



The “Next Practices” Of Strategy-Setting

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Are your strategic planning practices flat and uninspired? Have you reduced your planning process to a once per year, budgeting exercise? Do your senior people feel disengaged and removed from your strategic planning? Does the rank and file even understand what’s in your strategic plan?



Clearly, it’s time for a new strategic planning paradigm to emerge – one that features the right set of “*next practices*” that your organization can embrace to dramatically increase its success. I’ve written extensively about next practices in the past, and, have not described the ways in which they can be used to serve your strategic planning. Let me do that now.

Here are some strategic planning “*next practices*” that you should strongly consider:

- 1. Be dynamic and agile, not routine and static** – most “strategy” firms offer inflexible, rigid, complex and time consuming approaches that eat up resources and yield only limited value. Create an ongoing, continuous strategic planning process, one that enables you to readily respond to changes in the marketplace and institute the mid-course adjustments needed to “win”.
- 2. Disregard the pro forma and seek rapid results, instead** – many planning methods are overly dependent on the parochial interests of its senior leaders (i.e., their personal span of control) and the organization’s existing “ways of doing business”. These approaches produce plans that have blinders on. We need to break that cycle and seek planning practices that keeps everyone “honest” in the pursuit of immediate results.

3. Be Innovative and engaging, not flat and uninspired – countless management consultants employ the same old, tired planning processes that generate little interest or energy. Management teams want automated and integrated techniques that enable analytics and scenario testing. Be sure that your planning process has those kinds of tools built-in.


4. Embrace intuition and alignment, ignore anything that does not enable the achievement of your vision – Your strategic planning must provide a path to full alignment of business operations and the furthering of vision achievement. Anything else amounts to little more than chasing the “next shiny object.” This kind of planning results in squandered resources and missed goals and objectives.

5. Make strategy-setting inclusive and transparent – Gone are the days where strategic planning is done by cloistering the executive team in a room for a few days with a consulting team stock full of recent MBAs. Certainly, this kind of planning makes the leadership team feel good and important, but, the resulting plan is laden with complex theory and does little to engage and inform the rank and file. We need planning processes that leverage the best and brightest from within an organization – it produces better results and goes a long way to inform and engage the people that you need to execute on the plan produced.

6. Keep it alive 24/7 – Various planning methods are quite lax when it comes to defining the roles, responsibilities and processes needed to keep the plan synchronized with the evolution of the organization. Firms need rigor and discipline in their planning methodologies and a way to maintain and adjust the plan long after the consultants have collected their fees and are gone. Be sure to make it someone’s job to maintain and administer the plan.

7. Leverage your human capital when strategic thinking – Today’s businesses need strategic plans that can be immediately tied to current and future personnel capabilities. Regrettably, most contemporary planning methods lack the needed connection of plan to people. You want your approach to include it as part of the planning methodology. You can’t win the game, if your team isn’t prepared for victory.

8. Let your company culture of tomorrow inform your strategies today – Few planning approaches account for existing corporate culture. We believe company culture is something that should be designed in a deliberate fashion as a part of any strategic planning program. By including a Culture By Design perspective in your planning approach you hedge the bet that the organization can succeed in the execution of its plans. If you don’t, you run the risk that the current company culture will only hold you back from success.



To close, these 8 strategy setting “*next practices*” can revitalize the way you think about and approach your strategic planning. You should strongly consider embracing them, now, before your competition does. For the spoils goes to the victor and is measured in terms of growth, market share and profitability (at least in strategy-setting terms). If you like, be sure to reach out to me if want to further explore helping your enterprise get to a “*next practices*” frame of mind.

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