

STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLANNING

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To become successful, you must first plan for your success. Strategic business planning can be your blueprint to achieving your goals and planning for future growth. In addition, strategic planning can get you focused on your marketing approach and also help to build a supportive team of employees.

Strategic planning, which is a combination of strategic thinking and long-range planning, should not be entered into lightly. It requires considerable time and concentration from the members of the planning team. Strategic planning must be organized, communicated, and implemented systematically.

Who Leads the Meeting?

Although the owner of the business or general manager provides the leadership for the total planning process; it is highly desirable that an experienced planning facilitator guide these team meetings. This role must be carefully defined, and the right person selected to fulfill it. Preferably, someone from the management team should not fill it, even though some members may have the necessary skills. Each member of the team must be free to express a personal view and take a strong position on issues at hand.

The role of the facilitator is primarily one of process more than content. The process of planning is as important as the product. The process by which planning is carried out needs to promote open communication, trust, understanding, and belief. All of these are important ingredients in the whole people dimension of planning. People, not plans, produce results!

The Content of the Plan

A solid strategic planning framework and information base is the format from which decisions and judgments can be made. This includes detailed understanding of the dynamics in the industry and how it relates to your business. Other factors include; your competitive environment, customer base, strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of the company.

The facilitator assists and supports the team as a group and individually; by having them share concepts, techniques, and methods of selling to your customer. By guiding the process, the facilitator assures the airing of all relevant points of view and concern, and when appropriate, confronting and challenging individual members of the team. This is especially helpful when presented by someone who is likely to be more objective and outside of the team.

Involving the team

A strategic plan is a major communication vehicle to involve all members of the team and inform them to what is happening within your organization, as well as provide guidance to the personal and business goals of each individual.

Your employees probably represent the single most important group to bring into the meeting. It's important to get the word to them as quickly as possible about your future plans. Handled properly, this communication can be a powerful way to bring your employees together as a strong team.

Why you Need Strategic Planning

With the growing competition, low unemployment rate and changes within the new century; you need to PLAN to become successful today. Success doesn't just happen while you go about your business day to day - unless you are extremely lucky. But even a lucky person can run into problems along the way without a plan for future growth.

Your employees will naturally become more effective when they know your plan for success. To know they are such an important part of a growing team is motivating. Strategic planning will help them to plan their own personal and business goals to support your efforts.

Do you want to grow your sales by 20% or more this year? This goal can be implemented into your structured plan and presented to your staff with support in the form of a bonus for their efforts on getting you to that goal. It is important to give them a reason to support your business growth; a new bonus system may be just the answer.

Prepare to invest the time and effort required, then precede with confidence that strategic planning will help shape your organization's future success.