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MAKING OPPORTUNITIES KNOCK ON YOUR DOOR

How to implement strategic planning

The strategic planning how-to question strikes at the heart of how to make change of any kind happen in your organization. Start by answering why your organization might want to embark on a strategic planning process. Want to be one of the organizations, in which employees understand the mission and goals? They enjoy a 29 percent greater return than other firms. This seems to melike a good reason to start strategic planning. How about you?

have experienced executives holding information closely and consolidating their own dysfunctional power within the organization at the expense of other company employees feeling - and acting - excluded. (And then they ask: how can I get my staff to "buy-in" to these new expectations?)

Recognize the human element inherent in any change - the change from reactionary to strategic thinking is a huge leap. People have different needs and dif-

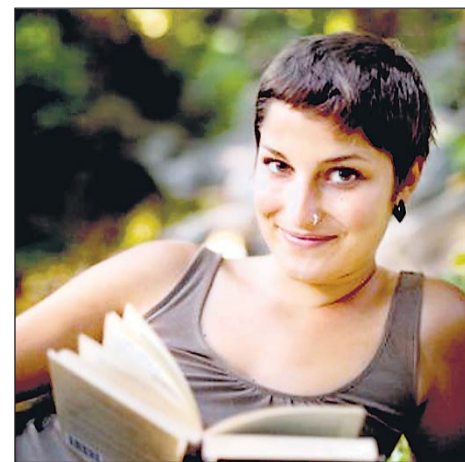
ferent ways of reacting to the change. They need .

If ttraining is part of the strategic plan, senior leaders must participate in the training that other organization members attend, but, even more importantly, they must exhibit their "learning" from the sessions, readings, interactions, tapes, books or research.

Lastly, and of immense significance, be honest and worthy of trust.

Throughout the strategic planning process, treat people with the same respect you expect from them. And you will enjoy the 29 percent greater return than non-strategic planning companies, predicted earlier. With your vision statement, mission statement, values, strategies, goals, and action plans developed and shared, you'll all win, both personally and professionally.

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Keys to Strategic Planning Success

These are the keys to effective strategic planning for your business:

- a) Full and active executive support,
- b) Effective communication,
- c) Employee involvement,
- d) Thorough organizational planning and competitive analysis, and
- e) Widespread perceived need for the strategic planning.

If you are implementing your strategic planning in an organizational environment that is already employee-oriented, with a high level of trust, you start the strategic planning process with a huge plus. An additional plus is an organization that already thinks strategically.

Unfortunately, the implementation of strategic planning most frequently occurs as an organization moves from being traditionally reactionary to strategic. So, often, learning to think strategically is part of the strategic planning learning curve.

Full and Active Executive Support for Successful Strategic Planning

Successful strategic planning requires a large commitment from executives and senior managers, whether the strategic planning is occurring in a department or in a complete organization. Executives must lead, support, follow-up, and live the results of the strategic planning process. Or, the strategic planning process will fail. It's as simple as that.

Without the full commitment of the organization's senior executives, don't even start strategic planning. Participants will feel fooled and misled. A vision statement and a mission statement, along with this year's goals, filed, unimplemented in a cabinet or computer, is a serious source of negativity and poor employee morale.

Senior leaders can do the following to create a successful strategic planning process.

Establish a clear vision for the strategic planning process. Paint a picture of where the organization will end up and the anticipated outcomes. Make certain the picture is one of reality and not what people "wish" would occur. Make sure key employees know "why" the organization is changing.

Appoint an executive champion or leader who "owns" the strategic planning process and makes certain other senior managers, as well as other appropriate people in the organization, are involved.

Executive support in strategic planning is critical to its success. Executives must lead, support, follow-up, and live the results of the strategic planning process. These are additional ways executive leaders can support the strategic planning process. See the first part of this article for more ways that leaders can support the strategic planning process.

Pay attention to the planning occurring. Ask how things are going. Focus on progress and barriers for change management. One of the worst possible scenarios is to have the leaders ignore the process.

Sponsor portions of the planning or the strategic planning process, as an involved participant, to increase active involvement and interaction with other organization members.

If personal or managerial actions or behaviours require change for the vision statement, mission statement, values, and goals to take hold in the organization, "model" the new behaviours and actions. (Senior managers must walk the talk.)

Establish a structure which will support the move to a more strategically thinking and acting organization. This may take the form of a Steering Committee, Leadership Group, Core Planning Team or Guiding Coalition.

Change the measurement systems, reward, and recognition systems to measure and reward the accomplishment of the new expectations established through the strategic planning process.

Develop within your a way to communicate, reinforce, and provide a structure that supports the articulation and accomplishment of the strategic planning goals.

While every person in your organization cannot make their voice heard on every issue within the strategic planning, you must solicit and act upon feedback from other members of the organization. Integral in the strategic planning process must be the commitment of each executive to discuss the process and the plans with staff members. Too often, I

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