

Planning for Strategic Planning

By Amie Fugett

Strategic planning is establishing actions in order to reach desired results. To achieve an effective, successful strategy it is critical to plan for the plan. There are many facets to consider when creating a strategic plan. These facets can be grouped into these three main categories: alignment, resources and processes.

Leaders are responsible for ensuring alignment within the organization. Alignment starts with clearly defining and establishing the company's vision, mission and values. Then the organizational goals, team goals and individual goals need to be in line. How do these goals align with the vision, mission and values? Also, how do these goals align with each other? Do the individual goals eventually roll up and align with the organizational goals? By aligning the company's vision, mission, values and goals, the organization creates its identity. The strategic plan honors this identity.

The performance management processes within an organization need to support the goals of the company. The measurements, reviewing progress, holding individuals and teams accountable and the reward systems need to be congruent and not in conflict with the desired results. These alignments are crucial for a strategy to be created.

Evaluating resources is the next step in planning for a strategy. Resources to review include the strengths and talents within the organization, technology and budgets.

Strengths and talents are an organization's greatest resource. What strengths are evident in the organization? What talents do the teams and individuals bring to the organization? How can these strengths and talents be leveraged to strategically reach the organizational goals? By being cognizant of the strengths and talents, the organization can start with a strong foundation. In addition, when individuals and teams are tapping into their strengths then they become more creative and motivated to drive for results.

Technology is a way of life within the business world. It is also ever changing. Review of the current technology is important. Know what technology the company currently has and how it is being utilized. Is the technology being used to the fullest to benefit the organization? Updates to the technology may or may not benefit the company in reaching the desired results. Determine what technology is important for the strategy.

Another consideration when preparing for a strategy is reviewing the budget. How is the budget currently allocated? What may need to be adjusted to support the strategy? How will the strategy drive the budget? Remember, the budget is a consideration when planning but should not dictate the strategy.

Finally, processes should be selected for the strategic plan. Processes should assist in answering the following questions:

- Where are we right now?

- Where do we desire to be?
- How will we get there?
- What may get in the way?
- How can these obstacles be removed or minimized?

There are various strategic models and tools that may be used. These models act as a guide in creating and executing a strategic plan. Strategies should also include processes for checks and balances, reviewing and modifying the plan as needed, and a communication plan.

By planning for strategic planning an organization has built the foundation in achieving successful results. Alignment, resources and processes impact the company's strategy and influence the future accomplishments.