

Where
the
hell
are
we?

How to implement
Total Quality
Planning™

John W. Myrna

*The breakthrough step-by-step program that enables you to create a strategic long-range plan in under two days with **immediate bottom-line impact**.*

*Your executives reach **consensus** on where your company is today and should be in the future with a **commitment** to specific actions to create and control that future.*

©1991, 1992, 1994, 2005 by John W. Myrna and Myrna Associates, Inc.

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Selecting the team

Criteria for team selection are functional requirements, strategic contributions and politics. The composition of the planning team matters a great deal to your organization. No matter what you may write or say, people will see this as a measure of who is in or out of favor.

Clearly you, the CEO, must be part of the team. It is your drive, your vision and your eyes that the team will look at the business through. Plans created by a planning department and presented are works of fiction. They should have no role in your company.

The CEO is a working member

Chief functional officers should be on the team no matter what their titles or reporting structures are. The chief financial officer, chief marketing officer, chief technical officer for example, play key roles.

Functional leaders

If you have an outside consultant that is a major contributor to your view of the market, technology or finance then consider including them as a member of the team.

Outside consultant

Typically the planning team is made up of your direct reports, one outside consultant/partner, and one or two specialists who will strongly influence the future success of the company.

Employees

Keep lame ducks out of the meeting. Someone who won't be around for long is not in a position to deliver on commitments, so lacks a key ingredient for success. With nothing to lose, lame ducks can endanger your meeting.

No lame ducks

Five planning team members is the minimum for a successful meeting. Twelve is the upper limit. During the meeting issues will be surfaced, discussed to a common level of understanding and then prioritized. You need at least five people to guarantee that the major issues get raised and there is sufficient knowledge around the table to bring them into focus.

Five to twelve executives is ideal

The time to achieve a common understanding of each issue increases in direct proportion to the number of attendees. The meeting will run longer the larger the planning group. Once the

number of participants exceeds 12, you stand the danger of turning the meeting into a series of presentation-like lectures.

Facilitator

The CEO never facilitates the meeting You need a meeting facilitator. **This person can not be the CEO or another member of the team.** They are too important as participants to be lost to facilitation. Further, the facilitator's role is to remain neutral, keep the team on course, and enforce meeting rules. This role is inconsistent with the CEO's role as a team member, participant, and ultimately decision maker.

Facilitator is a teacher In addition to making the process work the facilitator is also responsible for providing a wide variety of mini-lessons on business basics. Every executive team has uneven business knowledge. As issues get discussed the team will look to the facilitator to explain business concepts that not everyone understands. Examples of such basic business concepts include the sales funnel, the learning curve, and employee accountability.

Consider a Pro **Even if you have someone in-house who could do the job, consider hiring a professional. The perceived neutrality of an outside facilitator fosters a safe haven for surfacing and understanding your critical issues. A good facilitator has a greater base of experience, is more sensitive to body language, can talk plainly with the CEO about taboo subjects, and creates an external stimulus to action.**

A Pro is less expensive The right facilitator can also save your organization time by knowing how to synthesize data generated in the process. For example, Myrna Associates' facilitators document and organize the many flip charts generated during the first day of your meeting for reference on the second day and even offer to word smith key statements like your mission for the team's approval.

The right facilitator will have a broad base of knowledge to call upon during the meeting. Only 20% of possible supporting material is presented during a typical TQP meeting. For example, Myrna Associates' facilitators have the other 80% at hand should it prove to be of value during the sessions. **Time is money. You and your team should concentrate your energy on what you alone can contribute.**

The chemistry between you and the facilitator is important. If it's missing, find another facilitator.

Chemistry important

Administrative assistant

In addition to functional members of the team, designate administrative help. This person will handle meeting arrangements and help with the creation and distribution of planning notebooks. The CEO's administrative assistant is accustomed to handling company confidential material and can work closely with the TQP Facilitator to make sure things run smoothly. (Another advantage of using an outside organization such as Myrna Associates is that they handle all the documentation and quickly complete the plan's compilation.)

Admin. assistant

Set the meeting date

Set a date far enough in the future so that all team members can plan for it. Make sure it doesn't conflict with planned vacations, weddings or other important events. Pick a date that everyone can circle on their calendars and keep available. If your organization has been characterized by a "jerk around" management style this is the opportunity to transmit a message that things are changing.

Let people schedule and commit

Select a two-day block of time when you will not be interrupted. Do not pick a time when you will be in the final stages of a new product release, have a major show to prepare for, a year-end closing or any project that any team member might consider more important than devoting heart and soul to the meeting.

Set aside two days of uninterrupted time

Including a weekend day or two can ease the team's concern that there is no way they can take time for this.

Consider weekends

The Friday and Saturday combination is the most popular.

The meetings must start first thing in the morning. We recommend you set the meeting to start at your company's normal starting time. Your executives already know the traffic patterns for that time of day and their biological clocks are already set to that time. Participants must be committed to

*Start early
Start on time*

being at the meeting at the starting time; if they have a troublesome commute they should consider taking a room in town.

Allow for overtime

Participants must **leave their evenings free of commitments** in case an issue requires more discussion than a regular 8 hour day. You are dealing with the heart and guts of your organization in the meeting. Issues will be discussed until everyone understands them (limited only by an executive's experience and education.) Now is **not** the time to roll over an issue "for the sake of time."

Publish a schedule

The CEO demands commitment

Participants must be dedicated 100% to the meeting. They cannot be pulled out of the meeting to make sales calls or for other, albeit important, distractions. To help make this feasible, schedule a break morning and afternoon during which the office can tell callers, participants are available to return calls. This rule must be enforced, there is no slack time in this process to sit around and wait for someone who has one more call to make or didn't leave early enough in the morning to avoid the rush hour backup. With few exceptions, all cell phones, pagers, wireless computers, and the like must be turned off.

Select the location

Meet off premises

The meeting must be held off premises. The meeting room can be in a hotel one mile away, the CEO's recreation-room, or the conference room at another company, but it must be held away from where the company performs business as usual. Rooms and locations grow to specify their own purpose. The executive team meets in the conference room for its regular staff meeting. These rooms connote of meetings that take too long, are unfocused, invite employees to interrupt constantly, or a myriad of other distractions. The TQP meeting is a disciplined, efficient, highly structured participatory meeting without interruptions, and the opposite of most company meetings.

A resort requires extra care

The meeting can be held at a resort location, but if it is, stretch the number of days and take special care to make sure that getting the work done is understood to be your team's first priority.



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John started his business career working two paper routes to feed his avid electronics hobby. As a high-school sophomore he moved into the big-time with a leveraged buy-out of his accordion teacher's music business. He received an early education in managing a declining market when the Beatles invaded and the accordion business took a nose dive. Effective market positioning and two acquisitions generated the cash flow to fund his BS in Electrical Engineering from New Jersey Institute of Technology.

Following the road less traveled, John went from the big city streets of central Newark to the big sky country of Bozeman, Montana. Two years later he left for the Army with a Masters degree in communications science and life-long love of skiing and the West.

John joined STSC in its first year to share in the lucrative computer time sharing business. During his 15 years, STSC grew to over 250 employees, had a successful IPO and secondary offering, was acquired by a telephone company, and ended with an employee buy-out. John became the General Manager of the core business after the triple blows of a back-to-back recession, the IBM 4100 and the PC revolution knocked the time sharing business out of the sky. He turned his business unit around by shutting 18 offices, downsizing, and focusing on existing customers to generate enough cash flow to jump-start a very successful micro-computer software business.

Two months from bankruptcy and valued at "a quarter and two dead flies," VM Systems Group's board asked John to leave STSC and do his best to turn their company around. Within two years he consolidated the company's position as number two in its market, attracting venture capital and enhancing growth through product and competitor acquisition. John was now a recognized turn-around artist.

On July 4, 1991, John and his life-long partner - and wife - Mary, formed Myrna Associates, dedicated to improving the competitiveness of America's small businesses. John's experiences have given him a passionate belief in the power of strategic planning to generate immediate bottom line results, especially during a growth-spurt, turn-around or other transition. He's distilled what he learned from leading organizations over the past 20 years into a formal program tailored for the small to medium sized organization. It accomplishes more in a two-day team-planning meeting than in the two weeks required by traditional "big company" methods. Even organizations in crisis can find two days to invest.

Success flows from the executive team's consensus and commitment to achieving a small number of goals through specific action plans. Myrna Associates' Total Quality Planning™ (TQP) process facilitates this happening. Their facilitators can take total responsibility for pre-planning, meeting facilitation and the transcribing and printing of a company's plan. All the company team has to do is show up for the intensive two-day meeting and they are guaranteed to have the final plan in their hands within a week, guaranteed! Myrna Associates backs its work with a no questions asked, 100% money-back guaranteed.

Only after perfecting the process did Myrna Associates start certifying additional facilitators to deliver the planning product. Each of the Myrna Associates' facilitators brings rich, real-world experience to the planning meeting. They are personally trained in the TQP process by John who also maintains quality control. The increasing number of annual planning meetings has accelerated the pace of TQP innovation and improvement.

John and Mary live the motto "It's one thing to be independent, but there's no reason to be alone." John is a member of the CEO Club's annual management course faculty, writes articles and makes presentations on strategic planning, and serves on the boards of several companies.

John and Mary's son Adam in the family footsteps by founding his own software business when he was 13. He is now an engineer in the information technology field. Daughter Katherin is a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine. Daughter-in-law Jennifer manages Myrna Associates' back office.

This is what people have to say about Myrna Associates' breakthrough Total Quality Planning™ process.

"Thank you for a transformationally motivating two days. Our team is energized like we have never been before; we are looking forward to growth in 1998 that would not have been possible without your help. I look forward to our working together again in the future!"

Cathy Langham, President
Langham

"Our two day workshop was extraordinarily productive. Maria kept us focused and task oriented. Because she is a quick study, she assimilated unique – not to mention arcane – information and enhanced our dialogue. No exaggeration to say we did four days work in two days. Thanks so much."

MG(Ret) John Altenburg
Office of the Appointing Authority of Military Commissions

"As we evaluated who we were going to have lead our strategic planning, I was skeptical of a non-contractor focused company. One other issue we struggled with was how long we wanted the process to take. Maria did a fantastic job of leading us thru the process concisely over the past 2 days. She kept us on track and focused and on occasion re-focused on the issues we had to address in our plan. I am looking forward to seeing the future of our plan unfold with Myrna Associates there to keep us on track."

Al Wurster, President
Wurster Construction Company, Inc.

"The Myrna strategic planning retreat was exhilarating, stimulating, enlightening and we accomplished more than I thought or hoped we could in two days. We believe this retreat will be our launching point for our company's future."

Gary Baron, President.
Spirit Incentives

"I'm been in these kinds of groupings before and many times not a whole lot is accomplished. This is one of the few times I've been in one of these settings where not only did we accomplish what I expected but far beyond my expectations. Basically that stems from the leadership of John and George. Even if the Board came together with every intent of doing an outstanding job, or the best job they could, without the direction by the facilitator we would not nearly have accomplished what we have accomplished this weekend."

Gerry Serody, CEO & Chairman
CARE Pharmacies, Inc.

"The process used by you is fast paced, informative, thought provoking and it works! Thanks for a job well done."

Dr. CW Gilluly, Chairman
Cameron Run Group Inc.

"The Retreat has been a wonderful experience! It is one of the most important events our enterprise will have."

Tony L. Rovinsky, CEO
Eye Specialists of Mid-Florida

"John, Thank you for a fun filled productive two days. You have exceeded my expectations in the accomplishment of our strategic plan. I would suggest that any company with a new president or promoted employees use this process to align the team."

Norbert O. Kaiser, President
Kamco Plastics

"I have been deeply impressed by the John Myrna strategic planning session that have been unveiled to our team over the past two days. It is a seemingly foolproof process that results in specific action plans to be implemented within 90 days. Our entire team considers the experience a resounding success and we would recommend it to any company in a similar situation with great enthusiasm."

Coleen Reedy, CFO
Reedy Industries, Inc.

"We had two very intensive and productive days, the best strategic planning Perfect Plastic Printing has ever done. Our team remained focused and was comfortable with the process. We accomplished more in two days than other planning sessions which have lasted weeks. I look forward to working with you in the future."

Ted Liberkowski, VP Marketing & Corporate Development.
Perfect Plastic Printing Corporation

"The pre-work questionnaire focused out thoughts and produced a wealth of excellent ideas that formed a foundation for the team's work."

Denver James, Acting Director Conservation Education
USDA - Forest Service

"John: Your TQP program has brought our key company staff together as a team for the first time. In two days we've accomplished more in terms of gaining control of our future and focusing our efforts to reach our goals than in the previous 15 years. I'd whole heartily recommend TQP to any CEO or owner who wants to set his company's future rather than react to the present."

Lawrence J. Butler, President
Butler Capital

"This is one fine program. I would recommend this to others. I also plan to use it elsewhere at MVS."

Frank W. Ruprich, VP and General Manager
MacLean Maynard

“Our association developed an extraordinary strategic plan that will take us well into the 22nd century. Incredibly, we accomplished this task in 2 days with the professional facilitation of John Myrna. John's ability to focus and lead our diverse executive group enabled us to achieve more strategic clarity in 2 days than our Board of Directors has been able to define in 10 years.”

David Wirsing, President
Airforwarders Association

“I feel that the past two days has probably been the best team building experience I have ever been involved with. Our company has experienced the highs and lows of communication. Future Com is now pointed in a direction that our team is committed to for our overall success. Myrna Associates has provided some of the glue needed to help bind Future Com as a viable organization.”

Kevin Dutton, Owner
Future Com

“I think that injecting the experience, process, and facilitation that John provides gave us an excellent Vision, Mission, and Strategy that will propel our growth for many years to come. I highly recommend his service, it's well worth the money.”

Don Awalt, President
RDA Consultants Limited

“The strategic planning meeting by John Myrna was exceptional, educational and much needed to raise our group to the highest level.”

Dr. Stan Upchurch, Managing Partner
Longview Emergency Medicine Associates

“For the first time in 19 years I have seen the executive leadership team become galvanized with a common focus, understanding and ”STRATEGIC DIRECTION” – Thank you Maria – Thank you Myrna Associates.”

Bruce Griffin, CEO
Afni

“I am a believer in the Myrna planning process. I have seen it work with many of our clients and look forward to the same magic for PSR”

Frank Adams, President
PSR - MedicalEdge Healthcare Group, Inc.

“John Myrna: this is the 3rd planning meeting for Sabtech and the first and best we've had. John, we will do it again and again with you!! You are simply great!!”

Rahim Sabadia, President
Sabtech Industries

“Really Big Bang! For not may bucks! Do not even think about being your own facilitator! Thanks.”

Stewart A. Mercer, President
AV-EX

“Bringing Myrna Associates into the strategic planning process of our company CLMS was the best decision I've ever made! Smart, insightful, efficient, and humorous - all of these aspects of John's planning process contributed to our success. This company is a "must have" for any company looking towards the future.”

Leslie McClintick, Managing Partner
CLMS

“I wholeheartedly recommend John's strategic planning seminar. This is my third meeting and I've gotten a wealth of knowledge from each meeting.”

Gerry Grilec, Vice President
Southwest Town Mechanical Services

“Michael Jordan is to basketball what John Myrna is to strategic planning.”

Michael Sheaffer, President
Hi-Line, Inc.

“Total Quality Planning achieved in two days the planning objectives our organization struggled with for over a year. It is a cost and time effective way to plan for your future.”

John Calderon, President
TheraCare Of New York

“We knew we had a great need for a strategic planning meeting for our company. After the high recommendation we had received regarding your program, we had high expectations. What a meeting and great presentation and program you gave us! Our team was inspired and motivated, and we wish to express our sincere appreciation. I am sure that your program will provide us with the plan and focus we need for future success. We look forward to working with you in the future and wanted to express thanks for sharing your planning skills with us.”

Mary Ella Gabler, President and CEO
Peacock Alley Inc.

“John, when I originally heard about you I was pretty wary about your unique concept. However, now I can't believe how critically important this was for our company to continue on its growth path. I now feel very confident about the clear direction the company will take into the future, thanks to you. I look forward to you being a part of the company for a very long time. Thanks for everything.”

Glenn Schlossberg, CEO
Jump Apparel Company

“This was my third experience with John's process with three different companies and I find that each time I was thrilled beyond my expectations.”

David Crowder, President
Marketing Support Solutions, Inc.

"Your Total Quality Planning Program really works! The intensive, fast-paced and efficient strategic planning sessions you led us through last weekend helped our senior management team get focused on a profitable future. From start to finish -- from the advance preparations and interviews to the final wrap up and report -- you were a terrific facilitator and stimulator."

Bruce Harrison, Chairman
E. Bruce Harrison Company

"... I have noticed in the 2 days following our meeting, a much greater spirit of morale, cooperation, and a greater understanding between co-workers for the pressures of each other's jobs. I have also noticed that fresh ideas keep coming. As for me, I only slept 2 hours the evening we finished, then paced the floor with my head swimming with ideas. I would highly recommend your TQP program for any business!"

Diane Jackson Cole, President|
DJC Design Studio, Inc.

"I feel that I'm not alone - now there is a shared vision."

Gerardine Wurtzburg, President
State of the Art Inc.

"Impressive. John accomplished more in two days than our last effort that took 9 months, \$60,000 and thousands of man-hours."

Chip Harper, President
Harrison, Walker & Harper

"The strategic planning program which you introduced to our organization, has been extremely helpful in allowing us to focus on what is really important to our organization. Your stream-lined, no-nonsense approach was well-received by my staff. The assistance you gave us as Facilitator was key in developing a quality strategic plan in less than a week."

Fred Wilcoxon, President
Wilcoxon Research

"There is a new feeling of togetherness among all of us. We truly believe this is what is needed for our organization to move in the direction we all want to go. We never quite knew how to position ourselves to begin the journey. With your help, the blinders are coming off and we now have a map and compass."

Peter Criville, Vice President
Shellville Services, Inc.

"My recommendation for a [strategic planning] facilitator, no matter when you do it, is John W. Myrna."

Joseph R. Mancuso, President
Chief Executive Officers Club

"John, all of the senior management at ESN have benefited immeasurably from the efforts of George and the outline/agenda provided by your company. We have a better understanding, focus, and direction of where ESN is headed and our collective and individual roles on the "roadmap to success." Worth every penny!! Thanks"

Ray Lopez President and CEO
Engineering Services Network, Inc.

"In a world where fluff is fashionable, it is a pleasure to see a practical approach to such an important activity as Strategic Planning."

Morgan Hall, Maryland Center for Quality and Productivity, University
of Maryland

"John, I am writing to tell you how much I enjoyed the experience I had in your two day strategic planning meeting. I must admit I was skeptical before hand when you said we would come out of the two days with a comprehensive documented Strategic Business Plan. You proved me wrong. I would highly recommend your product to any business person who is interested in improving their operation with a proven path approach. You have reinforced my belief that the best processes are simple and straightforward."

David L. Rollins, Director of Total Quality
Eaton Corporation, Clutch Division

"It really works! My team has remained focused, I'm already seeing results and our profit margin's the best it's been in years."

Edward Brash, President
Redefinition, Inc.

"Everyone on our senior management team was excited and challenged the effort. We were a little daunted by the implementation effort but are eager to move forward in the direction we developed together."

David M. Smith, President
Acumenics Research & Technology, Inc.

"TQP provided our company with the focus we needed to continue our growth in today's dynamic marketplace. The company is now working toward common goals and maximizing the use of all available resources. I highly endorse this innovative but effective methodology."

Bob Wakefield, EVP & COO
Global Associates Ltd.

"You are one of the best in the marketing industry. It has been a personal pleasure dealing with you."

Larry J. Ellison, founder / CEO
ORACLE Corporation