

Embrace strategy sessions

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You’re in the midst of your annual corporate drills. You know: updating your mission statement, vision statement, and goals. You sit there and laugh because every year they try making changes to each statement yet you continue to build the same product, the same way, and distribute it to the same places where the same customers buy it. What you do never really changes but you’re expected to sing and dance to new music each year. Is this strategy session a waste of your time?

If it is, maybe you can take some initiative to help make your organization strategy sessions more productive. One thing I’ve learned over the years is that these sessions can be as good or as bad as you want to make them. And yes, the music you’re singing and dancing to each year does change, and the frequency of that change depends on a company’s internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats.

In order for people to be committed to a company or organization and contribute to its success, they need focus. They should have a statement of purpose to believe in, direction they are willing to move toward, and a belief

that their activities will lead to achieving something meaningful. Unless there are unifying mechanisms--a common focus and alignment--the company or organization will remain mediocre at best.

Executive management must provide this focus and ensure alignment. They provide focus by clearly articulating the company’s purpose, values, and vision. They provide alignment by ensuring consistency of goals at all levels so that everyone is moving in the same direction. And the executive team must ensure that everyone knows how their actions contribute to achieving the mission, vision, and goals.

Why such emphasis on focus and alignment? To ensure actions taken or decisions made are resulting in one or more of the following: 1) contribute to accomplishing the mission; 2) inch closer to achieving the vision; or 3) comply with company values. If actions or decisions aren’t resulting in one or more of these things, then they’re probably not worth doing or not worth the time associated with making a decision.

Annual discussions and reviews during strategy sessions are important to ensure your company remains on

track, gets on track, or changes track so it doesn’t fall off track or stay off track. If you feel your strategy sessions are ineffective, then here’s what you can do:

Step up and take an active role in planning and executing next year’s strategy session. Perhaps you can lead in facilitating it or maybe you and your team can formulate creative ideas to improve aspects of the company. Either way, bring something to the table. Don’t just sit at the table and say nothing. Certainly don’t judge or criticize anything anyone else says or recommends. You want to do your homework and be prepared to discuss why the mission or vision should remain the same or change. You should be ready to explain or showcase your thoughts, ideas or suggestions. Your input may very well be put to good use. After all, if the top echelon’s minds were already made up about all of this strategy stuff, they wouldn’t be herding everyone up for a strategy session.

So embrace strategy sessions! If you’re a valuable part of the process, there’s a great probability you’ll be a valuable part of the solution!

~ The End ~