

strategy journeys

*how I have helped organisations
develop effective strategic plans
and realise strategic opportunities*



Team: strategy

- organising strategic planning

A vital element of strategic planning is to design the right process for the organisation, to encourage ownership, balance resources, and achieve effective decision-making and communication. Creating a team to drive this - and not necessarily at Director level - can be very powerful.

The context

This large financial services organisation wanted to develop a 3-year strategic plan. It operated in an established market, and the focus was on making significant improvements to its current business to improve its competitiveness rather than consider any radical change of strategic direction.

The challenge

The organisation had a strong Departmental structure, and with several different priorities and perspectives achieving consensus and gaining agreement was likely to be a challenge – particularly as most change initiatives required information systems development, where resources were limited (an understandable tactical constraint to help control the cost base). The timescale set by the Board was demanding: the plan needed to be finalised within just 3 months.

How I helped

- I worked closely with the two senior managers delegated by the Executive Committee to be joint project leaders for the development of the plan, mapping out a structure for the strategic planning process. Co-ordination and communication were going to be critical – so we created a team of senior managers representing their departments but with the common objective of delivering a strong strategic plan for the organisation.
- My role was to guide the project leaders, steer the planning process and pull together the plan. It was vital that we had excellent communication across the team, with each member consulting quickly with his or her Director and departmental colleagues. Discussions needed to be well structured, encouraging frank and open debate, and followed up with prompt and clear communication which explained the issues and what was required to resolve them.
- The style adopted by the team – particularly in the middle and later stages of the process – was to develop iterations of the plan for review – an ongoing work-in-progress. We set up a dedicated intranet workspace and simple but effective document administration to ensure clarity.
- Developing the plan itself was a challenge (as expected), given the need to prioritise resources, coordinate developmental initiatives, and agree performance improvement targets. Yet it was the team itself that resolved these, demonstrating their transition from individual departmental representatives to a genuine team who put their organisational responsibilities first.

The outcome

The Board commented that the resulting Strategic Plan was ‘the best they had seen’ – with due credit to all the team that had worked so well together (and so hard!) to develop it. The Chief Operating Officer recognised too that the process had been ‘the best team working experience on strategic planning’, and the individual and organisational learning that had been achieved increased the organisation’s ability and confidence for its future strategic planning processes.

David Booth: ixq
www.ixqconsulting.co.uk