

THE SAVVY STRATEGIST

“...TURNING INTENT INTO ACTION...”

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Strategic Planning facilitates excellence in business operations and management
- Strategic Planning facilitates setting and achieving meaningful objectives
- Strategic Planning facilitates effective change, growth and development of an organization

Strategic Planning: Turning Intent into Action

The field of strategic planning is one that has existed in the business community for approximately two decades. Much has been written about the need for strategic planning, techniques for strategic planning, tools for strategic planning and various other related topics. However, it is wise to begin with a basic understanding of what the strategic planning process is and what it can do for an organization. Simply put, the process of strategic planning, and subsequently, the written strategic plan, seeks to answer and address the following series of questions:

- Who will do what?
- What resources do we need?
- How are we doing?
- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- How will we get there?

Effective strategic planning begins with gaining an understanding of this process. (See also “Strategic Planning: The Process” below). However, it is interesting to note that many people, well-experienced in business with cutting edge skills and knowledge, do not fully understand the process. They are therefore limited in their ability to see how it can work within their organization to provide a framework for *turning intent into action* to produce desired results. They are capable of conducting business, however, are not able to fully capitalize on their strengths and opportunities while mitigating weaknesses and threats through the usage of a well-



developed strategy for their business.

Many organizations have good intentions and even superior ideas, however, they are unable to get them off the ground while coping with the day-to-day aspect of doing business or running an organization.

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Strategic Planning: The Process

A series of steps must occur for the Strategic Planning Process to be most effectively implemented in an organization. Each step is important, as is the order of implementation. The steps are as follows:

Step # 1: Educate An educational workshop led by a business strategy consultant should be held for all members of the strategic planning team. The

purpose is to ensure a common understanding of the process and build enthusiasm regarding the organization as a team.

Step # 2: Gather Information This step involves determining, and subsequently accumulating,

all required information and data from relevant sources for members of the planning team to review and consider in the planning process. Desired informa-

tion may include information regarding accounting, finance, products, clients, marketing, human resources, finance, competitors, current business strategies or other relevant information.

Step # 3: Distribute Information This step involves ensuring that all relevant information is

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Watch for the January issue of **The Savvy Strategist** where we describe how integrity fits into the strategic planning process and ultimately the organization.

“... HOPE IS NOT AN
EFFECTIVE BUSINESS
STRATEGY ...”

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

— The Process...*cont'd from P.1*

communicated to members of the planning team prior to the actual strategy sessions. It is designed to keep all planning team members engaged and informed about the information that will be used as a foundation for the upcoming strategy sessions, action plans and budgets.

Step # 4: Strategize
This step involves meeting together as a planning team, ideally in a location away from the work environment to develop each of the elements of the strategic plan. This includes a mission statement, situational analysis, objectives and strategies. This may occur on several consecutive days or on non-consecutive days over a longer period. A basic framework for the strategic plan will

be complete after the strategy sessions.

Step # 5: Prepare Action Plans

Upon completion of the basic strategy, a series of action plans must be prepared. These plans will flesh out the detail of how the objectives will be met and the strategies accomplished. Usually, this process will take a number of weeks to complete as much of the specific action steps will be prepared by managers and staff outside of the planning team under the direction of the planning team member most closely associated with that functional area.

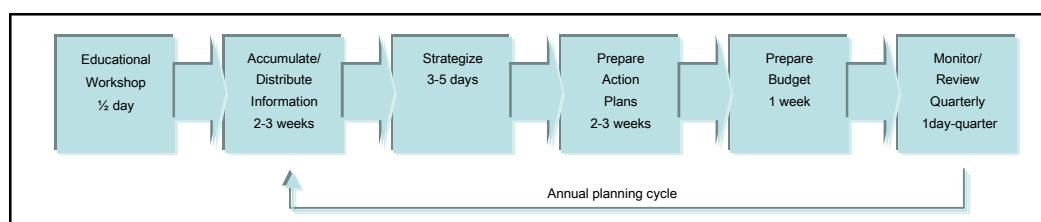
Step # 6: Prepare Budget

Although budgeting considerations should continuously be a part of strategic planning process, it is only after the strategy,

objectives and action plans have been prepared can estimates be made of costs associated with each element of the plans. It is here that plans must be vetted against cost consideration and re-worked if necessary based on available resources of time and money.

Step # 7: Monitor/Review

This is a series of on-going reviews, likely quarterly, whereby the strategic plan and its elements are monitored and reviewed to ensure that objectives are being met, actions are being taken and current information is taken into consideration to ensure continued relevancy and appropriateness of the components of the plan. Adjustments may need to be made at these intervals.



Graphic: Timeline of Strategic Planning Process

Strategic Planning: The Benefits



There are many benefits that accrue to organizations that invest in the strategic planning process. Some of the more significant ones include:

- Executives, managers and staff begin to refocus on their organization;
- The organization begins to concentrate on relevant opportunities;
- There is an increased ability to cope with both threats and

weaknesses as they are identified;

- There is an opportunity for better and more effective communication within the organization as the strategic plan becomes the governing document of the organization;
- The organization develops a better sense of market awareness throughout the process;
- Staff may be more motivated in their positions as they can clearly see how their role contributes to the overall plan and gives them a sense of purpose;
- Managers have the opportunity to “manage strategically” as opposed to managing “day-to-day”; and
- Gives organizations a clear, written governing document which guides day-to-day decisions.

— Turning Intent...*cont'd from P.1*

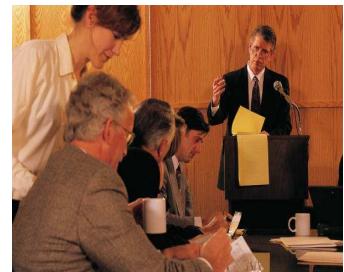
Recently, I came across this statement:

"Hope is not an effective business strategy."

It is interesting to note that although most people would seem to agree with this statement, many run their organizations as if the reverse were true and are therefore simply hoping that all will turn out for the best without investing in the effort of planning for the future. People and organizations need to understand that much of the desired effects of positive change, growth, development and success come as a result of structured and managed planning - they don't just happen.

The desire of **Savvy Management Group**

Inc. is to facilitate the strategic planning process for organizations and businesses that seek to *be more and do more* - organizations that recognize the need to go beyond day-to-day management and administration and seek to maximize potential for the purpose of building excellence into their organizations through the deliberate and managed process of planning. It is clear that greater success can only be achieved when an organization knows where it's currently at, where it wants to be, how it will get there, who will do what and what resources are necessary; in other words, a strategic plan.



Questions & Answers

What is the role of a business strategy consultant in the strategic planning process?

A business strategy consultant plays several roles in the strategic planning process: educator, strategist, information gatherer, facilitator, documenter and guide.

Who should be involved in the strategic planning process?

Ultimately, this will depend on the plan desired, however, in our experience if you want the most effective strategic plan, you will need both a top-down and bottom-up approach. (i.e. gather information and get ideas from all areas, top and bottom, and then use key people from each operational area to form a planning team). If a team is too large, (i.e. 20 people) it will be less effective, difficult to gain consensus, likely take longer and will cost more as a result. If a team is too small (3-4), there is a risk of not having all the information required to appropriately plan. The plan may evolve to be too narrowly focused on the thoughts, issues and opinions of the few involved. A general rule of thumb is to use the minimum number of people necessary to ensure that each operational area is represented and that the people in the planning process can contribute significant operational information or ideas related to their respective area(s) of expertise. In addition, top management must be included to ensure support for the planning process and ultimately the strategic plan itself.

How much time should be invested in the strategic planning process?

The most obvious answer to this question is simply, as much time is necessary to ensure that the company and each and every employee in it knows and understands the strategic plan and what they must do (i.e. How do I fit into the overall strategic plan and what activities and tasks do I need to complete to ensure that my role is fulfilled?) Of course, this will depend on the level of detail that the strategic plan will ultimately encompass and how well the organization effectively communicates the plan to managers and staff who are expected to complete the activities outlined in the plan. However, the actual planning process for a multi-year strategic plan will likely follow the process outlined in the article "Strategic Planning: The Process" (p.1) In terms of actual planning days that the Strategic Planning Group must meet, it is reasonable to assume that the group would need a minimum of 6-7 days of meeting time for the initial process and subsequently 3-4 days per year after that unless a major shift in strategy is required which would increase the planning time. It must be viewed as a true investment with the expectation that the significant benefits derived from implementing the planning process will far exceed the

"...BUSINESS STRATEGY

CONSULTANTS PLAY

ROLES OF EDUCATOR,

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INFORMATION GATHERER,

DOCUMENTER AND

PROCESS GUIDE..."

costs of both time and dollars invested in it.

Will it make a difference?

*Very simply...YES! Many, many organizations have experienced significant growth, development and healthy change after the implementation of the strategic planning process. They have experienced the benefits of having a documented plan that details the mission, objectives, strategies and actions that will help them achieve significantly more. The only way you'll truly know is to try it. Let **Savvy Management Group** help you get started.*



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“...TURNING INTENT INTO ACTION...”

Savvy Management Group Inc. is a business strategy consulting firm that focuses on helping clients turn intent into action. It was founded by both Rod Stewart, an experienced business consultant specializing in the areas of overall strategic planning, project management, information technology strategy and change management strategy; and Shannon Stewart (B.Comm) a skilled and experienced business consultant with experience, knowledge and training in the areas of overall strategic planning and business management. Both founders are American Management Association (AMA) Certified Strategic Planners.

Our mission is to assist businesses and organizations in understanding and utilizing the strategic planning process to achieve greater success through preparing a workable road map in the form of a strategic plan. In conjunction with this, we also offer related services such as: project management, facilitation, change management, business process review, customer relationship management and strategic alliance formation and management.

If you are interested in learning more about our strategic business consulting services, please contact us at the e-mail address listed. We would be happy to help you understand how the strategic planning process can work for your organization.



Coming Soon!

www.savvymangementgroup.com

Personally Speaking...

by **Shannon Stewart**, B.Comm, AMA Certified Strategic Planner

When we first began in the business consulting field over sixteen years ago, strategic planning was a concept that seemed to be reserved for the ultra-large, Fortune 500 type companies – companies that had the resources: knowledge, time and money – to spend on this type of strategic planning activity. These companies sought to use the latest in business strategies, skills and knowledge to enhance performance and propel them to the top of their industries. They were widely viewed as innovative and forward-thinking. However, as the concept of strategic planning became more and more understood and accepted it was realized by many more in the business community that the idea of having a road-map for success was actually a critical one...not just a “nice-to-have” but more a “must-have.” In time, concepts of strategic planning became used by business leaders and forward-thinking people across many industries and organizations of varying sizes.

We too, came to that realization over the years as we worked in the consulting industry. It became increasingly apparent in our consult-

ing practice that each and every one of our clients would significantly benefit from having a written road-map (a strategic plan) identifying and outlining answers to the questions as described in the article “*Strategic Planning: Turning Intent Into Action.*” (p.1) The more we sought to identify and fill the needs of our clients (in the areas of financial management, information technology, human resource management and project management), the more we realized organizations truly enhance their performance by starting with an overall strategic plan. They can then subsequently derive all other components from the overall strategy. Out of the overall plan, falls a number of operational, functional plans called action plans. If each operational area in an organization functions independently with no overall guiding strategy, each operational area cannot effectively be aligned and is not working together to accomplish objectives, if indeed there are any. By going through the process of strategic planning, implementing the action plans derived from it, monitoring the plan and reviewing it regularly an organization knows the direction it must go to

achieve success, and more specifically, each member of the organization is also clear on what they must do to achieve corporate objectives.

As we learned and understood the benefits of the strategic planning process, we began to educate ourselves, our staff and our clients in the process. It has become a very effective tool both within our own business consulting practice and in meeting the organizational needs of clients. As a direct result of this, we have chosen to focus the practice of Savvy Management Group Inc. on business strategy consulting to organizations that understand the need for turning intent into actions for desired results. That is our intent – we are turning it into action!

The Savvy Strategist newsletter will be published quarterly by Savvy Management Group Inc., Business Strategy Consultants.

Publisher /Managing Editor: Shannon Stewart

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