

# a plan of action

BY ELISA LEVY  
Citizen Columnist

In as far as the Florida Keys remain a beautiful oasis, there is monumental change happening before our eyes. In a span of just a few years, we are seeing an unprecedented housing shortage and consequential labor crisis, an ever-streaming flow of visitors that makes us think there is no longer a "slow season," and new levels of concern over climate change, flooding and the imminent threat of rising sea levels. Keys residents are great at seeing the upside of just about anything, but things are not "business as usual."



New times call for new measures. Really, what they call for is a plan of action. We need to think about, prepare for and clarify how we want to contend with a new reality, and how we might even use it to improve and grow. In the loosest form, that is called a strategic plan. Any business and any person can create one. A strategic plan is exactly what it sounds like — a plan with a devised strategy, purpose, goal, and set of actions to achieve a desired goal.

The problem with plans of any kind is that often they are lofty and lack clarity of action. More importantly, they lack a system of accountability. (We all know that from our failed New Year's resolutions.) The key to making a plan work is a road map. As French poet and writer Antoine de Saint-Exupéry once wisely stated, "A goal without a plan is just a wish." The road map is what makes everything

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Restaurateur Lynn Bell has recently expanded her Square Grouper's newest business additions, the Morning Joint coffee shop and retail store.

## Square Grouper expands coffee shop, retail store

BY RICHARD TAMBORRINO  
Special to The Citizen

For the past 20 years, Lower Keys restaurateur Lynn Bell has carved out a small yet mighty eatery in the Florida Keys and recently expanded her local empire to include Cudjoe Key's Morning Joint coffee shop and Mary Jane's Closet, a retail store.

Bell is now parlaying her Square Grouper brand and its reference to marijuana smuggling's heyday in the Keys by partnering with Morning Joint owners Austin and Miranda Gagnon on these two new enterprises.

Bell and Austin met in 2015 at Rick's on Duval Street in Key West and he convinced her to let him train her bartending staff on his mixology techniques at the Square Grouper. Austin was trying to expand a bartending school he had established in Miami to the Keys.

Austin made an immediate impression on Bell and after several years, one of the bartenders at the restaurant most impressed by Austin's training told the couple about Bell's plans to op

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achievable. There are many models of strategic plans, and they can be done personally or for a business, teams or departments. There isn't a single right way to do it, but all sound plans have at least four main ingredients.

**1. Priorities:** This area refers to a specific topic. Businesses may have four or five priority areas, including sales, marketing/advertising, communications, growth, new markets, etc. On a personal

level, priorities may include health, relationship, finances and work. Try to limit your priorities to no more than five when preparing a strategic plan. Otherwise, the plan may grow too large to accomplish.

**2. Goals:** Once you have your priorities set, ask yourself what specific goals you have for each area. Try to limit yourself to no more than five goals per priority. For example, if you want to increase sales, one goal might be to grow your customer database by 15%. If your personal priority area is health, one of your goals may be to lose 15 pounds.

Goals should be specific and quantifiable; otherwise, they are hard to measure.

**3. Actions:** For each goal, devise a number of action steps you must take (one time, or regularly) to achieve the goal. Try to limit yourself to fewer than 10 action steps. An action to grow your customer database by 15% could be to offer existing customers a reward for telling their friends about your business. Similarly, an action to support your goal of losing 15 pounds might be to do 30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise five times per week. In a group

setting, each action should always have the person(s) responsible indicated next to it.

**4. Timeline:** Actions can be easily put off if we don't make them a priority. Having a timeline helps you ensure that there is a clear plan with a sense of urgency attached to it. The timeline also helps you plan realistically. Most strategic plans range from one to five years. If all of your actions take place in the first three months, it is a good idea to go back and ask yourself if you are being realistic about your goals.

Once you have these four ingredients, it is time to put them together into a readable, written plan. The easiest and most organized way to do this is through a chart. List the first priority; underneath it, list all the main goals. Next to each goal, list the action steps, the person responsible and the deadline for each item. Once you have made your plan, you are 70% there. The next step and most important step is accountability. This requires one or more designated people to be in charge of deadlines, and to ensure weekly and

monthly that the action items are completed.

It is true that life happens while we make other plans, and things unfold in life that we never would have expected. At the same time, it is useful, if not necessary, to point ourselves in the right direction with clarity, purpose and precision. It is the key to getting where we want to go personally and in business.

Elisa Levy conducts seminars on conflict resolution and anger management. For information, call 305-296-5437 or visit <http://www.elisalevy.com>.

## puzzle answers

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