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# Planning

## FEATURE ARTICLE

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### Do I look like a guy with a plan?

My fiancée and I are both suckers for a good superhero movie. One of the greatest of all time (in my opinion) being Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight*. A couple of evenings ago, while scrolling through movies on HBO Max, we stumbled across this 2008 masterpiece and couldn't help but give it a watch. While I've seen this film at least a dozen times, there was one scene that struck me differently than it ever had before.

The **scene** I am referring to takes place about 3/4 of the way through the movie when the Joker finds himself alone in a hospital room alongside Harvey Dent. The Joker provides a short monologue describing how he is different from everyone else. Claiming that he doesn't plan, "I just do things."

It was at this moment that I had the realization. While the Joker personifies evil and seditious behavior, everything he does requires extensive, well-thought-out planning. Try as he

might to have us believe otherwise, the Joker is one hell of a "schemer". This trait is not unique to him either, all superhero villains are incredibly talented planners.

Quality, deliberate plans require three essential characteristics:

#### 1. They must be clear

The goal for any plan must be unmistakably clear. Failure to define an end goal leads to instability and in turn leaves us with nothing to work towards. Without that target in sight, we have no way of distinguishing what steps are necessary to achieve it.

#### 2. They must be simple

Complicated and convoluted plans are a recipe for failure. Keep the moving parts to a minimum and wherever possible, keep the elements that are within your control in your control. The more complicated the plan, the greater

the opportunity for it to fail. Achieving this level simplicity is difficult. Throwing together a plan with 100 steps is easy. Creating a plan that delivers the same results with just 10 steps is hard.

### 3. They must be flexible

As the famous Prussian Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke once said, “no plan survives first contact with the enemy.” We must anticipate change and prepare for it. Plans are living documents. They must react to change and adapt to it. A plan is the basis for which to work from, but it should never be set in stone.

Next time you watch a superhero movie, keep these characteristics in mind and you will quickly attain a newfound respect for those villains we all love to hate.

***Plan like a villain.***

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