



"MOVING FROM INSPIRATION TO REAL IMPACT - IT TAKES A PLAN"

Many churches, companies, businesses, corporations and organizations have been compelled to undertake a strategic planning process.

In my thirty years of working in the faith-based world and talking with company heads, I have also discovered that hundreds and hundreds of plans are gathering dust on the shelf, never enacted, carried out, or completed. Why? Is it lack of will? Is it lack of resources? Is it lack of ownership? Is it lack of the right personnel alignment?

As one church executive told me recently, "we know what to do, but we get too busy doing everything that we don't do the main thing."

When the good old planning approach is the "good old template approach" it lacks creativity, ownership, and the DNA of the people it is supposed to energize and focus.

Many books on Strategic Planning are lengthy, laborious, and filled with stories and filler.

So let's look at a Strategic Planning 101 - "the short version."

Every successful company, organization or church, knows that to establish their purpose and direction is necessary to declare a clear, concise mission statement as the foundation for who they claim to be, all they do and what they hope to accomplish as a company.

For example:

Starbucks – "Establish Starbucks as the premier purveyor of the finest coffee in the world while maintaining our uncompromising principles as we grow."

Google – "To organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful."

Nike – "To bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete in the world."

Facebook – "To give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected."

The Episcopal Diocese of Newark, New Jersey – Our mission is "Equipping congregations... Empowering People...Engaging the world...with the hope and justice of Jesus."

Willow Creek Church – "Turning irreligious people into fully devoted followers of Christ."

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So what are the steps to be taken in order to live into and live out the organizations reason for being?

An organic planning process should be built on core values and begin by:

- First, discovering and declaring a Mission Statement.
- Second, align of key people who buy into the mission and can carry it out.
- Third, create a Vision Statement, a compelling picture of the mission in action.
- Fourth, develop an Action Plan (objectives and goals, answering “what, why, who, when, and how much?”.)

This process should be leader driven, collaborative in nature, and communicated clearly and simply to all who will drive the process. There must be “buy in” from all on the leadership team and those in places of influence. The ultimate, unifying goal is the success of the organization in fulfilling its’ mission to the best of its ability. This case must be integrated into all levels of an organization through crystal clear, enthusiastic communication.

Don’t be afraid to have an experienced professional come along side to listen, ask the needed questions, think with you, understand the DNA of the organization, build a framework and plan, then hold you accountable, all while keeping a healthy outside perspective.

None of us are experts at everything. Successful leaders know what they don’t know and are willing to gather people around them that help make them and the organization successful.

The demands of the day to day can derail the best intentions and the best plan unless you plan for it and have in place a system of accountability.

Here is a “quick snap” of the basics. There is of course, much structured activity going on in terms of relational focus, listening, observation, asking, and mapping throughout the process.

Let’s take a look at “Strategic Planning 101”: Preparation

Phase One:

- Know what you don’t know.
- Know you need a plan.
- Know you need help (more often than not, from the outside).
- Establish an environment that fosters collaborative thinking and an organic process.
- Be ready for things to get messy as you listen, build a framework, establish direction, and formulate the process.
- Be open to change.

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Phase Two:

- Gathering input, insights, information, opinion, and history.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses.
- Evaluate people resources.
- Set the Framework: Build on this foundation.

*"The Mission Statement is the mirror for all decisions,
The Vision Statement becomes the blueprint for all actions,
The Action Plan becomes the catalyst that gives life and energy to the Mission Statement"*

Phase Three:

- Discover and Declare a Mission Statement – "our purpose, our calling".
- Identify and align the right people who will support and live out the mission.
- Align organizational structures to reflect the mission statement.
- Articulate a Vision painting a compelling picture of the mission in action.
- Design and Action Plan with short and longer range objectives and goals.
- Launch actions and set measures and accountability.

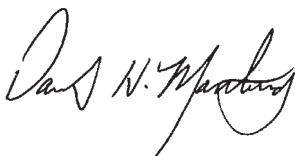
All of the components of this planning process take time. It will take weeks, months, and often years before the mission and vision become the new or refreshed DNA of the organization. Be patient and do it right!

Be wary of a canned, template heavy program of strategic planning, or one that appears to be a quick fix. It might just end up on the shelf.

Every leader and every organization that truly is willing to work at being effective in maximizing the "reason for being" should be willing to commit to a sensitive, professional approach to "Strategic Planning."

There is never a "right time" to jump in; there is always the "need to begin."

It's a great to feel inspired, but to move the inspiration to real impact it probably will take a unique plan. So remember, "It's the planning before the planning" that starts you down the path of moving from "inspiration to impact."



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