

Organizing for Strategic Success

By Jody Owen

It's that time again – the great Strategic Planning Summit has occurred, the team is excited to move ahead in the direction they created, the plans are on paper, and . . . *now what?!*

Part of the strategy is developing a concise plan, starting from the end and working backwards, putting benchmarks, time references and people responsible in place. What piece of the plan will get done, by whom and by when?

To take implementation of the plan a step further, is there anything else which would make the picture complete and help to accomplish the goals? I would bet there is. Here are a few suggestions to help you organize for strategic success:

- **Communicate the goals to everyone concerned.** Too often the heads of departments are involved but the other people in the department, including support staff, never have a clue about the overall goals. Having everyone see the big picture allows them to buy in at a higher level. Buy-in also helps everyone understand their part in the whole scheme.
- **Calendar-in deadlines, and time to work on the projects.** Perhaps you need a standing appointment with yourself or with your team member(s). You will probably need an additional 30 minutes or an hour scheduled each week to actually work on it.
- **Schedule any regular meetings NOW.** Schedule these meetings for the whole year, if necessary. This leaves less room for excuses in the future.
- **Create agendas or topics for each of those meetings NOW, and write them into your schedule with the event.**
- **Create and distribute a quick-reference one-page outline** of meeting information, pieces of the plan and responsibilities. Include phone numbers and email addresses of those responsible.
- **Put together a notebook to keep information organized and the pieces easy to track.**

- **Talk with the HR department** to see if there are any strategies requiring overtime, additional temporary staff for specific projects, and incentive program for items completed on time, special outside meetings, consultants to help with the projects, or any change of job descriptions resulting from the new goals.
- **Expect breakdowns to occur.** Develop a methodology to follow when this occurs so people feel safe in admitting them and comfortable with asking for help when it occurs.
- **Monitor and report progress on a regular basis.** Communicate any delays to those who are or will be affected so these people don't find out from "someone else."
- **Revisit the strategy at various points.** See if there are any changes or updates to be made.
- **Consider people's talents and skills when assigning tasks.** A creative right-brained individual is not your best researcher. Likewise, a left-brained logic will not do well in thinking outside the box or matching tasks to personalities.
- **Ensure everyone has the proper tools, technology, time, staff, training and equipment to support assigned responsibilities.**
- **When communicating, ask the other person to repeat back to you what s/he heard about his/her responsibilities and tasks.** This ensures you have communicated the plan properly and s/he has understood what communicated. Ask for his/her input on ways to streamline processes.
- **Streamline and update systems and procedures to match your new direction.** It won't work if every piece of the picture is not aligned to and facing the new direction.
- **Give credit where credit is due, and do it often!** Acknowledge work done to the individual, as well as to the "community."

These are just a few tips on keeping things on track. It takes a little bit of effort to set yourself and your team up for success, but the payoff is

tremendous! Here's wishing you every success in moving forward with your strategic plan!