

CHAPTER ONE

WHY YOU NEED THIS BOOK

*“Drive thy business or it will drive thee.”
Benjamin Franklin*

In the introduction, I told you of some examples of where this strategic planning model has worked. But why do you need it? Your organization is cruising along nicely right? Maybe not as much as you think. I've been amazed at how many leaders, even those fairly high in the organization, don't have a firm grasp of essential pieces of information that are in a good strategic plan.

If you find that hard to believe, try this: first, write down your organization's mission statement, then write the list of values that guide your organization's actions. Next, write down a couple of goals your organization is working toward. If you can do that, great! You're ready for the second step. Go out to your organization and ask those same questions. Ask people why they work there. You'll most likely get the answer about a paycheck. Dig a little deeper. Ask them where they fit in the organization's mission or what they do to help reach the goals.

How did that go? Now you see why you need to have

a basic strategic plan. It spells out the framework of the organization and provides a road map for everyone. By creating a basic strategic plan and keeping it up to date, the senior leader provides one of the most important tools possible for their subordinate leaders—a clear road map. A good strategic plan goes beyond that though because it isn't just the organization's leaders who need that clear roadmap. Each and every person in the organization should know those essentials. It should come as no surprise that in organizations where everyone knows the plan, there is higher production and better relations, especially between employees and leaders. Nobody has to guess and everyone understands what the organization is doing.

I have been involved in developing leaders for many years and I've seen all the leadership models, techniques, and lists of do's and don'ts. I've come to believe that there are people who are natural born leaders and those who work hard to develop leadership skills. But the one commonality that has been most noticeable through the years is that a good leader's effectiveness is greatly diminished when he or she doesn't have a clear road map of where they are supposed to be going. If the leader is already weak, this lack of clarity can be fatal to their effectiveness as a leader.

To take this one step further, the leader who doesn't have clear direction and focus will be less likely to garner the true loyalty of his or her subordinates. Or worse yet, they *will* garner that loyalty and take their section of the organization off in a direction that senior leadership never intended.

There are numerous management styles and models for success in various industries. This book does not imply that any of those are good or bad. However, I have found that leadership and management theories, including strategic planning, seem to get progressively more complicated as each expert tries to outdo the last by adding some new piece to the equation. My experience has proven that a

basic plan that lets everyone know what the organization does and how it intends to do it is essential, but it doesn't have to be complicated. Many organizations have attempted to adopt the latest methods only to fail because they did not first determine what they were trying to accomplish.

Bob's Tips

“There are two ways to plan. You can plan to maintain the status quo or you can plan to become much more than you are now. This book is intended for the later. It is for the leader who wants to excel!”

I worked in an organization once that had a broad range of responsibilities over a wide area. Our boss decided that we should be more efficient (he was correct) and that we needed an outside agency to find where we needed to improve (correct again). He brought in a reputable firm that did a very thorough analysis and developed a very detailed improvement plan. What impressive work *that* plan was! It laid out a road map to improve our processes and become more efficient. More than a year later when I left the organization, not one part of that plan had been implemented. It was like trying to teach molecular physics to a basic algebra class—not that they aren't smart enough; they just don't have the basics down. That's exactly what was wrong with that plan. It did not cover the basics. Remember I said we had broad range of responsibilities? We did but each area was still working toward a common mission, though no one took the time to define that mission. It was a lost opportunity to make organization more cohesive and therefore more efficient.

That brings us to another reason you need this book,

even if you aren't the senior leader. I was unable to influence the larger organization in that case, but I did use this model to focus my own part of the organization and help two other sections as well. This planning process is not just for the highest level. Any leader can use this model and reap the benefits. I've even seen a higher level adopt the process after watching one of their subordinate levels succeed.

Don't completely dismiss strategic planning models that refer to such things as environmental scans and Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOTs). Though I believe these tools are unnecessary for the basic strategic plan, you may find them useful as the more complex process of accomplishing your goals proceeds. Start with this model first so everyone is working from the same reference point.