

**Research Article****Investigating the effects of strategic planning on organizational performance (Being studied by the Customs of Islamic Republic of Iran)****\*Davood Feiz, \*\*Alireza Moghaddam and \*\*\*Alireza Mikaeeli**

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**ABSTRACT:**

The strategic planning investigates the position of organization in the competitive environment. This process, in turn, can influence the performance of the organization as well. Thus, in this article the effect of strategic planning on organizational performance (financial and non-financial) is investigated in Customs of Islamic Republic of Iran. The sample includes 155 managers and staff of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs in Tehran, among which a questionnaire has been distributed randomly. The results of structural equation modeling using LISREL software shows no significant relationship between strategic planning and financial performance, however, its relationship with non-financial performance is confirmed. In addition, the results reveal that there is a relationship between non-financial performance with high correlation and financial performance and influences that.

**Key words:** strategic planning, financial performance, non-financial performance**INTRODUCTION:**

In the last two decades, the management of organizational performance has become one of the most significant and interesting topics and this tendency has led to lots of innovations both in the fields of research and application. Evaluating performance is a key issue that influenced wide range of majors and experts and new reports and articles were written about that. In addition, the market of useful software in this field developed dramatically. However, despite plenty of models and frameworks in the field of conceptual models, researchers have the most influence on the formation of this specific field. In this article we will introduce some frameworks of management performance along with investigating concepts of strategic planning.

**Problem statement:**

Strategic planning is the organizational process to define the strategy of organization

and making decision about how to find required sources to reach the strategic purpose. This process also includes people and sources. For an organization to know where it is supposed to go, it is necessary to know where it exactly is. Then, it should define whatever it wishes to be accurately and specify how to reach such position. The documentation resulting from this process is called the strategic plan of organization.

Strategic planning is used for effective planning to illustrate the plan of an organization, but it cannot obviously predict how the market will be and what will happen in near future. However, thinkers of strategy in the organization must design the strategies based on survival in tough times. In fact, strategic planning is the official image of organization's future. Each strategic plan will at least answer one of the following questions:

1. What we are doing exactly?

2. Whom we are working for?

3. How we can do our best?

In business planning the third question may be asked as following:

How we can get rid of rivals or avoid competition? In this approach we are mostly trying to defeat our rivals to be the best and one of a kind. In most of the organizations the strategic plan determines what will happen to that organization the following year; it is usually true about the next 3-5 years (long-term), too. However, some organizations have extended their prospect up to the next 20 years. Evaluating performance of the staff is the most essential and sensitive issue of the authorities in the organization (Saadat, 1996). Despite great attempt of authorities for the better evaluation of the staff, they are not satisfied. Identifying good staff and rewarding them creates an incentive for improving performance through the right evaluation of that. Classic managers evaluated in order to control what staff were doing, however, today the aim of evaluation is to lead the staff to collaboration to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of the organization (Defense Industries, 2002). Performance evaluation system should be designed so that it can inspire the staff to have a better function and contribute to the effectiveness, efficiency and the excellence of the organization.

In educational institutes due to lack of standards and functional indicators set by educators, the evaluations has caused dissatisfaction of teachers. Thus, the main issue of the study is: what is the impact of strategic planning on organizational performance in Islamic Republic of Iran Customs?

### **Investigating the literature and background of the study**

#### **Strategic planning**

Strategic planning has a long history in Public sector. The word strategic is derived from a Greek word (STRATEGOS) consisting of (STRATOS) means army and (EGOS) means leader. However, it is developed in Private sector. Although strategic planning approaches have been compiled in Private sector, they can help Private and Public organization as well as

the other communities and institutions. Strategic planning can be defined as a regular and systematic attempt for making decisions and taking fundamental measures, through which some characteristics including the nature of an organization and type of activities will be determined. (OLSEN AND EADIE)

In another definition, strategic planning means the process of mobilizing the resources of organization and unifying its attempts to attain long-term goals and mission with regard to internal and external facilities and constraints.

It also means the process of investigating current situation and the prospect of the organization or the community, setting goals, developing a strategy to reach them and evaluating results. (OSBORNE & GAEBLER)

Strategic planning can also be defined as planning long-term goals and choosing required activities toward reaching them. Here, the differences between strategic planning and tactical planning are mentioned. It is clear that the two are different from each other, but these differences lack clear boundaries, for what is a tactical decision for someone can be strategic decision for another one. Such that the difference between them is relative not absolute.

However, some of the differences can be counted as following:

Tactical planning is generally carried out in fundamental and middle levels while the strategic one is formed in high levels.

In tactical planning the current benefits of organization is emphasized while in strategic one future benefits were mostly taken into account. In other words, the view of tactical planning is short-term while the view of the strategic one is long-term.

In tactical planning mostly experienced methods are used that are based on the past achievements while in comprehensive one novel and unexperienced methods are also experimented.

The tactical planning is less dangerous than the strategic one.

Tactical planning emphasizes efficiency while the strategic one focuses on affectivit

Strategic planning makes the staff go beyond the present and pay attention to the future. It has some limitations and shortcomings, but it brings positive achievements for organizations if it is used properly.

### **Features of strategic planning**

Riesel Ekafconsiders three features for planning:

Planning is something we are busy with more than any other thing, which means decision making is based on prediction.

Planning is necessary when our favorable situation in the future consists of some interrelated decisions; means we face a decision making system.

Planning is a process helping organization in creating one or some situations for the future that seem to be farfetched.

The other features of strategic planning are as following:

The reflection of values in the society

Paying attention to the main and basic question of organization

Determining a framework for management planning and decision making

A long-term vision and paying attention to the prospects of organization

Creating unity in the operations and measures of organization in long periods

Prevalence of organization's operational planning and directing it.

Two important questions that organizations are facing in the implementation of the strategic planning are:

What is the activity of the institution?

What is the reason for doing this activity?

To answer the first question mission of the institute ought to be defined at first and the second question is answered by selecting and determining the goals of the relevant institute.

### **Mission**

The meaning of mission can be so general and vague that makes no sense to the mind or it can purely be promotional and talk about the ideals that are impossible to achieve. In Peter Drucker's view lack of existential philosophy is by itself the most important reason of business failures.

Mission includes a clear definition of the current and expected scope of business in the next few years. It represents the type of business in the organization. Members of organization cannot be aware of the realization of mission without having a prospect of success. In other words, mission specifies the goal of organization and the reason why the organization does the tasks it is responsible for.

### **Goals**

Goals are more specific requirements arising from mission and environmental review, the higher level management strategy elements turn into lower targets. It should be stated about goals that as the time and resources are limited, the next priority of goals becomes more important. In this context, reconciliation (TROP OFF) between profitability and market share or the other goals should be so clear that the most important objectives of organization is achieved.

### **Strategic planning approach**

To develop a strategic planning three basic steps are considered, based on which a strategic plan is implemented. The three steps include:

**First step:** specify our position as an organization (where are we?).

**Second step:** what are our future plans in the organization (where is our destination?).

**Third step:** to reach the goal plan an approach and work the plan.

**Properties of the first step:** in this step, 5-10 percent of the time is spent on planning. In other words, in this step planning has an essential role. Only the current position and situation of organization is determined.(Where organization is at the beginning).

**Properties of the second step:** planning has a significant role in this step and 40-60 percent of the group's time is allocated for that. Quality of decisions made in this step influences the success of strategic planning crucially.

**Properties of the third step:** in this step also 49-60 percent of the group's time is spent on planning. Consistent with this step, the group develops strategies to realize a prospect. During the third step, the group launches tactical

planning that will help to fulfill the strategic plan.

### **Strategic planning process**

The model of strategic planning whose process is analyzed has 8 steps and this model has provided a proper list of items that makes a strategic planning possible. (Bryson model)

The steps of intended process by Bryson include:

Initiation of strategic planning and consensus about that

Identifying organizational command

How to create a mission and organizational values

Assessing external environment (opportunities and threats)

Assessing internal environment (strengths and weaknesses)

Identifying strategic issues that the organization faces

Setting the strategies to manage strategic issues

Making an effective organizational vision for the future

These eight steps should result in implementation, conclusion and evaluation. It should be noted that conclusion and evaluation should be done in each step.

First step: the beginning of strategic planning and coming to an agreement about that: the aim of this step is talking and gaining the support of key decision makers and opinion leaders in order for planning to be successful. The agreement should include strives, steps of reference during the process, scheduling the reports as well as the roles and duties of the members.

Managers can intensify dynamicity of the organization by applying strategic planning.

Strategic planning comes up with solutions to reach the goal by analyzing environmental risk factors.

Second step, identifying organizational command: formal and informal rules that make the organization obedient are must-dos that it faces. Typical organizations exactly know what to do and what not to do.

Clarifying the mission and organizational values:

In this step the mission of organization is determined and the reason for its existence is specified, which means why has the organization been established and what is it attempting to achieve? Setting a goal can eliminate unnecessary conflicts and facilitate negotiations and productivity of activities. Agreeing on the goals determines the areas in which the organization will face a competition. Before development of mission statement, the organization should analyze influential groups. Influential is an individual, a group or an organization that can influence the organization's resources and output. For example, some influentials of the government, citizens, taxpayers, unions, influential groups, parties and non-profit clients, employees and financial suppliers can be mentioned.

Fourth step, assessing external environment:

The planning team should identify opportunities and threats properly. Studying external environment is due to identifying working environment. It is obvious that if the environment was fixed, environmental effects wouldn't be that important, however, today, change is counted as an undeniable fact, that's why identifying external influential factors is crucial. Main goal of this step is to identify opportunities and threats. Every situation that helps the organization make progress is defined as an opportunity and every situation that prevents its function is referred as a threat.

Fifth step, assessing internal environment:

Most of the organizations have lots of information about their input, but they don't have clear idea about their current strategy, whether in general or based on performance. To identify internal environment of an organization, one must be aware of its strategic advantage. Analyzing and recognizing strategic advantage is a process through which marketing, research and development, resources, employees and management information systems are tested to identify the organization's strengths and weaknesses.

Sixth step, identifying organization's strategic issues:

Strategic issues must be followed by environmental assessment. Such issues must be considered with organization's weak points, outside threats or its future opportunities. Organization may offer new services and approaches. Strategic subjects ought to be differentiated from daily ones and their list must be used as a basis for strategies that need to be implemented and set.

Seventh step, setting strategies to manage issues:

Setting a strategy that is sometimes called executive plan is a step in which deduced strategic subjects from previous steps are implemented.

At this point, strategies are set to realize objective goals and in practice we can call them executive plans representing main steps, responses, deadlines and required resources to realize them.

An effective strategy must comply with several criteria, it should technically be feasible, politically acceptable by key influential groups and should be match with the philosophy and values of organization. Moreover, an effective strategy must comply with ethical, spiritual and legal issues.

#### **Advantages of strategic planning**

One of the advantages of planning is being strategic. This kind of planning specifies and directs the organization's activities and serves as its guide.

Directs the future, specifies priorities and makes today's decision in the light of future outcomes.

Strategic planning has coordinating role in organization's operational plans and directs the measures of different units.

It creates an effective method, a teamwork and expertise by a rapidly changing conditions.

Strategic planning makes predictions with a long-term vision, thus it has useful information for long-term measures of the managers.

Strategic planning and management require strategic insight throughout organizational units including all administrative systems and instead of being a mechanical action, it recognizes

central role of individuals, groups and the influence of corporate culture.

#### **Limitations of strategic planning**

Despite mentioned advantages of strategic planning, most of the experts consider it inefficient and mention some limitations in its application as following:

High costs of planning, thus most of small organizations cannot afford it.

This kind of planning requires a long time. The organizations must spend lots of time to pass different steps so that strategic planning can start working.

The process of strategic planning is too logical and analytic. Its plan is too much mental and cannot consider social-political dynamicity in each organization.

Making decision about mission and goals is not always easy and it may make no sense.

Strategic planning technically requires experts which is not available for all organizations.

Organizations' lack of access to comprehensive and timely information about the environment, environmental changes and major events.

Unfamiliarity of the managers with strategic planning and management subjects and mistrusting them.

#### **Organizational performance**

Achieving organizational goals depends on the ability of staff to perform the duties. Manpower is counted as one of the most important factors in advancing and improving the efficiency of organizations. Therefore, improving performance of the staff is an undeniable need for organizations and managing performance is the means of attaining this goal.

Management of performance tries to lead the staff in reaching organizational goals by creating empathy among them and aligning their goals, this way it can enhance productivity of the staff, thus productivity of the entire organization. The more successful management of performance, the more productivity will get, as a result, success and continuity of organization will be guaranteed.

Management of performance is one of the specific subjects of strategic human resources management and is a good means of improving

performance of the staff and the organization. If management of performance is implemented in an organization with all the requirements, it can identify some of the problems and come up with practical solutions for them. Performance management has a holistic view on the performance of individuals and organization and creates synergy between individual and corporate performance through certain mechanisms. (Rajaeepoor, 2006)

#### **Necessity and importance of performance management**

Continuous improvement of organizations' performance creates great synergy that can support the growth of organization and create excellent opportunities. Governments and organization always try to reach such a goal. Continuous improvement of performance cannot come true but through getting aware of the amount of progress, identifying challenges ahead of organization, being aware of the extent of implemented policies and identifying cases that need to be improved seriously. Reaching such goals is not possible without measuring and evaluating. The science of management also confirms the above-mentioned. If we cannot measure something, we won't be able to control it and if we cannot control something, we won't be able to manage it. Performance is the main point in all organizational analysis and it requires measurement, thus organization is nothing without a system for measuring performance. (Talebian, 2009)

#### **Definition and concept of performance management**

Performance management has several definitions, some of them are mentioned as following:

Performance management can be considered as a set of measures and information used for enhancing efficient use of resources and facilities to reach goals through economic methods along with efficiency and affectivity. It is a common expression for activities that deal with managing the staff's occupational and behavioral responsibilities. It is a way to facilitate making relationship between the staff

and the leaders and results in the creation of more favorable working environment and commitment to provide services. With regard to the above-mentioned definitions performance management can be defined as an approach that uses mutual relationship between the staff and the leaders to create an environment to make efficient use of facilities and resources toward reaching goals through realizing expectations of organization from the staff on the one hand and managing the organization on the other. Performance management lets the supervisors recognize poor performance of the staff and take action to improve that. On the other hand, it stimulates good performances by rewarding them. It is a process that takes evaluating performance, disciplinary system and the policies to deal with complaints as its management tool. The principles and tools of this management is used to enhance productivity of the staff and attain competitive advantage. (Fatah, 2009)

#### **Strategic performance management of organization**

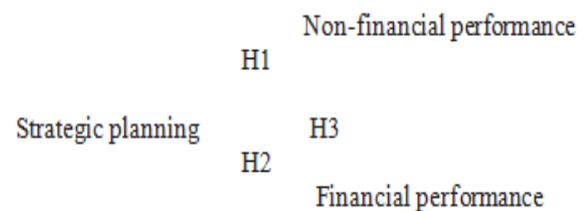
Management and leadership of organization have been changed a lot and need certain goals as well as coordination among the staff. Such fundamental changes require a strategic plan which would be a guide for a promising future indeed.

Manpower is the main reason of implementing this strategy, thus strategic management of performance is a tool that assures long-term goals of organization. Researches reveal that a system of strategic performance management must be applied completely so that the executive objectives of performance management will be guaranteed. A complete system of strategic performance management can be assessed according to the prediction of achieving performance management advantages. Complete applying means a condition in which crucial factors of success and key indicators of performance that are being investigated in the current system of evaluating performance, are realized. Complexity of competitive business arena and high expectations of customers have revealed

the needs for being aware of organization's strengths and weaknesses and continuous improvement of productivity. Therefore, today one of the major concerns of organizations is achieving a comprehensive, flexible and trustworthy performance management method relying on that they can get adequate information about their current position and having a look at the future, they can learn a great deal from the past mistakes. Reaching the goals depend on the ability of staff in doing their duty. Hence, improving performance and the staff is an undeniable need for organizations and performance management is a tool to reach this goal. Performance management is an approach trying to create empathy between the staff and the supervisors by making a fair system of evaluating the staff's performance, establishing systems of benefits and rewards based on performance, through which it can align the staff's goals with the organization's and enhance productivity. If performance management with its requirements implemented in an organization, it can identify some of the problems and provide practical solutions for them. It has holistic view of people's and organization's performance and creates synergy between the performance of individuals and organizations using certain mechanisms. Performance management is a traditional and classic approach in the theory of organizations. Despite importance and necessity of performance management in productivity of an organization, the results of many studies reveal that performance management failed to reach this goal. What disabled it in enhancing productivity is lack of emphasis on improving the staff. Strategic performance management is a comprehensive and long-term approach that tries to guarantee profitability and long-term survival by

improving the staff. Continuous improvement of organizations' performance creates a great synergy that can support development and make excellent opportunities. Governments, organizations and institutes always try to reach such a goal. Continuous improvement of performance cannot come true but through getting aware of the amount of progress, identifying challenges ahead of organization, being aware of the extent of implemented policies and identifying cases that need to be improved seriously. Reaching such goals is not possible without measuring and evaluating. According to Lord Kelvin, an English Physicist, about the necessity of measuring if we could measure whatever we talked about and expressed them as numbers and figures, then we can claim that we know something about the subject. Otherwise, our knowledge is incomplete and will never be flourished. The science of management also confirms the above-mentioned. If we cannot measure something, we won't be able to control it and if we cannot control something, we won't be able to manage it. The main point of all organizational analysis is performance and to improve it needs to be measured, thus an organization is not conceivable without performance management. (Robins, 2007)

**Figure 1:** theoretical model of research: reference: Booker et al, 2010)  
Organizational performance of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs



Studies regarding the title of research

**Table 1:** previous studies regarding the title of research

Studies that didn't identify the relationship between strategic planning and performance or observed little negative effects		Studies that identified positive relationship between strategic planning and performance	
Rhenman [66]	1973	Ansoff et al [the number of reference: 5]	1970
Rue&Fulmer [72,73]	1973,1974	McDonald [27] &Eastlack	1970
Norburn [37] Grinyer	1975	Guth [39]	1972

Kallman& Shapiro	1978	Malik [49] &Karger	1975
Kudla [54]	1980	Burt [14]	1978
Tezel [48] Leontiades	1980	Klein [52]	1981
Robinson &Pearce [69]	1983	Seiler [74] &Sapp	1981

**Research method**

In terms of purpose, this research is an applied one and it is conducted using descriptive- correlational method. The population are the managers and staff of the Customs of Islamic Republic of Iran with 260 people. The number of sample was obtained 155 people using Morgan table, among which a questionnaire was distributed randomly. This questionnaire made by the researcher which is the main tool of gathering data is in the form of field study and its structure is as following:

**Table 2:** the criteria used for measuring variables of the research

Cronbach alpha	Factors	Dimensions	Variable
0.874	-	-	Strategic planning (ST.P)
0.791	Net profit Net profit margin Facility's rate of return The rate of growth of deposits	Financial performance (F.P)	Organizational performance (OP)
	The client's satisfaction Internal process of the community and the environment Learning and growth The staff's satisfaction	Non-financial performance (NF.P)	
0.902		The total Cronbach alpha of questionnaire	

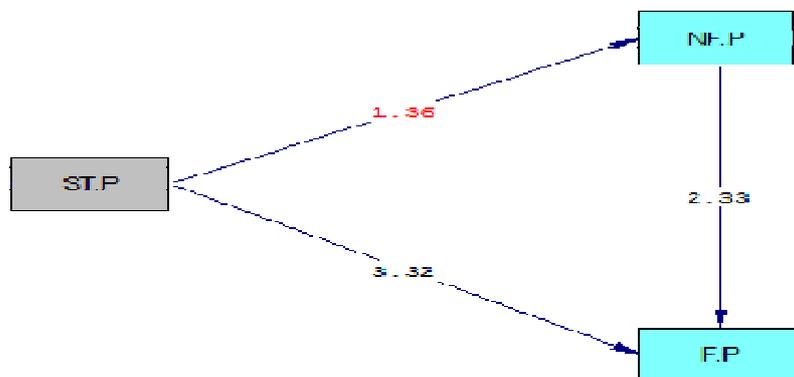
As it is illustrated in table 2 all Cronbach alphas are more than 0.7 which is final confirmation of the research tool. Validity of the questionnaire was also confirmed by experts and professors. Data was collected through LISREL software, modeling technique of structural equation was tested and some suggestions were made for accepting or rejecting them.

**Research hypotheses**

1. Strategic planning influences non-financial performance of the Customs of Islamic Republic of Iran.
- 2.Strategic planning influences financial performance of the Customs of Islamic Republic of Iran.
3. Non-financial performance of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs influences financial performance.

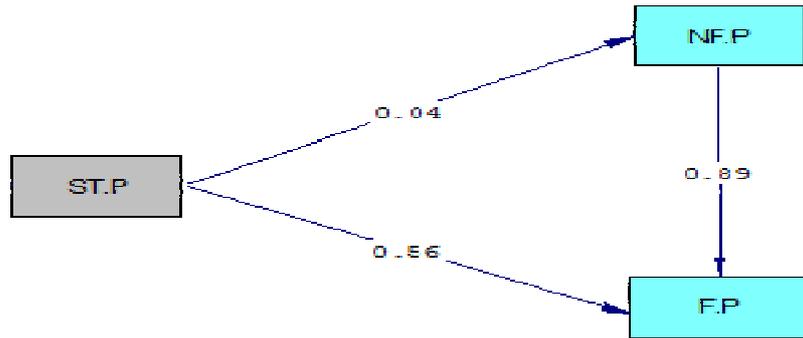
**Test of hypotheses**

After describing variables and getting solutions from the population, here mentioned hypotheses and the statistical test used in the research is discussed so that the accuracy and inaccuracy of the hypotheses are investigated through analysis of findings.In figure 2 the results of T test for hypotheses have been shown:



**Figure 2:** the results of T test

In figure 3, standard coefficients of the structural model are illustrated.



**The results of hypotheses**

**Table 3:** the results of hypotheses test

		Hypothesis
0.04	Standard coefficient	Strategic planning influences non-financial performance of the Customs of Islamic Republic of Iran.
0.41	Standard error	
1.36	T-value	
0.56	Standard coefficient	Strategic planning influences financial performance of the Customs of Islamic Republic of Iran
0.69	Standard error	
3.32	T-value	
0.89	Standard coefficient	Non-financial performance of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs influences financial performance.
0.47	Standard error	
2.33	T-value	

The results reveal that the first hypothesis is not confirmed due to having T statistics of less than 1.96. The second hypothesis is confirmed with T statistics of 3.32. Standard coefficient of 0.56 represents direct and moderate correlation between the two variables. In other words, there is a direct and significant relationship between strategic planning and financial performance and promotion of strategic planning causes promotion of financial performance of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs. The third hypothesis is confirmed with T-value of 2.33. Standard coefficient of 0.89 shows direct and high correlation between the two variables. In other words, there is a direct and significant relationship between non-financial performance and financial performance in Islamic Republic of Iran Customs and the promotion of non-financial performance will lead to the promotion of

financial performance of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Evaluating performance is a continuous process in organizations; in this regard three factors should be taken into account:

1. Strategic goals: that includes strategic management and revision in the strategies.
2. Communicational goals: that includes controlling current position, showing future direction, providing feedback and benchmarking the other organizations.
3. Motivational goals: that includes the formation of bonus system as well as encouraging improvement and learning. Performance assessment (the factor being studied and the method of assessment) has become a challenge for researchers and users for many years. In the past, business

organizations used financial indicators as the only tool for measuring performance until Johnson and Kaplan in the early 1980, after the assessment of accounting systems of management revealed inefficiencies of such data for assessing performance of organizations. The inefficiencies were as a result of increasing the complexity in the organizations and the competition of market, thus using measuring systems that merely rely on financial indicators can cause problems for organization. Some of the problems are as following:

Since financial indicators don't have any connection with organization's strategies, they may be in conflict with strategic goals and cause some problems in developing strategies. For example, overusing return rate of capital can lead to short-term improvements.

Traditional criteria such as efficiency of the cost and desirability may put managers under pressure in paying attention to the short-term results; consequently, there would be no moving toward improvement.

Financial indicators don't give detailed report of the costs, products and customers and just emphasize the process of partial control rather than controlling the whole system.

Financial indicators are not able to detect qualitative costs properly, they just encourage more production. Deficiencies and drawbacks of traditional systems of evaluating performance led to a revolution in the performance management, such that researchers and users tended to create systems that consider current environment and goals, hence different processes for creating strategic planning is a framework for realizing strategic thinking and leading operations to reach certain goal and results. In other words, strategic planning is a systematic attempt for making fundamental decisions and taking basic measures that form activities in a legal framework.

Strategic planning determines goals, outlines and mission of organizations in long-term, it is comprehensive, high level, long-term, a framework for tactical and operational

planning. The managers of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs should always answer the following question:

Where we are going? (Existential philosophy)

How do we get to destination? (Strategy)

What are our facilities? (Budget)

How can we get to know if we are taking the right way? (Control)

We should remember that strategic planning means making basic decisions and taking measures for defining nature of an organization. Therefore, if people get involved in important, clear and certain measures, their commitment will increase and this can contribute to a successful strategic planning as a public entrepreneurship.

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