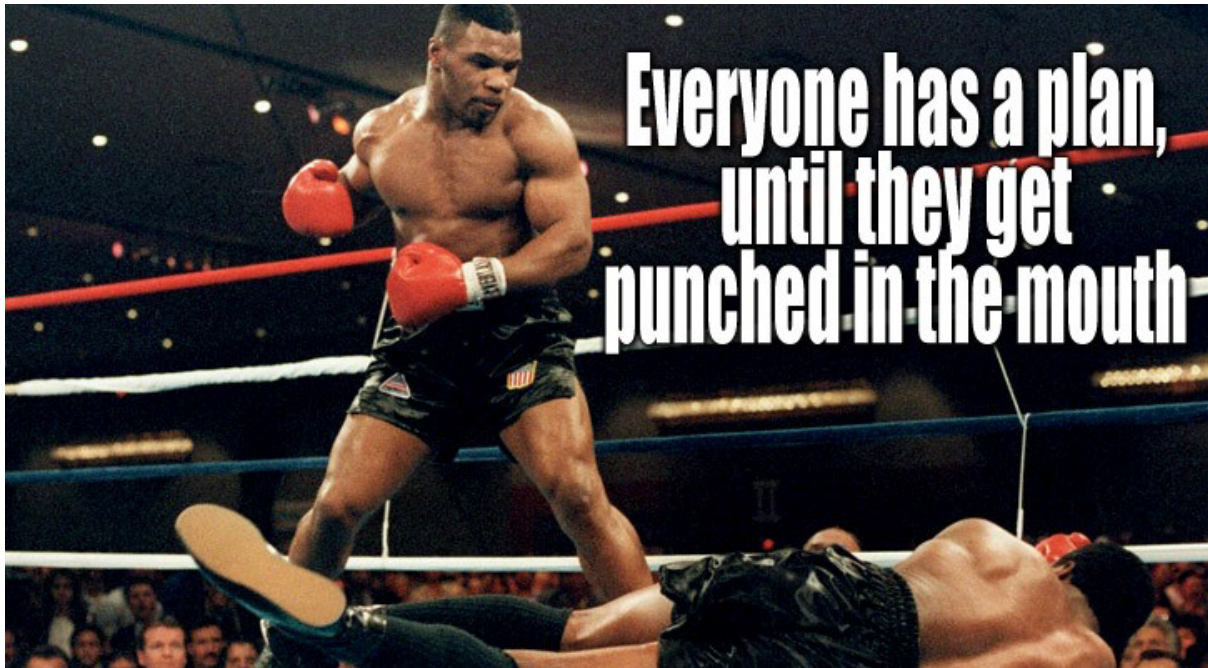


Everyone Has a Plan Until They Get Punched in the Mouth

[Planning](#), [Productivity](#)

Share



When Mike Tyson was asked by a reporter whether he was worried about Evander Holyfield and his fight plan he answered; "Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth."

What Tyson said is similar to the old saying "no plan survives first contact with the enemy". But does this mean that there is no need to plan? Absolutely not.

Holyfield was no doubt smarter and more strategic than Tyson (hard not to be), but was Tyson right? Tyson was a brawler, awesome at powerfully fighting his way out of a corner and landing devastating blows. Could Holyfield have planned to have half of his ear bitten off? How did he respond to Tyson's unpredictable nature.

Holyfield won. Despite the massive 15/2 odds against him. He won. However had he blindly followed his plan when things had changed he may not have. The question is how you adapt your plan when you get punched in the mouth. There are two key things here

1. **Most of the plan should survive** despite everyone being focused on the bit that is broken. So, keep the old plan in mind when working out the new plan. You may have a puffed up eye and half an ear but your arms and legs are still working so don't stop moving, defending and throwing punches.
2. **The new plan needs to deal with right now reality.** There's no point thinking about training and strategy while you're being punched in the face. Your ear hurts and your eyes are swelling so you need to think and make a decisive decision. In this case the fighter can either to go for a knockout now or stay away for a while, his choice will have knock on effects for the rest of the fight but the fighter needs to make a decision or get punched in the face again.

To bring this back to the workplace. If you've created a detailed work plan for your team that fully utilizes your people and equipment and key people call in sick or a machine breaks down. What do you do?

1. **Most of the plan should survive**, priority jobs should still happen and most of the team should be able to carry on doing what they were planned to be doing. So, adapt the current plan to cope with the change, don't throw it all out and start again.
2. **The new plan needs to deal with right now reality**. In most cases planners won't be around to help so your supervisor needs to be able to solve the problem himself, this means they must both understand the plan (the why behind the what) and believe that they have the authority to change it. Someone didn't come in, I can borrow someone or do a different job from tomorrow's plan. Machine is broken, can I do contingency work, fix it or borrow another machine. The last thing you want is for people to stand around doing nothing.

Both Tyson and Holyfield were right, plans shouldn't survive the first punch in the mouth but you need one in the first place to be able to adapt it for changes in reality...

"Victorious warriors win first and then go to war, while defeated warriors go to war first then seek to win" Sun Tzu, the Art of War.

So, be like Holyfield, put a plan together in sufficient detail to "win first" but ensure you can adapt this plan so that one "punch in the mouth" does not result in defeat. Holyfield won with a TKO in the 11th round after Tyson tried to bite his other ear.

Some things you just can't plan for!