

Where the Hell Are We?

By John W. Myrna

Team driven strategic planning dramatically improves results and teamwork while lowering executive stress. The challenge is how to effectively put together a quality strategic plan that your team will actually implement. Conventional approaches take weeks or months leaving too little energy, time, and budget for the real challenge of implementation. Too often the CEO or some outside consultant develops a plan and then expects the team to buy in and implement.

A strategic plan is only as good as its implementation. Myrna Associates has facilitated hundreds of strategic planning sessions for mid-sized companies and organizations over the past fifteen years and identified the reasons strategic planning fails. The main reasons are:

- There is nothing left in the planning budget for implementation because the planning process used up all available time and energy. For most mid-sized companies an annual two-day planning meeting and two or three one day renewals are sustainable.
- The implementation team isn't vested. There was no team buy-in because the CEO or a paid consultant "saved everybody a lot of time" by writing the plan.
- The planning team was the wrong size – too small to have enough hands in the business to provide sufficient insight or too big to cover all the ground and reach true consensus. The ideal size is between five and twelve.
- The planning process took so long that there was never a final version anyone was held accountable to implement.
- The plan overreached and included every good idea. The planning process has to ruthlessly prioritize opportunities and focus on ones that do the best job of moving the company to its long-term vision.
- The plan had too many strategic goals. Strategic goals are strategic because they change the status quo. Companies can follow-up and manage about five strategic goals a year.
- The planning team didn't have the horses required to implement. If you don't have, and are unwilling to get the necessary people, things aren't going to happen.
- The CEO really didn't want to focus. Implementation of a strategic plan requires commitment from the team to produce results, and a commitment from the company to provide the resources and attention they require.
- The plan only documents actions rather than results. Action steps are your tactical plan for achieving specific results.



John Myrna is co-founder of Myrna Associates Inc., a renowned group of facilitation experts and consultants who help organizations plot successful paths during retrenchment as well as periods of expansion. Using proprietary techniques, Myrna Associates helps management teams to go from strategy to action plans and accountability quickly, starting with two-day off-site meetings and followed by one-on-one coaching and team reviews. His recent books, "An End to Meeting Madness," coauthored with team member, Maria C. Birkhead, and "Where the Hell Are We," document his successful methodologies validated over 30 years of strategic experience. He can be reached via e-mail at johnw@myrna.com or his company's Web site, www.myrna.com.

- The plan never got down to tactical steps – to specific action steps. You need to drive through and identify what action steps are going to get done over the next 90 days.
- There was no explicit accountability. Every annual goal and key result needs to have a single, named individual who is accountable for making sure it happens.
- The company “saved” money by doing it in house. Use a neutral, independent facilitator with a proven process.
- The company hired an industry expert to tell them who they were and what to do. You get the best results from harnessing the wisdom of your executive team, the team that will have to implement and live with the consequences.

The final reason for failure is using an overly complex planning model. Hours are wasted arguing over semantics. Is this a goal or an objective? Is this part of the vision or mission? A simple model with clear, useful boundaries is valuable. For example, Myrna Associates has streamlined the strategic planning process into six distinct interlocking levels, a model we call the Progress Pyramid™. Each level provides a stable platform for investing the resources required to affect change.



- We start with our long-term Vision
- How do we fulfill Vision? – by achieving our Mission
- How do we achieve our Mission? – by executing our Strategy
- How do we execute our Strategy? – with Strategic Goals
- Will the status quo get the job done? – it never will, hence the need for goals
- How do our strategic goals change the status quo? – by producing results
- How will we produce results? – by taking action in the here and now

Summing up, if you're going to make the investment you need to do it right.

Strategic planning doesn't have to be complex. An approach like Myrna Associates' Total Quality Planning™ enables you and your team to create a complete strategic plan in only two intense days. The resulting strategic plan carries you from your long-range vision all the way to the first 90 days of tactical action steps. For more details, how to books, and information on an inclusive facilitated program visit our web site at www.ceo-strategic-planning.com.



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