

Putting Your Plan to Use

In the last couple issues we discussed how to develop a simple and useful business plan that includes the key components of developing a vision statement, mission statement, objectives, goals and tactics.

The interaction among team members and thought in developing the plan is the greatest benefit. Unfortunately, few farmers go through a strategic planning process, and fewer follow up and revise it quarterly.

A quarterly meeting including all participants involved in the original plan is important. Without everyone present, a lot can be lost or missed in the discussions. Hog-tie participants if you have to, and do not allow phone calls.

The first place to start for the quarterly follow up is reviewing tactics. Were the tactics identified, completed and the timetables met? If not, why?

This process holds people accountable, and more importantly it holds you accountable to yourself. You not only have in writing what you and others had planned to do, you have to answer why an item did or did not get done.

Recognize that things change from one quarter to the next and

change will accelerate in the future. So if some tactics, goals or objectives are not needed, not realistic or need to be modified, fix them.

Then you can revise, add or delete the goals from which the tactics resulted.



Your objectives, mission and vision statements need not be changed quarterly. If they were developed well and with a lot of thought they may not change, even yearly. I suggest they should

be reviewed at least once a year.

Your plan should be a tool for getting things done, making changes and bringing your team together, making the whole more than the sum of the parts in your farm. It should not be a chore, and not an obstacle.

Make the meeting short, one hour should be enough time, and make the plan the only item for the meeting. Cluttering a planning meeting agenda with other topics will cause you to lose the plan's effectiveness.

Assign one person to manage the business plan or hire a vendor to initiate group review and discussion. This person is in charge of making sure the group periodically reviews the plan and assess progress toward the desired results.

Keep in mind this plan is for the benefit of your business: Keep it simple and design it to fit your personal business needs. The quality of the plan is not determined by how many pages it is or how fancy it looks. It's determined by the content and, more importantly, the mutual agreement throughout the organization.

The business plan itself is just a byproduct of the organization generating internal communication. This communication is really the critical element needed for future success. Writing the business plan is just one of the tactics used to stimulate thought, organize ideas and set the course and future direction of the company.

Following a few of these simple processes can make your investment in your plan really pay off. ■

Be A Real Manager

Strategic planning is not new. All successful entrepreneurs and managers do it. In many cases it's intuitively done. The owner has a plan in his or her mind of what needs to be done, how and when. The problem is, everyone else cannot read his or her mind. That is where the benefit of the planning process comes in.

For senior managers in large companies, strategic planning is their major job. That's what they get paid for and getting paid well is worth it if they do a good job of identifying direction, vision and strategies.

The problem is most farms do not have a senior management team to do the planning. In most cases you are the senior manager, the middle manager and the poor slob who has to get it done.

However, that does not minimize the need or importance of planning. ■

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