

What is Strategic Planning?

Strategic planning focuses on obtaining accurate and unique information relevant to your business objectives, presenting same in an articulate written or oral form, to ultimately position the company or organization to most effectively leverage existing resources for the purpose of gaining market share within reasonable profit metrics and within a specific timeline.

Strategic planning requires creativity, innovation and non-linear thinking. It is focused on defining causality within a leadership perspective. It is much more than a descriptive “what happened” reporting function; it is more about what “will or should happen” to or within an organization to reach their defined successes.

Strategic planning is about the future, not the past. It is about long term thinking, not near term. It requires making assumptions about your organization’s future.

Does Strategic Planning Work?

Strategic planning more often than not does not work. All the time and money that has been spent by so many companies on strategic planning has been ineffective for four fundamental reasons:

1. No clearly defined business objectives to begin with
2. The belief among organization leaders that the strategic planning process is finite, a once a year task, a necessary management evil ... versus a dynamic, ever-hanging need to look into the organization’s future. A desire to “Plan the work and work the plan!”
3. Too much debate among the planners about the forecasts and not of the ASSUMPTIONS made in the strategic plan forecasts themselves
4. Lastly, and most importantly, failure to execute the defined tactics necessary to drive the planned strategies.

It is difficult to effectively plan for the future of an organization and to motivate leaders to do the same when the strategic planning function has long been fraught with a valid representative history of failure. However, if business planners strive to understand WHY and HOW strategy planning most often fails, they will significantly improve their odds of achieving future planning success. It has also been proven that the rewards of effective planning success are worth the effort!

Define a Strategic Planning “Champion”

There are so many demands today on business leaders. If there is no planning discipline within the **organization**, there will only be reactive responses to future business challenges not proactive tactics to form the organization’s purpose and related successes. There must be a “champion” within the organization who makes strategic planning an ongoing priority within the organization. This requires an ongoing commitment from senior management and a constant

priority given to strategic planning processes. A shared commitment to strategic planning is theoretically important but practically best maintained with anointment of one person to constantly drive the priority among the organization's leadership.

A strategic plan should be considered a "live" document, constantly being updated and upgraded, addressing valid changes within the assumptions made in its development. Business or organization strategies and their associated tactics are integrative, should cut across; a broad number of issues, organizational functions and entities. An effective strategic plan will pragmatically force change within the organization to ultimately drive improvement OF the organization and its products or services offered.