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Business Strategy Planning: No more ‘Wash and repeat’

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Introduction

Don't let your 2017 strategy planning be another year of wash and repeat!

Welcome to HR18o's White Paper looking at Business Strategy. In 4 parts, each section takes you through elements of the strategy building process, in a typically HR18o way!

We understand that organisations have pressures from all angles. Sometimes it is difficult to revisit your business goals, what the priorities will be and make a plan as to how you are going to achieve them. This can lead to a year on year repeat of your activities, without really getting a handle on what is working well – and what isn't!

2017 could be the time to get out of the cycle of 'wash and repeat'?

If you like the ideas we put forward in this paper, then you'll love HR18o's [Strength Test!](#) Developed by the HR18o boffins, this is a powerful tool to define ambition, identify the current position and provide a series of recommendations that can be easily implemented to provide breakthrough value. With a price point allied to your business size, it is within the reach of all types and size of business.

We hope you find this document a useful read and if you'd like to see more like this [sign up for our newsletter.](#)

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1. No more ‘wash and repeat’: Do something different

Most business owners want to make wise decisions but they are sometimes at a loss to identify where to begin. This is where strategic management comes into play. An important concept for business



Flickr Rob Briscoe

owners and managers to grasp, strategic management entails evaluating business goals, objectives and plans considering your company focus on effectiveness and efficiency. Strategic management is vitally important even on a small scale within a business. It is difficult to accomplish anything without a clearly defined set of goals for the business operation.

Why plans fail

An effective business is often one that has initiated programmes and services within its structure which ensure open communication, good management and effective leadership. Take your eye off the ball of these fundamentals and you will find it difficult to manage strategically because the basic framework of goal setting and decision making are missing. This is why plans fail to get off the ground.

Your process might be missing some important ingredients. Setting up control and reporting mechanisms is important to strategic management and as part of a push! This allows the business to make changes when they are needed and constantly monitor its own progress. It is apparent that all things today are process driven and that means all things need to be constantly improving. Put in place a regular cycle of review and if necessary re-engineer your business processes to deliver better business results.

Why is data important?

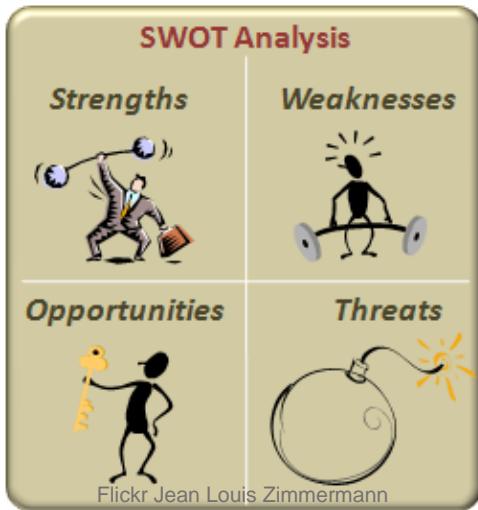
The volume of information available to us is growing rapidly, opportunities to expand insights by combining data are accelerating and bigger and better data gives businesses more panoramic views of their business environment. The ability to see what was previously invisible improves operations, customer experiences and strategy. Often companies already have data they need to tackle business problems, but management don't know how they can use this information to make key decisions.

How is data used to support planning?

The key question to ask yourself is, “what decisions could we make if we had all the information we need?” Businesses need to get more creative about the potential of external and new sources of data and encourage a more comprehensive look at data by being specific about the business problems and opportunities they need to address.

2. SWOT analysis

Staying Grounded in reality – concentrating on what's important



In the strategic planning world winter is a busy time. Most companies are at the top of their service cycle and looking to renew their plans - or realising they don't want to start another year without one! Like any planning tool, a SWOT analysis is only as good as the information it contains. There are some fundamental questions to help with focus:

- What does the company do best?
- What are the functional capabilities?
- What must you do long term to succeed?
- How can you be more innovative and effective?
- What unique resources or capabilities do you have now and what do you lack?

These are the essentials, and it is key that the process stays grounded in reality! Strength and weaknesses you identify should be done with a market orientation and customer focus in mind (even though these are 'internal' questions) because:

- Strengths are only meaningful when they assist the business in meeting customer needs
- Weaknesses that might not seem outwardly apparent to customers often will still manifest through the experiences that they have with your company.

Finding the Clarity

Strategy implies being ready for the future, which can sound a bit daunting. Putting an **actionable** plan together may even seem impossible to accomplish given the unpredictability. Using a more in depth check helps make framing your strategy much less complicated and understanding your internal and external environment is a necessity for charting your strategy. The world is indeed a complex place but investing in your strategy check will help you with your bottom line by:

- Focusing on your strengths
- Shoring up your weaknesses
- Capitalising on your opportunities
- Recognising your threats
- Predicting ways to measure success.

It's worth remembering that with the appropriate use of tools pyramids have been built and mountains moved.

Right people around the table – skills to do it

Many people get confused about the differences between strengths and opportunities, as well as the difference between weakness and threats - what needs to change or improve in the processes which deliver strategy. Like directions on a compass, the S and W are your internal orientation and the

O and T are your outward. Having the right people around the table is critical: questions should be explored with your key staff, managers and leaders. Don't sell your brain trust short by only relying on a couple of people to answer or explore what could be fundamental in the business! If you or your people do not know what to ask or how to analyse, ensure you have a steer - a helping hand from someone who knows how to get you through to the main areas.

3. People hold everything together

People plan should match your ambitions

A talented and aligned workforce is crucial for bringing strategy to life and ensuring a business delivers on its objectives. All organisations understand that success comes from having the right people aligned to the work that needs to be done.



As work requirements evolve, the demands on your workforce change too. Combined with a number of trends that impact on the shape and expectations of the workforce, business leaders need to address these challenges to deliver their strategic plan. Many industries are in the midst of major changes where having the correct workforce in place is the critical gap between success and failure - workforce planning is not just about keeping up with workforce trends. Getting the right people in place means addressing the right things.

What is missing can be fundamental

Missing any one of five core elements would be detrimental to providing the basis for the talent required to deliver on your strategy. Even with small numbers of employees, you need to integrate workforce supply and demand analysis into your planning cycle giving you:

- The right size - the right number of people in the right roles spending the right amount of time achieving given outcomes.
- The right shape - identify duplication and inefficiency to establish the right balance of admin to professionals, juniors to senior, experienced staff to new hires.
- The right place - ensure the required staff resources are available in the right locations to meet current and future workload.
- The right skills - assess the gaps in the competencies and skills that will be needed to meet future goals.
- The right costs - benchmark pay and reward to pay the right process for the right skill.

Communicate, change, coordinate

Few businesses have escaped the need for change at some point, and any change requires fostering new behaviours needed to transform or make something stick. The fact that change needs to happen, or has become more frequent, does not make such changes any easier. At its core are the people and

people processes - and people are creatures of habit, hardwired to resist adopting new mindsets, practices and behaviours. Businesses must embed these mindsets, practices and behaviours at every level and that is hard to do, but it is vital. Implementing business strategy and changes to make it happen means effort must be given to capture the hearts and minds of people who need to operate differently to deliver the required results. The good news is that it can be done!

4. Making it stick

Processes that hang together

In this the final part in our handy guide to business strategy planning for 2017 Leeds-based HR180 considers how you are going to actually make your strategy happen.

A comprehensive approach to both strategy building and change management requires several success factors which together enable you to take the necessary steps. Firstly,

clearly define the business objectives the change is intended to deliver. Understand the current organisation - its culture, its capabilities and its experiences - both successful and unsuccessful - and conduct an impact analysis including identifying why change is needed. If this is a little intimidating, we can help! The [HR180 Strength Test](#) will come to the rescue. This exclusive service includes an impact analysis and makes a clear case for change. We will work with you using the most efficient tools and techniques for the specific need of your organisation.



Models and practices which are understood

If you are asking people to deliver or adapt to a new reality, or new set of deliverables, they need to understand the emotional case for the change so they can feel truly committed to the transformation. It can't be presented as another 'programme of the month' that staff will have

to live through. Bringing the details of what will change, and what won't, allows leaders to paint a vivid picture of what the change means for employees personally, and not only why it benefits the business. Leaders must be role models and committed leadership is the foundation for any business undertaking change.

A guiding hand – the HR180 approach

The experience brought by the HR function plays a critical role to institutionalise best practices plus to engage and involve employees over the long term to capture the full benefit of the change and any future changes.

To enable lasting change all HR systems, structures and processes must be aligned and consistent with the goals of strategy embedment and transformation. You need to articulate clearly oriented elements of the future business - not just its structure, but also employee value propositions and individual and team roles - as well as required competencies, skills and behaviours. Things like performance management, learning and development, workforce strategy and retention programmes are key enablers of the change agenda.

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What now?

For many business owners and managers it is really difficult to find the time (and inclination) to take an objective look at their organisation, given the daily pressures of work, looking after a diverse range of employees and keeping up with employment law and trends!

At HR180 we can help with just about **everything** people related – from retained bespoke outsourced HR services and individual HR projects, to HR Consultancy including our exclusive [Strength Test](#).

See more at our website www.hr180.co.uk. If you would like to get in touch with HR180's Mission Control, simply give us a call free on 0113 287 8150 or email Claire@HR180.co.uk.

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