

The Association for Strategic Planning's

Body of Knowledge (BOK) Framework with Content Details for Certifying Strategic Planning Professionals (SPP) and Strategic Management Professionals (SMP)

BEST PRACTICES EDITION #9



Body of Knowledge Framework

Content details of the Association for Strategic Planning's approved Body of Knowledge (BOK) reflect edition #9 of the material upon which questions for the current ASP Certification Exams were based. Specific task statements for both Level I SPP and Level II SMP are in this BOK Framework document; additional material for each level is in the two self-assessment workbooks:

- I. Level I Strategic Planning Professional Self-Assessment Workbook
- II. Level II Strategic Management Professional Self-Assessment Workbook

Both Self-Assessment Workbooks and this Framework are now available for complimentary electronic download from the Association for Strategic Planning's website (www.strategyplus.org).

As available, they may also be purchased in a spiral-bound, hardcopy format for \$29.95 each, also from the ASP website.

(Above section was revised in Oct. 2011.)

1. Lead—Level I

1.1 Lead in Personal Creditability (Think-Plan-Act)— Level I

The candidate should know and/or understand how to

- 1.1.1 Set goals and opportunities for his/her own **lifelong learning** and continuing education in the field.
- 1.1.2 **Strive to develop and maintain** a balanced life (body-mind-spirit).
- 1.1.3 **Act with conscious intent** by deliberately **guiding his/her behavior** in accordance with a personal vision and values.
- 1.1.4 **Commit to ethical practices and high professional standards** by acting with consistency, honesty, high integrity, and civility in all aspects of life.
- 1.1.5 **Take inventory of themselves** by knowing their style, strengths, weaknesses and having flexibility to change as circumstances permit.
- 1.1.6 **Develop a personal vision**, goals, and personal strategies for his/her life and career.
- 1.1.7 **Develop personal credibility** through having the courage of their convictions to confront dysfunctional behavior.

1.2 Lead in Interpersonal Relationships (Think-Plan-Act)—Level I

The candidate should know and/or understand how to

- 1.2.1 **Show empathy, caring and respect** by respecting the feelings, emotions, and perspectives of others.
- 1.2.2 **Communicate effectively and actively** through active listening, questioning others and giving and receiving honest and effective feedback.
- 1.2.3 **Mentor and coach others** by helping them be accountable and achieve better results.
- 1.2.4 **Manage conflict** by influencing and persuading others and myself towards a "win-win" solution.
- 1.2.5 **Be innovative and creative** in strategic thinking; strategic and annual planning; and strategic implementing of change as well as continuous improvement. **Support creativity** in others.
- 1.2.6 **Build and adhere to a reputation for integrity, ethical behavior, and fairness to others.**
- 1.2.7 **Facilitate better problem-solving and decision-making** between individuals, seeking consensus where possible, yet not allowing compromises on strategic direction.
- 1.2.8 **Seek and act upon constructive feedback** from others to further their personal growth and development.
- 1.2.9 Give critical, yet **constructive feedback** to others, including executives.

1. Strategic Leader—Level II

1.3 Strategic Leader in Planning Teamwork (Think—Plan—Act)—Level II

The candidate should know and/or understand how to

- 1.3.1 Practice **participative planning department management** through involving others and building consensus.
- 1.3.2 Facilitate the thinking, planning and **implementation work of groups** in meetings, task forces, and department teams.
- 1.3.3 **Educate managers, employees, and teams** (regarding thinking, planning, and implementation).
- 1.3.4 Guide and support communication with **department management and employees** about the Strategic and Annual Plan to ensure “buy-in” for implementation.
- 1.3.5 Lead an **effective planning department team** of both management and employees alike.
- 1.3.6 Promote **better planning department problem-solving** and decision-making as a role model for the organization.

1.4 Cross Functional Strategic Leader (Think-Plan-Act)— Level II

The candidate should know and/or understand how to

- 1.4.1 Create, charter, and support **cross-functional teams**, projects, and task forces.
- 1.4.2 Support and integrate **business processes** based on anticipating and delivering customers' wants and needs for quality products and services.
- 1.4.3 Institutionalize strategic thinking tools and **critical thinking** across functions in a more holistic and effective manner.
- 1.4.4 Manage planning processes effectively through sound **project management skills**.
- 1.4.5 Foster a **culture of innovation** and strategic thinking throughout the organization.
- 1.4.6 Foster networking, **knowledge transfer** and the development of a learning organization across the entire organization.

1.5 Organization-Wide Strategic Leader (Think-Plan-Act)—Level II

The candidate should know and/or understand how to

- 1.5.1 **Support the organization's vision**, values, and competitive position in the marketplace and strategies to achieve them throughout the organization.
- 1.5.2 **Support organization design professionals** and senior management to effectively redesign and restructure the organization chart to align it with the strategic plan for day-to-day responsibility and accountability.
- 1.5.3 **Coordinate communications of strategic content** through senior management and communications staff relying on a range of channels and methods.
- 1.5.4 Align **planning and implementation tasks with the accountability** for their achievement at all levels.
- 1.5.5 Support **cultural change and transformation** to create a customer-focused, high performance, adaptive organization.
- 1.5.6 Organize and design the change management **infrastructures and change processes** of the organization to smooth out strategic plan implementation and effective change management
- 1.5.7 Be a **change agent/advocate and advisor to management during** strategic implementation.
- 1.5.8 Assist the organization in being **flexible and adaptable** to changing environments, demands, and deadlines.
- 1.5.9 **Guide effective sourcing, application and sharing of knowledge** and learning across the organization.
- 1.5.10 Ensure that the **underlying business model** and processes for the organization are aligned with the desired changes arising from the strategic plan and its implementation.

2. THINK—Level I

2.1 Think Content—Level I

The candidate should know and/or understand how to

- 2.1.1 Design a **future global environmental scanning** system and process utilizing accepted methodologies for today's global competition.
- 2.1.2 Ensure that enterprise-wide **risk management**, scenario planning, portfolio analysis, and futuring are part of the strategic planning process.
- 2.1.3 Support full **economic and portfolio analysis** of tentative/alternative strategic directions to ensure their viability, growth, and sustainability.
- 2.1.4 Assist senior management with industry and organizational **structural analysis** in search of a better business model.
- 2.1.5 Gather **customer satisfaction information** and intelligence, especially regarding their wants, needs, loyalty, and retention.
- 2.1.6 Offer a full range of **organizational growth strategies**; from organic to development, to mergers/acquisitions, to strategic alliances, etc.
- 2.1.7 Assist the collective management team in developing and using a **common framework and language** to become a strategy-oriented organization attuned to the frequency of the business' dynamic nature and processes.
- 2.1.8 Provide **benchmarking** and best practices research on what works or does not work.
- 2.1.9 Focus the organization on **strategic goals and measurements** for its short and long term success.

2.2 Think Processes—Level I

The candidate should know and/or understand how to

- 2.2.1 Promote **ethical considerations** as part of the strategic thinking process.
- 2.2.2 **Draw quiet people out safely** and ensure open and frank communications in strategic thinking sessions.
- 2.2.3 Lead **virtual teams** to openly discuss strategic thinking topics.
- 2.2.4 Foster a **culture of creativity and innovation** as part of the strategic thinking process.
- 2.2.5 **Focus on keeping things simple** (simplicity wins the game every time) as it is a way to make an organization more strategic, and yet faster and cheaper.
- 2.2.6 Guide **near term trend and competitive/industry analysis** to be able to strategize in dynamic and evolving global markets.
- 2.2.7 Utilize proactive **pre-work and pre-meetings** to tailor and sequence the organization's Think—Plan—Act framework to ensure senior and middle management all understand and use the same process.

2.3 Think Infrastructures—Level I

The candidate should know and/or understand how to

- 2.3.1 Provide the necessary and specific holistic **strategic thinking framework** to ensure better strategic decision-making.
- 2.3.2 Provide the needed **strategic thinking infrastructure** to keep it separate from the day-to-day tactical and pressured world of business.
- 2.3.3 **Organize meetings** with a single agenda on difficult and chronic strategic issues affecting the organization.
- 2.3.4 **Involve a broader array** of middle management and others in the strategic thinking process as a learning experience while ensuring there is no “dumbing down” result.

2. Strategic Thinking—Level II

2.4 Strategic Thinking Content—Level II

The candidate should know and/or understand how to

- 2.4.1 Provide **strategic intelligence** to senior management to lead competitive advantage and strategy discussions, ending with consensus decision-making, where possible.
- 2.4.2 Evaluate different **strategic alternatives** to create a uniqueness that creates value for their customers and a competitive advantage for the organization.
- 2.4.3 Assist senior management with the development of their **vision and mission/purpose, core values** and long range direction for the future.
- 2.4.4 Assist senior management with **value chain management analysis, sustainable value chains**, and business models that drive entrepreneurial behavior.
- 2.4.5 Link strategic thinking with **strategic budgeting** to ensure a focus on the future and opportunities vs. sunk costs.
- 2.4.6 Guide the **dissemination of acquired knowledge** to the entire organization in a form that is useful.

2.5 Strategic Thinking Processes—Level II

The candidate should know and/or understand how to

- 2.5.1 Conduct **strategic deliberations** through an understanding of group dynamics, personalities, facilitation, asking good questions, and assisting consensus and closure.
- 2.5.2 Challenge existing assumptions and **confront the logic** of all involved, including senior executives.
- 2.5.3 Facilitate **conflict-management** in order to persevere through difficult discussions and chronic issues that have no easy answers.
- 2.5.4 Assist senior management with **redefining industry boundaries** if necessary, including scenario planning or modeling to transform and create new market space.
- 2.5.5 Assist senior executives in identifying the **unintended consequences** within every strategic discussion in the complexity of today's world.
- 2.5.6 Provide a **systemic approach** to strategic thinking during future environmental scanning and clarify the desired outcomes before moving forward with any analysis, problem-solving or decision-making.
- 2.5.7 Teach the senior management first, the rest of management second, and the entire workforce third in **thinking strategically** as a better way to be strategic on a daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly basis.

2.6 Strategic Thinking Infrastructures—Level II

The candidate should know and/or understand how to

- 2.6.1 Design a **Strategy Management Office** to guide the strategic thinking—strategic planning—strategic implementation processes.
- 2.6.2 Design a **strategic management system and yearly cycle** as a way to run the business day-to-day, week-to-week, month-to-month, and year-to-year while thinking dynamically and tuned to the frequencies of the business.

3. Plan

3.1 Plan Content—Level I

The candidate should know and/or understand how to

- 3.1.1 Guide the design and implementation of a good **corporate strategic plan** and understand best practices as to why good ones work and bad ones do not work.
- 3.1.2 Advise on identification and evaluation of different options to grow **the top line** (Sales/Revenues).
- 3.1.3 Advise on different methods to **lower costs**, increase profit margins, and improve cash flow and the balance sheet.
- 3.1.4 Conduct a **future environmental scan** and ensure it is global in scope to capture the worldwide dynamic trends of strategic significance.
- 3.1.5 Use quantitative tools to **conduct decision analysis**, modeling, and risk management to support executive decision-making.
- 3.1.6 Explain the concepts and principles of the **premier theorists and practitioners** in the field of strategic planning, both in history and the current field of planning, including the major schools of strategy as well as the newer emerging ones such as Balanced Scorecard, Blue Ocean Strategy, the Knowledge Economy, The Systems Thinking Approach, etc.
- 3.1.7 **Leverage, align, and cascade the corporate direction** into three-year business plans for all strategic business units and major functional areas.
- 3.1.8 **Use goal setting and metrics** extensively with targeted goals to track and measure “smart” outcomes.
- 3.1.9 Articulate the importance of the organization’s distinctive **core competencies** and strategies that result in a competitive advantage vs. MOS (more of the same).
- 3.1.10 Assess the degree to which the **corporate culture** will obstruct or enable implementation of the strategic plan and adjust accordingly.

3.2 Plan Processes—Level I

The candidate should know and/or understand how to

- 3.2.1 Integrate, communicate, and **cascade all the strategic planning components** into an Annual Planning and Budgeting process across and down the entire organization.
- 3.2.2 Identify and explain at least two of the **different methodologies for strategic planning** that follow the Think—Plan—Act process.
- 3.2.3 Conduct an effective **current state assessment** (such as a SWOT analysis), including status of the organization with respect to its competitors.
- 3.2.4 Understanding the strategic planning process that starts with the **desired outcomes** such as the ideal future vision, mission, core values, and desired competitive advantage/positioning to set a future direction for the organization.
- 3.2.5 Understand how to use **scenario planning and modeling** to anticipate and make sense of changes happening in the world and their impact on the organization.
- 3.2.6 Support, communicate, and audit the **organization’s core values**.
- 3.2.7 Facilitate formulation of the **vision and mission statements** to be clear in defining “why the organization exists” (its purpose) including who its future customers/clients are and what products and services it will provide them.
- 3.2.8 Provide an annual **department planning process** that is in a line of sight linked to the corporate strategic plan.
- 3.2.9 Articulate numerous ways to **involve all key internal and external stakeholders** to the process; since people are willing to change when they are involved; not when it is imposed on them.

3.3 Plan Infrastructures—Level I

The candidate should know and/or understand how to

- 3.3.1 Guide relevant **research and required data collection** required in a timely fashion.
- 3.3.2 **Utilize online and computer technologies** to facilitate and speed the strategic planning process
- 3.3.3 Designate a corporate “**support team and functional cadre**” to ensure that the knowledge, timing, outcomes, processes and infrastructures of planning and strategic management achieve the corporate-wide integration and leverage they require to ensure business success.
- 3.3.4 Implement an **annual strategic planning review** and update system to ensure the continued improvement of the strategic planning process.
- 3.3.5 Assist the organization in **keeping simple, clear,** and well understood language and terminology of the entire strategic management system.
- 3.3.6 Work towards continuously evolving **continuous improvement processes** that are in synch with rapidly changing global systems and events.

3. Strategic Planning—Level II

3.4 Strategic Planning Content—Level II

The candidate should know and/or understand how to

- 3.4.1 Facilitate **the art of strategy identification**, evaluation, and selection.
- 3.4.2 Guide the creation of a marketplace **competitive advantage** and how to strengthen it.
- 3.4.3 Influence the **strategic direction** and vision of the organization as well as the determination of core strategies to achieve this direction.
- 3.4.4 Cascade goals and core strategies into corporate-wide **annual top priority strategic action items** and annual department plans to achieve these goals/core strategies.
- 3.4.5 Ensure that a **yearly strategic management system** integrates with the corporate budgeting and financing processes as well as HR Rewards and Recognition Systems.
- 3.4.6 Articulate the **importance of brand/reputation** and support the development of plans to strengthen this.
- 3.4.7 Assess market opportunities, strategic alliances, and new **business development challenges**.
- 3.4.8 Create viable and mutually exclusive **strategic alternatives** and best strategies using carefully chosen criteria
- 3.4.9 Facilitate a thorough **financial analysis** of the organization's financial health and human resources.

3.5 Strategic Planning Processes—Level II

The candidate should know and/or understand how to

- 3.5.1 Focus the organization on the most critical issues to address.
- 3.5.2 Facilitate a **top management planning team process** led by the CEO that appropriately involves the Board of Directors and other key internal and external stakeholders.
- 3.5.3 Build necessary **relationships across countries, cultures, languages** and continents with global sensitivity, awareness and sophistication
- 3.5.4 Facilitate **effective decision-making processes** in plan development.
- 3.5.5 Facilitate a process to **uncover and clarify the organization's core competencies** and any gaps.

3.6 Strategic Planning Infrastructures—Level II

The candidate should know and/or understand how to

- 3.6.1 Install a timely pre-planning process to “**engineer success upfront**” in the planning process.
- 3.6.2 Set up a planning infrastructure whereby the **core planning team** is led by the CEO and includes all members of senior management within a manageable size so they can be productive.
- 3.6.3 Install a **Strategy Management Office** structure/staff person(s) to guide the strategic planning (Think—Plan—Act) process.
- 3.6.4 **Coordinate and integrate** specific structural linkages between strategic plans and operating plans for appropriate performance, results, and associated rewards.
- 3.6.5 Develop specific frameworks and structures to build, review, and evaluate the links between the corporate strategic plan and **strategic business units** with three-year business plans.
- 3.6.6 Coordinate a **merger/acquisition process or system** for the organization.

4. Act—Level I

4.1 Action Content—Level I

The candidate should know and/or understand how to

- 4.1.1 Leverage the fact that “**people support what they help create**” in supporting change across the entire organization.
- 4.1.2 Ensure **teamwork and project management skills** are taught to those in the organization needing to effectively implement strategic plan projects and initiatives.
- 4.1.3 Take into account the importance of the **organization’s culture** when planning/implementing organizational change.
- 4.1.4 **Break down long-term strategic plans** into annual and project plans.
- 4.1.5 Keep the organization abreast of **new emerging theories** and methods of creating customer value, including listening to and involving customers to create such value.
- 4.1.6 Ensure the **application of quality management and customer service** best practices in support of the organization’s strategic direction and core values.

4.2 Action Processes—Level I

The candidate should know and/or understand how to

- 4.2.1 Foster ongoing communications processes and **involvement of all key internal and external stakeholders** so they “buy-in” and “stay-in” over time with the new strategic direction.
- 4.2.2 Set up a monitoring and **accountability process and information systems** to track key success factors—“smart” goals and implementation of the change.
- 4.2.3 Review progress and coordinate the **modification of the implementation plan** as needed.
- 4.2.4 Provide mechanisms, including **lessons learned**, that ensure the process is **improved over time**.
- 4.2.5 Serve as the **trusted advisor to project teams** and continuous improvement teams as they implement the strategic initiatives throughout the year.

4.3 Action Infrastructures—Level I

The candidate should know and/or understand how to:

- 4.3.1 Identify and engage the **key stakeholders** that will drive the change and the best practice structures.
- 4.3.2 Work with the CEO and CFO to ensure that adequate **funding and resources for the required change** initiatives and infrastructures are in place.
- 4.3.3 Guide the development of **regular change leadership teams** at all unit levels as appropriate..
- 4.3.4 Establish an effective **portfolio management system** to support the strategic plan initiatives and projects.
- 4.3.5 Assist senior management in developing and executing an **annual implementation schedule** (corporate yearly calendar).
- 4.3.6 Convey the concept that an organization is a system wherein **all components of the system are interrelated**.
- 4.3.7 Support ideas to ensure **employee engagement and attunement** of their hearts and minds in support of the strategic direction.

4. Strategic Action—Level II

4.4 Strategic Action Content—Level II

The candidate should know and/or understand how to

- 4.4.1 Ensure that **change theories** and their application to the organization are taught and applied at all levels of management by subject matter experts including knowledge of behavioral science principles and change management applications.
- 4.4.2 Facilitate a **line of sight** for the organization's goals and objectives across/down the entire organization.
- 4.4.3 **Facilitate changing the culture** of management and employees.
- 4.4.4 Facilitate ways to motivate and **incentivize people**.
- 4.4.5 Foster **innovation** in new product/services development.
- 4.4.6 Ensure that an **effective monitoring and evaluation system** is in place.
- 4.4.7 Ensure that a Code of Conduct has been developed and is properly communicated and enforced with all employees.

4.5 Strategic Action Processes—Level II

The candidate should know and/or understand how to

- 4.5.1 Follow **best practices in change management and overcoming resistance** to ensure that the change initiative succeeds.
- 4.5.2 Obtain the **commitment of the board, CEO**, senior management, and middle management to lead, and support the strategic change.
- 4.5.3 Guide senior management in understanding the **impact of change** on all aspects of the organization and the need to appropriately “keep up the pressure” for change so employees don’t slip back to old routines.
- 4.5.4 Facilitate the development of a **change game plan** that can be fully supported by senior management before the formal change and implementation process begins.
- 4.5.5 Facilitate **reward and accountability systems at all levels** to support the change initiative.
- 4.5.6 Assist senior management in **making effective critical decisions** to drive change based on valid information and objective analysis.

4.6 Strategic Action Infrastructures—Level II

The candidate should know and/or understand how to

- 4.6.1 Ensure that the needed **rewards and recognition structures** for the new strategic direction are in place and reinforced at all levels of the organization.
- 4.6.2 Facilitate an organization-wide **Change Leadership Team** that is led by the CEO, supported by the Strategy Management Office, and meets monthly. The purpose of the Team is to lead tracking, reporting, adjusting, communication, and follow up of the strategic plan implementation.
- 4.6.3 Set up and run a **Strategy Management Office** to coordinate the entire strategic plan change effort in support of the CEO and Change Leadership Team.
- 4.6.4 Identify and install other **change infrastructures/teams** (such as an Employee Development Board, IT Steering Group, Facilities Management Team, etc. as appropriate).
- 4.6.5 **Guide the horizontal integration of strategies** and strategic initiatives across functions.

5. Strategic Planning Professional Foundation—Level I

5.1 Professional Roles—Level I

The candidate should know and/or understand

- 5.1.1 The role of the Strategic Planning/Strategic Management Professional in Strategic Planning (Lead-Think-Plan-Act)
- 5.1.2 The roles of the key others the Strategic Planning Professionals and Strategic Management Professionals will interact with, including the Board of Directors, CEO, Sr. Management Team, Line Managers and SBUs
- 5.1.3 The terminology, definitions and framework of the different components of the field of Strategic Planning (Lead-Think-Plan-Act)
- 5.1.4 How the clarity, roles and relationships of Strategic Planning Professionals and Strategic Management Professionals should be with internal and external clients
- 5.1.5 The keys to engineer success “up front” in successful strategic planning and implementation

5. Strategic Management Professional Foundation—Level II

5.2 Professional Roles—Level II

The candidate should know and/or understand

- 5.2.1 The role of the Strategic Planning/Strategic Management Professional in Strategic Planning (Lead-Think-Plan-Act)
- 5.2.2 The roles of the key others the Strategic Planning Professionals and Strategic Management Professionals will interact with, including the Board of Directors, CEO, Sr. Management Team, Line Managers and SBUs
- 5.2.3 The terminology, definitions and framework of the different components of the field of Strategic Planning (Lead-Think-Plan-Act)
- 5.2.4 How the clarity, roles and relationships of Strategic Planning Professionals and Strategic Management Professionals should be with internal and external clients
- 5.2.5 The keys to engineer success “up front” in successful strategic planning and implementation

**ASSOCIATION FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING CERTIFICATION PROGRAM
THINK—PLAN—ACT**

ASP Body of Knowledge Statements Summary

Level I			Level II		
Point		# of Statements	Point		# of Statements
LEAD – 15% (24 questions)			LEAD – 25% (40 questions)		
1.1	Lead in Personal Credibility	7	1.3	Strategic Leader	6
1.2	Lead in Interpersonal Relationships	9	1.4	Cross-Functional Strategic Leader	6
			1.5	Organization-wide Strategic Leader	10
THINK – 25% (40 questions)			THINK – 15% (24 questions)		
2.1	Think Content	9	2.4	Strategic Thinking Content	6
2.2	Think Processes	7	2.5	Strategic Thinking Processes	7
2.3	Think Infrastructures	4	2.6	Strategic Thinking Infrastructures	2
PLAN – 25% (40 questions)			PLAN – 25% (40 questions)		
3.1	Plan Content	10	3.4	Strategic Planning Content	9
3.2	Plan Processes	9	3.5	Strategic Planning Processes	5
3.3	Plan Infrastructures	6	3.6	Strategic Planning Infrastructures	6
ACT – 25% (40 questions)			ACT – 25% (40 questions)		
4.1	Action Content	6	4.4	Strategic Action Content	7
4.2	Action Processes	5	4.5	Strategic Action Processes	6
4.3	Action Infrastructures	7	4.6	Strategic Action Infrastructures	5
Strategic Planning Professional Foundation – 10% (16 questions)			Strategic Management Professional Foundation – 10% (16 questions)		
5.1	Professional Roles	5	5.2	Professional Roles	5
Total	160 questions	84	Total	160 questions	5