Title:
A 'Four Square' Statement

Word Count:
291

Summary:
A quick and simple way to develop a strategic plan for any written document. And while it doesn't require much actual writing, it will help you focus your attention and get a better response to your message.

Keywords:
plan, strategic plan, writing strategy, writing, communication

Article Body:
Here's a quick and simple way to develop a strategic plan for any written document. And while it doesn't require much actual writing, it will help you focus your attention and get a better response to your message.

Take a sheet of paper and divide it into about four equal parts by drawing a horizontal line across the page and a vertical line down the page.

Starting in the upper-left corner, write down the germ of the idea. Take just a few words and describe the basic idea. Don't elaborate and don't use any space beyond that square, which will force a certain amount of conciseness. For example, "Try invoicing occasional customers at mid-month and end-of-month, rather than just at month-end."

Moving to the upper-right corner, concisely explain the 'what' and the 'why' of the idea. What will I gain by pursuing this idea? For example, "Could improve cash flow and reduce our line of credit cost by 5%."

Now, go to the bottom-right corner and make notes about the 'who' and the 'how' involved in implementing the idea. For example, "Sales reps submit billing info by the 10th and 25th of each month, billing department processes and prints invoices by the 15th and 30th."

Finally, in the lower-left corner, explain how you will know whether or not the idea worked. What will you measure or monitor to see whether or not you're getting the benefits you identified in the upper right corner. For example, "Review the accounts receivable ratios and the costs of the line of credit each

month."

Now, you've got a one-page summary of your idea, and while it's not a detailed plan, it should have helped you think through the idea, and even communicate its essence to others.