strengths.)
- **Weaknesses** (internal) – What's keeping you from being among the best in your industry (vulnerabilities, limitations, or needed improvements)? What's keeping you from reaching your goals?
- **Opportunities** (external) - What trends can you capitalize on? (See [Environmental Factors](#) on page 3)
- **Threats** (external) – What things are out of your control, but must be planned for? (See [Environmental Factors](#) page 3)

SWOT

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats

Internal Factors	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
External Factors	
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

Figure 1.

SWOT - A planning tool for creating strategies to cultivate strengths, recognize weaknesses, maximize opportunities and address threats.

Environmental Factors - External factors will affect your plans – both positively and negatively. To avoid working in a vacuum, keep the following environmental factors on your radar screen and add to the list as you identify additional ones:

- World events
- Social attitudes
- Popular culture
- Ecological factors
- Competition
- Industry activity and trends
- Political mood
- Legislative action
- Status of national, regional and local economy
- Use of technology and emerging developments

Imagination – The potential of the human brain is infinite. Yet we only use a small portion throughout our lives. Schedule time to think, dream and visualize the possibilities. Consider starting each day by reading portions of your plan and brainstorming for at least 15 minutes. This process will stimulate your brain and trigger your subconscious mind where ideas incubate and surface when you least expect. If you need a jump-start, try the “Creative Whack Pack” by Roger von Oech. This deck of idea-generating cards can help you break habitual thought patterns and look at what you’re doing in a fresh way.

CommuniQuest Update

New Keynote Presentation

Two years ago, God gave me the phrase "God Holds Your Future" as a personal motto to remind me that He is in control of my life. A few months ago, He instructed me to prepare a keynote presentation by the same name. I had the pleasure of delivering it this summer for the first time. Below is a description.

God Holds Your Future

In a world of uncertainty, feelings of doubt, fear and frustration are common. These feelings of helplessness can lead to worry, stress and depression. Our lives can seem out of control. Discover how to find peace and assurance through God. Drawing from her own personal struggles and Christian walk, Jennifer shares how to deepen your relationship with God, strengthen your faith, and look toward the future with renewed confidence. In a world of uncertainty, it's reassuring to know that God holds your future. Experience His blessings for yourself.

Quest E-Newsletters on the Web

Previous issues of *Quest* e-newsletters are now available on the CommuniQuest web site. Click [Newsletter Archive](#) or type http://www.communiquest.com/newsletter_archives/archive_main.cfm in your Internet browser.



Jennifer is a professional speaker, author and president of CommuniQuest, Inc. Through her seminars and keynotes, she delivers fresh insight and proven techniques on how to work smarter and live a more satisfying life. For more information on her workplace strategies and inspirational programs, visit www.communiquest.com or call 1-888-866-0821.

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