

Good news- Very easy to read, short, simple and very practical. It uses a five step strategy briefing approach to help put plans into action, offers interesting examples and makes the process easy to follow.

Bad news- It might seem too simple at first and thus not worth considering, but....

Good news- It really **is** worth considering, has solid applicability for everyone in business today, and of course, I have summarized it and offer you some real tactics! As usual, I hope you can put them to use right away.

Summary:

Most organizations have strategic plans, these days, and create them through sometimes detailed and time-consuming processes. The resulting plan usually includes a vision and/or mission, a set of lofty goals and a number of measures and targets, finally approved months into the year they are supposed to cover, and only add to the confusion about what really matters to the business unit or department. And for many managers, the unanswered two-part question still remains: What do you want me to do or us to do?

This article offers answers to those questions. It describes a process called strategy briefing, a technique derived from the military. Through it, managers and their reports can move together from the uncertainty surrounding unclear and/or complex goals and performance measures to clarity about just which objectives each person needs to focus on and in what order of priority. The briefing also helps managers set parameters for two variables that are keys to high performance: the extent to which people in an organization act in line with its leaders' intentions, and how much freedom they have to take independent action. In essence, the briefing turns lofty strategic goals into a clear blueprint for execution.

A single strategy briefing can help a team perform better, but the real magic happens when briefings roll down through an entire organization. When that occurs, the company's strategy is broken into a cascade of discrete but linked elements. In the end, people will be strategically aligned and operationally autonomous; a combination that is one of the hallmarks of high-performing organizations.

The five steps of the strategy briefing process:

1. State your intent
2. Revise your intent in the context of your company's situation
3. Determine which measures indicate whether you are achieving your goal
4. Define the tasks implied by your intent
5. Define the boundaries or constraints that limit your team

Applications:

Once you have your strategic plan or are given the plan to implement and have read it, gather your team and consider doing the following:

1. **State your intent (or what you are expected to do and why)**
 - Make two lists on a flipchart; the what's and the why's
 - The what's might include something like "increase sales by 20%" or "increase our ranking into the top quartile"
 - The corresponding why's might include "so that we can achieve profitable growth" or "to attract better candidates to do more meaningful research"

2. **Revise your intent in the context of your company's (department's or BU's) situation**

- Ask what's happening today in your world that might affect the plan?
- What does the future look like in your world?
- What are your competitors doing?
- Revise your plan accordingly

3. **Determine which measures indicate whether you are achieving your goal**

- Of course, use the S.M.A.R.T. test
- And make "R" stand for "really matters" as well as "realistic"

4. **Define the tasks implied by your intent**

- Slice those "overwhelming top priority tasks" into smaller, more easily do-able chunks
- Make sure you have owners and completion dates for each action

5. **Define the boundaries or constraints that limit your team**

- Do a risk analysis or potential problem analysis
- And maybe do a "potential opportunity analysis" while you are at it
- Revise your plan accordingly

And Finally:

I work with many clients on Consulting, Training and Coaching and have already put aspects of this strategic planning implementation approach to use with some of them. If you want more thoughts about this article, or want to add your own, check out my blog. You can visit it at <http://richsteel.blogspot.com/> This opinion and others are posted on my newly revised web site: www.rsbc.com To talk more about this and other topics, e-mail me (Rich Steel) at rsbc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610 388 3680 or on my cell at 610 324 8466.