



Topics:

- If you don't know where you're going, it doesn't matter how you get there
- What do they really think? Employee perceptions
- Count every cent – every cent counts
- Never trust a skinny cook. Respect
- Think safety first, second and third!
- Safety is no accident, you have to prepare for it



If you don't know where you're going, it doesn't matter how you get there



Very few businesses operate successfully without a formalised and clear operating strategy. Managers in organisations small and large can apply the following process in identifying their strategic goals.

OBJECTIVES

What is it you want your business to achieve? List the major objectives of your business. These are long term or on-going commitments to bring about a desired state of affairs. Larger organisations will relate to these as their mission statement. An objective is often not associated with a specific time deadline. Objectives may relate to ongoing functions or strategic issues.

SCENARIOS

Consider future scenarios. Forecast the circumstances and document the assumptions under which the business expects to operate. Specifically, scenarios indicate the expected availability of resources. List likely scenarios under two headings - optimistic and pessimistic. For each scenario listed, consider the probability of that scenario actually occurring. Think hypothetically and 'out of left field'. Think about world events and trends and their impact on your business.

PRIORITIES

Establish a priority for each objective. Priorities indicate the relative importance of the various objectives in the light of the most likely scenario. Allocate a percentage out of 100 to the most important through to the least important. The total of all priority weightings should equal 100.

STRATEGIES

These are a series of decisions and/or actions designed to create favourable conditions or eliminate potential obstacles to enable the achievement of an objective. A strategy usually involves a major commitment of resources and has a significant potential impact on the success of the organisation.

For each objective, list the major decisions and actions which will need to be undertaken.



PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

For each objective, list the specific things you would expect to see happening if the objective was being achieved.

GOALS

A commitment to bring about a specific, measurable state of affairs in a definite time period. Goals are milestones in the pursuit of objectives. They specify how much of a performance indicator is to be achieved in a particular time period.

For each objective and the associated performance indicators, list goals for the next 12 months or longer term.

EARLY WARNING INDICATORS

Predicting the future is risky business. For each of your worst case scenarios, list the things which could start to happen to indicate that things are changing or deviating from the expected. Set up a mechanism to monitor these early warning indicators.



What do they really think?

The dogs bark, but the caravan moves on.

Arabic proverb

How an organisation is perceived by employees can really affect the quality of product and service provided by them and in turn the level of business and sales generated.

It would be nice to think that all employees possess the “corporate loyalty” which helps organisations become profitable and successful. Unfortunately this is not the case. In many organisations there is often underlying resentment of management and in many cases, open resentment of management and the organisation for which they work.

Cost cutting and job losses have left many employees resentful and bitter. The cry from governments and business for higher productivity and cost reduction has resulted in these employees working longer hours, being laid off through redundancies (if they’re lucky) or sackings (if they’re not), lower pay or more work for the same pay. Whatever the case, there is a need to repair some of the damage that has been caused. The problem for managers is how can they change the perceptions of employees about the organisation from the negative to the positive. Bear in mind this is not about having a “warm and fluffy” workplace where everyone is happy. It is about creating an environment in which employees value the work that they do and want to do the right thing by the organisation. The end result being greater productivity and thus greater profits and higher returns for shareholders.

Decide that you will make a conscious decision to establish positive perceptions about the organisation. Do this with your people:

- Discuss the concept of perceptions and the differences between fact, inference and opinion, and symptom and cause.
- Discuss the concept of corporate loyalty, why it is important and the desired image of how we want to be seen in the marketplace.
- Discuss the impact both negative and positive perceptions have on the day to day operations of the organisation, i.e. employee motivation, morale, productivity and performance.
- Survey employees as to their perceptions of the organisation. This can be done by using outside expertise to conduct organisational climate surveys. Or design and develop your own employee perceptions survey. If you choose to do it yourself then consult with staff as to the content and design of the survey. Identify key areas about which employees form perceptions.
- Ask employees why they hold the perceptions they do of the organisation. Do this in a non-threatening environment and where open discussion can take place.
- Discuss with employees what would need to be done to change any negative perceptions. They will have ideas which are often sensible and effective.
- Ask employees what they can do to change any negative perceptions they may hold.



- Assess the accuracy of perceptions by discussing them with staff and management. Where there is uncertainty about the accuracy of perceptions, providing verifiable examples will clarify the “truth”.
- Identify areas of communication breakdown that result in poor perceptions and discuss possible reasons for these perceptions.
- Explain the impact the “big picture” has on management policies which appear to employees as unfair.
- Celebrate the organisation’s wins by rewarding employees, e.g. paying the often promised bonus, providing morning tea, personally thanking staff.
- Identify ways to share the positive perceptions held by employees and what is required to be a “good” corporate citizen.
- Form a social committee and encourage people to participate. Sponsor this group and let it be known this has been done.
- Reward and recognise employees who promote the organisation in a positive light.
- Discuss with senior management the support required from them to develop positive employee perceptions.



Count every cent – every cent counts

Get wealth when you have it not; guard what you have got; increase what you have guarded; and bestow on worthy persons what you have increased.

Panchatantra (c. 5th c.) 1, Franklin Egerton

With money in your pocket, you are wise and you are handsome and you sing well too.

Yiddish Proverbs, (1949), ed. Hanan J. Ayalti

In today's increasingly competitive environment, there is constant pressure to reduce costs. The organisational budget is not a bottomless pit which can throw money at everything people want. Responsible cost management must exist. Managers themselves can't do it alone – they need the assistance of their people.

The trick to reducing costs, without pain, lies in gaining agreement from all stakeholders that there is firstly, a need to do so and secondly, a willingness to take actions to reduce costs.

Part of this process is through consultation with, and the education of, these stakeholders.

- Discuss and agree with all stakeholders the reasons for and the benefit of reducing costs.
- Discuss the benefits of reducing costs to the organisation and individuals.
- Explore the attitudes that people have to the notion of reducing costs. Get them to write them down, discuss them in the group, and ask, "are there better attitudes that we can adopt which will serve us better?"
- Brainstorm ideas with people about ways in which costs can be reduced.
- Identify and discuss major overhead costs and areas where excessive costs are evident.
- Explain to people why cost reduction in an identified area is important and what the consequences are if costs are not reduced.
- Establish a strategy to reduce costs and inform all people of this strategy. Involve staff in developing the strategy.
- Ensure that cost reduction will not result in adverse consequences to staff, customers or the organisation.
- Begin implementing ways to reduce costs.
- Inform customers of your intentions to reduce costs in the identified area and the reasons why this is happening. If the cost reduction is going to affect customer service, apologise for this.
- Provide feedback about cost savings to staff and customers.
- Allocate cost savings to other areas where there is identified need for extra funding.
- Inform staff where saved money will now be spent, i.e. other areas, debt reduction, capital purchase or new equipment.

Execute Leadership



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- Set targets as to anticipated and expected cost reductions and discuss these with staff.
- Monitor progress and provide feedback about how the targets are going and what efforts have resulted in the most effective reductions.
- Recognise and reward people who make a concentrated effort to reduce costs.
- Check that cost reductions do not adversely affect the day to day operations of the organisation by seeking feedback from staff in these areas.



Never trust a skinny cook

Without feelings of respect, what is there to distinguish men from beasts?

Confucius, Analects (6th c. B.C.), 2.7, tr. Ch'u Chai and Winberg Chai

We can always make ourselves liked provided we are likeable, but we cannot always make ourselves esteemed, no matter what our merits are.

Nicolas Malebranche, Trait de la morale (1867)

Why are some people more respected than others? What do they do that sets them apart? Two of the qualities they possess are a greater awareness of where they fit into the big picture and an awareness about themselves as individuals. They have no pretences.

We can respect people for the many individual qualities they possess be it their determination, intelligence or just plain kindness. To be respected as a whole person is the ultimate and reflects a combination of special qualities. How well do you measure up in this department?

Here are some ways to earn and maintain respect:

- Seek feedback from your people as to what their perceptions are about an issue. Ask them what they are thinking and how they are feeling about it.
- Actively listen to what people are telling you and demonstrate that you have listened by paraphrasing what they have said and, where possible, acting on what they said.
- Demonstrate an interest of their world by asking them to present a point of view from their perspective.
- Present your point of view in an objective and factual manner by avoiding making value judgements and providing verifiable evidence where possible.
- Demonstrate a sense of humour by laughing along with the group or being involved in the odd, harmless, office antic. Beware of not to going too far.
- Show that you can laugh at yourself if and when a situation arises.
- Respect the confidentiality of people where sensitive issues are involved by ensuring they are counselled or disciplined in private.
- Avoid losing your temper, being sarcastic, being cynical or showing your frustration where it will damage your image, the image of someone else or the image of the organisation.
- Demonstrate fairness and consistency when making judgements and decisions.
- Demonstrate honesty.
- Avoid embarrassing people in front of their peers.
- Ask your people how they would like to be recognised for outstanding work. Some public praise can cause embarrassment.

Execute Leadership



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- Model the behaviours you wish your people to exhibit. Acknowledge it when you don't 'walk the talk'.
- Do what you say you are going to do.
- Know the technical requirements of the jobs you are managing.
- Demonstrate loyalty to the organisation by speaking positively about it and the staff.
- Recognise and reward people who demonstrate the behaviours the organisation is trying to engender.
- Provide support to people who are endeavouring to comply with the requests of the organisation. This may in the form of either resources or encouragement.
- Treat all people equally regardless of status.
- Admit it when you are wrong and apologise to the other person.
- Be prepared to admit your own short comings or areas in which you lack knowledge.
- Give credit where it is due - don't pass off team member's efforts or ideas as your own.
- Always adopt a 'can do' attitude.



Think safety first, second and third!

Example is always more efficacious than precept.

Samuel Johnson, 1790-1784, English lexicographer and critic

Diligence is a great teacher.

Arabic proverb.

Not a gift of a cow, nor gift of land, nor yet a gift of food, is so important as the gift of safety, which is declared to be the great gift among all gifts in this world.

Panchatantra (c. 5th c.), 1, tr. Franklin Edgerton.

Over the past decade, due to changes in legislation, safety has become a huge issue in the workplace and is continuing to have a significant impact on the way the work is and will be done. Management has a 'Duty of Care' to ensure the work environment is safe for everyone.

Part of the dilemma for management is the cost to address many of the 'safety issues' which have been identified. Many of these issues have been around for a long time, but have never been considered important. The emphasis of responsibility, however, has shifted from the individual (to take care) to the organisation (to make it safe.)

Both litigation and legislation are acting as powerful incentives for organisations to ensure that the worksite is safe. By applying these actions you will meet most of the criteria for a safe work environment. However, you will need to inform yourself about both legislative requirements and the policy and requirements of your organisation.

- Appoint a safety officer who can assume the role of 'watch dog' and give him or her the power and the backing to intervene and make adjustments where necessary.
- Establish a safety committee, comprising staff and management to oversee key safety issues and make decisions.
- Identify and highlight hazards and areas which are unsafe.
- Determine the cause of hazards and act immediately to rectify the situation.
- Implement action immediately to restrict use of unsafe areas or things and to limit danger.
- Establish a procedure for dealing with unsafe situations and equipment.
- Establish clear criteria by which objective and rational assessment can be made.
- Inform staff of any safety concern you may have as soon as is practical. Make sure you get a response from them so that you know they have received the warning.
- Notify the appropriate authority to deal with the hazard where it is beyond the skills of you or staff, e.g. electrical, chemical or structural problems.
- Establish and document an organisation evacuation procedure.
- Ensure all areas display, in a prominent place, a copy of the evacuation procedure.

Execute Leadership



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- Practise and update evacuation procedures regularly.
- Discuss with staff the implications of 'Duty of Care' and what their role might be in this area.
- Include specific organisation safety issues into the organisation induction program.
- Ensure equipment complies with national safety standards before purchasing it for the organisation.
- Budget for the replacement of equipment which may be becoming unsafe.
- Reward and recognise people who are safety conscious.
- Provide regular safety training courses for staff and committee members which relate specifically to workplace safety.
- Learn about the legislative requirements of management in relation to occupational health and safety. Do this by reading literature, attending courses, inviting government safety representatives to the worksite to talk to staff and conduct safety audits.



Safety is no accident, you have to prepare for it



Accident is defined as an event that is without apparent cause or unexpected;an unlucky event, especially one causing injury or damage. (The Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary). “Unlucky” will undoubtedly console the family of a worker killed in the workplace and explain the reasons their father or brother or sister had to die. (There are not too many managers killed in the workplace.)

The term ‘accident’ is an unfortunate one as it conveys an acceptance of the unnecessary. We are used to referring to crashes on our roads and highways as ‘accidents’. They are not accidents. They have causes: incompetence, ignorance or lost focus – not being present in the moment. “We’re terribly sorry you have lost an eye, but it was only an accident.”

As if ‘accident’ excuses the maiming for life or the death. No one need be killed or injured at work and when they are, there is always a reason. Always.

Unintentional happenings are also described as accidents. So what is your intention when you deliberately choose not to replace unsafe equipment or deliberately choose not to follow a safety procedure? Is it to take a chance with somebody else’s life or even your own?

Here is a checklist for managers who believe that death and injury in the workplace are preventable.

- Identify the requirements for safety training.
- Check where safety rates as a priority in the minds and actions of you and your work group. What is the safety culture like within your team?
- Discuss the attitudes within the team towards safety, accidents, death and injury.
- Ensure regular, ‘hands on’ safety training of all team members.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the training in terms of what people think and do in relation to safety, i.e. check that people are applying the safety training in the workplace.
- Keep safety as a constant focus in the minds of your work group.
- Conduct regular ‘toolbox’ safety training.

Execute Leadership



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- Ensure all hazardous areas and equipment are clearly marked.
- Ensure safe operating procedures are clearly visible and followed.
- Encourage your people to report anything to you which they perceive to be unsafe. Ensure that workers believe that they can report concerns without fear of consequences.
- Check what pressure is placed on people to ignore safe limits and safe practices.
- Ensure all new operators undergo safety training before commencing work.
- Check that all staff are informed of and understand safety procedures.
- Instil an attitude within your team that accidents don't just happen, that there is always a reason and that all accidents are preventable if we are focused and aware.
- Check that all legislative and company safety requirements are met on site.
- Act immediately on unsafe practices - never tolerate non-compliance with safe working practices.
- Regularly check potential safety hazards.
- Act on workers' complaints and concerns immediately or as soon as possible. Otherwise they won't bother.
- Encourage workers to take responsibility for the safety of themselves and their own workmates.
- Remind workers that not one casualty believed that they would be injured or killed that day.
- Investigate incidents to establish causes and implement the necessary changes.
- Conduct regular safety audits to identify safety hazards and unsafe practices.