

# Originally Printed in AQUA Magazine

October 2006

## Are You Thriving or Surviving?

### ***Simple Strategies for Sensational Success***

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The Thriving Mind is focused, confident and purpose-driven. By contrast, the Surviving Mind is scattered, worried and opportunistic.

The Surviving Mind creates barriers to progress and success. It entangles itself in a web of stagnation and frustration – doing things the way they’ve always been done, or perhaps making only minimal, occasional improvements. It is, in short, merely Surviving.

The Thriving Mind lives the principle of doing the right things for the right reasons. Consequently, it avoids mediocrity in exchange for meteoric results. By reading this, you are already encouraging a Thriving Mind by seeking knowledge to better your business. It means you are experimenting, innovating and hopefully *enjoying* your work. The Thriving Mind asks “What if?” and “How can I make it happen?” It sees obstacles as opportunities and craves creativity. It engages all resources (including mental, physical, equipment, people and relationships) to build Thriving businesses capable of the greatest productivity with minimum effort, while similarly withstanding the toughest of challenges.

Amazingly, the two states of Thriving or Surviving are almost equally easy to fulfill – the difference between them being defined by your own mindset.

### ***The Surviving Mindset***

You may be stuck and just Surviving if you:

1. Chase random, short-term opportunities.
2. Overvalue yourself, and ignore others’ input.
3. Confuse activities with results.
4. Spend money on the wrong things in the wrong way, and face perpetually unsolved problems.
5. Limit your growth and accept the status quo.

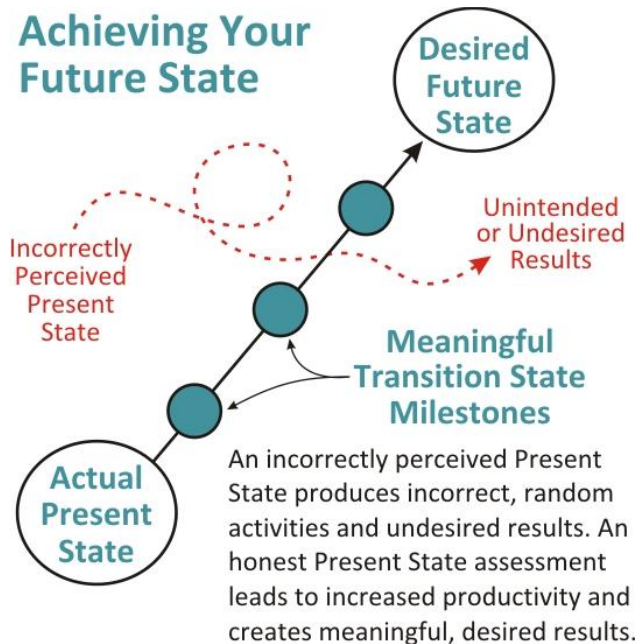
### ***The Thriving Mindset***

You are seeding and cultivating a Thriving Mind when you:

1. Focus on the longer-term and work toward your Future State.
2. Don’t take yourself too seriously.
3. Focus on results, not activities.
4. Pay for what you need, not what you can “afford.”
5. Educate yourself and embrace Innovation.

## Focus on the Longer-Term

Japanese corporations' strategic plans often span *decades*. Compare that with American demands for instant gratification, such as buy now – pay later, fast food, and 24-hour shopping. Just as Rome wasn't built in a day, building a Thriving business takes time, commitment, consistency and accountability. Selling short your company's Future State for random, short-term opportunities all but guarantees mediocrity.



Getting started on a longer-term strategic plan is easier than you think, and much easier than grinding through a traditional business plan development process. Consider holding a Future State workshop, designed along these guidelines:

1. Schedule dedicated, out-of-office time with key personnel. Plan on a minimum of two days.
2. Reserve a meeting room at a hotel and have meals brought in. Have plenty of whiteboards and colored markers, paper and pens available.
3. Spend the first day defining ground rules for the workshop, to provide structure, and conduct a no-holds-barred review of your company's Current State (where you are), and what you envision for your Future State (where you want to be). Focus on solving solid, long-term strategic issues. Outline potential Transition State Milestones (steps from your Present to Future state) that might be needed to get you from your Present State to your Future State. Now sleep on it.
4. Spend the second day defining, detailing, and mutually agreeing to the Transition Milestones necessary for achieving your Future State.
5. Begin immediate execution of Milestone tasks.

**TODAY:** Schedule the meeting room. Do not cancel for any reason. You must accomplish this task to find lasting, peaceful organization and success. Call or e-mail me to arrange to have Strategic Planet help maximize your workshop experience.

## ***Don't Take Yourself Too Seriously***

History and heroes are two great teachers. I have complete admiration for our nation's World War II fighting forces – men and women of the “The Greatest Generation.” My own grandfather went ashore at Normandy. Another of my lifelong heroes of that era is Colonel James M. Stewart, an Army Air Corps bomber pilot who voluntarily enlisted as a private in 1941 at age 32 – a full decade older than most. He went on to fly 20 successful bombing missions over Europe. Following the war, he transitioned to the Air Force Reserves, retiring in 1968 as a brigadier general.

His unwavering devotion to the cause and unmatched easy demeanor won him individual recognition by Winston Churchill and Harry Truman, among others. He was decorated with the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal, the Distinguished Service Medal, six Bronze Service Stars, the Croix de Guerre from the French government and even made the September 24, 1945 cover of *LIFE* magazine. In 1985 Ronald Reagan awarded him America's highest civilian award, the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Colonel Stewart was a genuine hero of the greatest struggle in human history. Nevertheless, he never took himself too seriously, never walked with arrogance, never considered himself more important than others and never let successes go to his head. He invited input and made changes when better ideas were presented. We must each do the same, and become the leaders that others will follow with enthusiasm.

**TODAY:** Talk to a customer, a vendor or an employee and invite input. Instead of trying to “manage” customers, let customers manage relationships and sell them first their needs and second their wants. Meeting needs first strengthens relationships and builds lasting loyalty.

## ***Focus on Results***

There is a monumental mindset difference between “being busy” and being *productive*.

It is easy to be busy. But busy-ness wastes time, money and opportunities for innovation. It is measured in hours clocked and papers pushed. Being productive, on the other hand, is measured by positive financial results due to optimum time usage and completing meaningful objectives.

When you are productive you work intelligently to create additional disposable time (time that you get to choose how to use), devise and execute innovations, enhance relationships, fulfill strategies and impact the bottom line. The Thriving Mind is productive and does not confuse meaningless busy-ness with measurable results.

**TODAY:** Eliminate unnecessary tasks from your schedule. Stop putting out fires and focus on not letting fires start in the first place. I call this “Retiring the Fire Truck.”

## ***Pay for What You Need***

Paying for what you need as opposed to what you can “afford” is similar to “you get what you pay for,” except that it addresses a frequent psychological barrier. The misperception of what you can “afford” leads to under-buying a solution to a problem. The solution you need might be a larger truck for transporting more materials, or a more innovative and immersive website for enhancing customer relations, or a specifically-skilled individual to lead a portion of your business.

If you fail to purchase what you need to fully solve the problem, then you will not maximize your company’s ability to Thrive. And, since a portion of the problem still exists, it will continue to be an issue. Correctly solving a problem produces returns in excess of the cost, thereby actually making the purchase affordable. For example, if you need a person with particular skills for a specific job, and that type of person costs \$80,000 per year, then it is unreasonable to hire for less than that and expect complete success. The same applies to vehicles, heavy equipment, furniture, office or retail locations or consultants.

**TODAY:** Resolve lingering, strategic purchase decisions immediately. Indecision and delays typically waste enough money to cover the difference of just solving the problem correctly in the first place.

## ***Education & Innovation***

I consider myself an avid reader, covering nearly one hundred books a year, along with hundreds of articles across dozens of industries and topics. Why do I do this? Because there is no value in reinventing the wheel! Why re-develop something that has already been done? Instead, focus on evaluating and combining the discoveries of others to create new innovations.

The purpose here is not to illustrate any special skill I have, but to inspire and motivate you to do the same. On my website ([strategicplanet.com/books](http://strategicplanet.com/books)) you can find reviews and links to incredible titles for advancing your business and personal life. Reading engages the mind, encourages new knowledge connections and enables unprecedented forward action. In addition, the more you read, the faster you learn to read, and the more information you will be able to assimilate and apply.

**TODAY:** Go to the book review section of my website ([strategicplanet.com/books](http://strategicplanet.com/books)), find a title that interests you, and buy it from any number of online book stores. Some are available as e-books, meaning you can immediately purchase, download and start reading right now.

## ***The Colonel and Mr. Smith***

Colonel Stewart could have avoided service altogether. The Army actually rejected him after his first physical for being underweight – despite his height of nearly six feet four inches. But the determined patriot re-volunteered and had a friend “adjust” the scales for his next physical!

Further in his favor was the fact that the man who enlisted as an over-aged private in 1941 was also an international celebrity. He was the same Jimmy Stewart whose acting credits by the time he enlisted included Frank Capra’s *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *Philadelphia Story*, for which he had just won the Oscar for Best Actor a few weeks earlier. Jimmy Stewart and his personal favorite, *It’s a Wonderful Life*, are still considered among the top actors and movies of all time. As with the Army, he received countless awards, including an Oscar for Lifetime Achievement and a star on Hollywood’s Walk of Fame. He made nearly one hundred movies, with Katherine Hepburn, John Wayne, Gary Cooper, Cary Grant, Grace Kelley, Henry Fonda and numerous other stars.

Yet, he never took himself too seriously and always stated that his military experience was his greatest life achievement. He kept life simple and avoided the trappings of prestige and money that challenge so many people and businesses. Did he Survive? Absolutely! But he did much more than that. Jimmy Stewart had the mindset that enabled him to Thrive!

**TAKE ONE HOUR RIGHT NOW:** Now it is time to experience some instant results from your reading. Over the next hour, focus and act on each of the five “Today” tasks I have presented and you, too, will immediately begin Thriving at new levels of success.

Provide feedback on this article at [StrategicPlanet.com/npc](http://StrategicPlanet.com/npc). You will also receive additional FREE tips on how to thrive and a more detailed description and outline for holding a Future State Workshop.

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