



*By Dr. David Robinson, Founder*

## *"Solving Problems or Creating the Future"*

Are you solving problems or creating the future? There are two basic kinds of leaders; those who solve daily management problems and those who provide strategic leadership. Both are vital for success. It always works best if the senior leader has strategic planning skills. If not, most likely the organization will get bogged down in management challenges, lose forward momentum and stop pursuing the vision. Soon active inertia sets in.

Strategic planning is hard work. It requires objective and sometimes painful looks in the mirror. Without defining present reality with brutal honesty, you are not ready for the future. Many leadership teams are hesitant to challenge the status quo, change behaviors or execute new procedures. Why? Because, "the way we have always done it" remains the most comfortable, nothing changes. The pace of today's changing world and the need to remain relevant demands a strategic planning process.

If you are a senior leader or serve on a core leadership team, strategic planning must be a core value and your primary function. If not, you should move to the management team because chances are you are a problem solver and function better managing the future that others have created.

What about your organization, ministry or marketplace effort? Do you focus more on today's problems or tomorrow's opportunities? Do you have a strategy (action plan) that is clear to everyone on your team? Does everyone know the current goals and how they will be achieved? Does your structure bring operational value on a daily basis? Do the behaviors of your team members align with your values, goals and strategy?

Why is strategic planning so important? It is if growth and fulfilling your vision is important. I am always amazed by leaders who say they have a vision but cannot adequately define it. They have no defined action plan to get there.

Strategic planning brings objectivity and structure to the planning process. It sets the stage and guides the leadership team in a common and focused direction. It provides a road map for success.

Strategic planning directs the investment of resources and provides accountability for results. It's a great way to measure success and return on investment. A good strategic plan, properly executed, will:

1. Bring clarity on mission, vision and values.

2. Help in planning efforts and improve the decision-making process.
3. Help anticipate and manage change.
4. Align everyone on priorities and purpose.
5. Establish performance expectations and identify strengths and weaknesses.
6. Critique systems and processes.
7. Create and maintain a culture of constant improvement.

Organizations that perform at the highest levels of achievement while maintaining a spirit of excellence do so because they stay engaged in a good strategic planning process. Conversely, a leading cause of organizational failure is the lack of adequate long-range planning tools executed consistently.

Strategic planning, along with many other leadership challenges, always go better with an outside facilitator or coach. Why do they help things go better?

1. They bring objectivity and structure to the process.
2. They bring a sense of urgency to the real issues.
3. They help clarify and merge competing priorities.
4. They help identify and eliminate non-productive behaviors.
5. They challenge assumptions and the status quo.
6. They provide options not previously considered.
7. They help leaders stay focused on solutions - not just problems.

You can create a better today with better management solutions; however, you can only create a better tomorrow through better strategic planning. As a senior leader, what is your priority?

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