

Planning for economic survival

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In these tough economic times it is critical that each organization creates alignment and focus among its employees. The survival of your company depends upon getting everyone on the same page and creating efficiency. The best way to do this is to implement a strategic planning process that I have outlined below.

A good strategic plan has five key elements:

- 1) Your company's mission vision values (MVV)
- 2) Your company's strategic plan
- 3) Good communication within your organization to insure alignments between individuals and departments
- 4) Well-written job descriptions
- 5) A good review system with individual employee objectives

Developing a well-executed strategic plan for your organization should begin with developing mission, vision and values statements for your organization. These three statements are the foundation upon which you set for your company's growth for the foreseeable future. The mission statement answers the question, "Why do we exist?" The vision statement answers the question, "What are we trying to accomplish?" The values statement answers the question, "How will we do business?"

It is not enough for top management to develop these statements in a short meeting. Consider that you are setting the foundation for the future of your company. If your employees do not help you write these statements it is unlikely that they will take ownership of them.

Once the MVV are written you can craft a strategic plan to give more specific direction for the next one to five years to make the MVV become a reality. A good strategic plan should address the needs of four groups; employees, customers, owners, and the community. Thus, your strategic plan should have four sections with goals in each section. Take a great deal of discipline in crafting these goals as they will direct your employee's behavior over the time period in question. Under each goal you should list action items which are assigned to individuals. Each action item should have a date set for its accomplishment. It is critical that the leader of your organization then refers to this plan regularly and holds people accountable to the timetable. If not one is held accountable then your plan will collect dust and all of your planning efforts will be wasted.

Once your strategic plan is complete it is necessary to align your company's job descriptions and review process with the strategic plan. Each employee should have a formal review annually. In this review their performance should be evaluated as it relates to your company's MVV and strategic plan. Each employee should have a direct line of sight between their behavior and the success of your organization. Part of the review process should include setting individual employee objectives designed to help that employee create this line of sight connect with the organization.

Surviving in tough economic times is not guaranteed, but I believe that if you follow the plan outlined above you will be taking a significant step toward not only insuring your survival, but creating a great company.

