



About MDW Associates

MDW Associates, LLC is a small service oriented company founded in 2012 to provide advice, analysis and daily assistance to Federal Government clients.

Our mission is to make our clients more successful by providing honest assessments, exceptional analysis, prudent advice, direct communication and hard work.

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Strategic Planning

A Strategic Planner develops long-range changes to achieve evolutionary success. In order to achieve this success, a strategic planner must also be on hand to monitor the execution of their strategy as it will require quick-reaction fact-of-life adjustment.

One example of strategic planning within the Department of Defense is the definition, development and implementation of strategies for the preparation of budgets and analysis of how best to allocate resources to implement the strategy. This is followed by a review of the specific experience gained in that unique situation to apply to the following planning cycle.

Strategic planning occurs at all levels of an organization that can benefit from an evolutionary change. Which is to say, everyone. Don't reinvent the wheel and don't fix it if it isn't broken, but the introspection involved in strategic planning can bring about realizations that would otherwise go unnoticed. Having people on staff who are looking in new directions and reassessing old boundaries often yields evolutionary change.

Clients

Federal government agencies use strategic planning in order to improve performance, maximize the use of resources, reduce duplicative and outdated activities, and comply with legal and regulatory requirements such as those outlined in the Government Performance Results Modernization Act of 2010 and agency-specific business transformation requirements.

Large-scale initiatives, such as the review of financial systems integration or the implementation of more detailed acquisition policy, require a concerted effort led by a strategic planning professional with specific experience in the field or processes being analyzed.

Careers

Strategic planners often start out wherever they can gather multi-discipline knowledge. Typical career paths include financial and business management, system engineering and program management. They must demonstrate the abilities to inspire cultural change, explain abstract concepts and quickly react to changing conditions. In the private sector, the Chief Strategy Officer is often chosen to replace an outgoing CEO.

Community

There are a number of organizations providing support and education to the strategic planning community. The Association for Strategic Planning offers a multi-level professional certification. Several trade organizations, like the ASMC (American Society of Military Comptrollers), offer classes and collateral products on the subject of strategic planning specific to their industry.

Strategic Planning Tools

Whether for informal or formal use, an understanding of the basic analytical tool-set used in strategic planning will help you create a plan to reach your vision. Many of these tools may sound obvious but the true art in strategic planning is applied motivation, flexibility and follow-through. This avoids pitfalls such as:

- a lack of commitment, communication, leadership, and/or discipline,
- the failure to review results following implementation,
- data overload,
- an overly cumbersome and intricate plan, and
- a history of failed strategic initiatives.

Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat (SWOT) Analysis

A review of internal strengths and weaknesses along with a review of external opportunities and threats allows an organization to frame its objectives within its operating environment. Once an achievable objective is set, the organization can use the SWOT realizations in conjunction with other Strategic Planning tools to develop plans, revise or formulate policies, and monitor successful implementation.

Balanced Scorecards

This incredibly popular tool assists managers in monitoring the execution of their strategy and assigning specific targets to individual accountability. At all levels, all actions are linked to a shared vision.

Scenario Planning

Long-range thinking requires not only confidence in the organization's Vision, but also an understanding of its limitations. The drivers for change are defined and written into a framework to produce multiple scalable scenarios. These are narrowed down to the most viable plans and then reviewed for potential issues. The results are reviewed periodically as the framework itself is not a closed system and can evolve as its environment evolves.

Root Cause Analysis

The identification of the initiating event in a causal chain where intervention would have prevented a system failure is not meant to imply the existence of only a single Root Cause or use of a single corrective action. It is meant to be applied continually and not only after an incident occurs.

Situational Analysis

Here the internal and external operating environment is analyzed at a particular point in time. Laws, regulations, rules, custom, sentiment, competition, markets (customer, supplier and labor), technology and what barriers exist all form a framework from which to base an analysis. This framework is then put in motion to give each externality its own causal chain to impact internal strategic plans.

These tools and many others are used in combination and tailored to meet the specific requirements, goals and capabilities of the client. Realistic expectations must be pre-defined and specific measures for success set to ensure the solutions implemented given the above analysis work. Above all, proper communication and commitment can enable the team to accomplish their mission to provide success for the organization as a whole.