

Productive to the Max

Productivity

Performance

Profitability

ACTION PLANNING

MaxTips! May 2009

"We should be taught not to wait for inspiration to start a thing. Action always generates inspiration. Inspiration seldom generates action"

Frank Tibolt

Life is so busy and there is so much to do and take in that it is a wonder that you get anything done. Many times, that is all you do-get some things done and leave other pursuits on the back burner as you longingly wish there was more time for them.

Or perhaps you have a lot of plans, but they are in your head and that piece of real estate is also taken up by many other thoughts, so you really can't be sure that all the contingencies for your plan are covered.

You are certainly aware that in order to succeed in life, goals and objectives are essential.

An action plan:

- is the list of tasks, actions or operations that you need to complete to achieve those goals and objectives
- follows a decision already made
- is the process that brings the decision into reality
- provides a solid basis to help you determine what steps are required, what resources you need, the obstacles that may arise and how the actions impact other areas
- includes deadlines for all the specific actions and methods to measure objectives
- allows you to schedule and coordinate resources and monitors your progress.

And best of all-if you are away then someone else will know where you are at.

I see so many organizations that take the time an effort to create mission statements and strategic plans and then stop. The time is taken to identify the top organizational issues and to develop strategic goals. But all that time and effort is lost because action plans are never

developed and specific tasks are never assigned. Morale and productivity plummet along with the bottom line.

HOW TO DEVELOP ACTION PLANS

1. **As a team, develop a clear mission statement.**
2. **Develop a set of strategic goals that align with the mission statement**
3. **Prioritize the strategic goals**
4. **Develop an action plan that details how each part of the organization will contribute to the achievement of each strategic goal**
5. **Specify the relationship of these action plans to the overall strategic plans**
6. **Ensure that action plans extend to each manager and employee**
7. **Create a template for your action plans that clearly identifies the part of the organization involved, the major functions and the contribution expected of each manager and employee.**

Consider including the following columns in your action plans:

Goal -Take your highest priority goal. Make sure all the goals are S-pecific, M-measurable, A-ttainable, R-ealistic and T-ime bound (SMART)

Key Tasks- Break it up into tasks, activities or steps by logical sequence

Client-Write down the client name(if applicable)

Start and End date-Create a start and end date

Responsibility-Determine who will be responsible

Needs- Ascertain needs (money, space, material, systems, equipment, resources)

Gaps-Knowledge or experience (Training needed?)

Time Wasters-Uncover obstacles and how to overcome them

Time Savers-Establish ways to save time and write them on the list

Measure of Success-Decide your performance measurement, outcome or evidence of success

Discussion-Add a place for discussion or notes beside each task

Make sure your action plans contain measurable steps that can be marked off as they are completed.

KEEP ON TRACK

- 1 Remember to prominently post your action plans and evidence of completion and success. This will provide opportunities for reward. Find out if there are other ways to achieve the goal.
- 2 Prominently post your action plans and track the progress of each completion and success.
- 3 Use a whiteboard that is regularly updated for the department and/or each individual.
- 4 Print out the action plans and keep with you at all times.
- 5 Incorporate the plans into all your meetings, personal development or training plans and performance reviews and regularly review.
- 6 Discuss and revise as you go along.
- 7 Find out if there are other ways to achieve the goal.

After each goal is completed, have a post-mortem to determine if things could have been done differently and file for the next project

Whether you are an organization who has allowed your strategic planning to slip, or an individual who is not receiving the guidance required to attain the organization's goals, make action planning a part of your life. For personal success, implement professional and personal action plans that reflect what you are doing, where you are going and how you want to be successful. Whether you are buying a house, planning a financial future, going on a diet, exercising or planning to travel, action plans will get you there.