

# Obstacles that hinder the business planning process

Business plan execution is a process without an end. Companies and leadership teams are constantly occupied with perfecting business strategies, creating innovative projects and devising distinctive initiatives, and these all require stringent business planning processes.



Val Bourdos Nichas

Val Bourdos Nichas, a respected business leader and visionary, and owner of VBN Consultants, highlights where in the business planning process, obstacles are often encountered which lead to plans never getting out of the starting blocks, or failing dismally.

According to Bourdos Nichas, several key areas need to be considered to ensure that more businesses are successful in turning a theoretical plan, into a reality. It's important to look out for the following symptoms that could be detrimental to the successful implementation of a brilliant business plan.

## Leadership lure

- It is the role of the team leader to set the stage and explain the vision of the business strategy. Communication is key as it's important that all team members understand the bigger picture and what the desired outcome is. The business goals need to be clearly defined as well as each individual's role, highlighted. Everyone in the team needs to know where they fit in.
- The leader needs to continually drive the strategic process, direct the execution and meet on a regular basis with the team to evaluate deliverables and timing, as well as manage any challenges before they develop into a crisis. Commending players on achievements and successes is fundamental to sustaining good team morale.
- The leadership qualities required to steer a winning team through to completion and achievement of the business plan deliverables, are varied, but leading by example is mandatory. A sound work ethic, vision, meeting deadlines, follow up, as well as providing direction and support, are essential in leading the group.

## Fanatical planning fever

- Mastering the skill of effective business planning process is necessary and is a crucial element in determining business success. Business planning process is ongoing and needs to be tackled with the diligence and attention to detail that it deserves.
- A business plan is often referred to as the company's 'how to' document or a 'roadmap for your business'. Don't cut corners as a precise and well compiled business plan will allow a business to achieve at least 80% - 90% of its overall deliverables.
- Most business leaders avoid this crucial part of the business strategy process. Thorough planning is of critical importance and without it, a business strategy will never become a reality.

## The ego trap

- Individual personalities and team dynamics can sabotage an effective roll-out plan and shouldn't ever be ignored. Team dynamics are a very important part of working life and can have an enormous impact on the team's productivity, as well as the overall performance of the group, and the individuals in that group.
- Ego can never override the business objectives of the team and it is essential that all individuals keep a look-out for this. Once it has been identified and others are made aware of it, plans can be put in place to resolve the issue.

## Is the customer calling?

- Many business initiatives fail simply because no one was listening to the customer. All customers have wants and needs, and it is the successful companies that have regular deep dialogue with their target market.
- Companies need to know how to embrace the rapidly changing needs of their target customers. This knowledge will enable them to provide the customer's daily needs as well as their future requirements.
- To enjoy customer satisfaction and brand loyalty, the business execution needs to be uniquely molded.

## Competency cream or crack

- Structure follows strategy. Only once the strategy has been created, should the team structure be formalised.
- A common pitfall in strategy execution, is to over-commit to deliverables without having the necessary resources or skill set in place, to effectively execute the business plan. Resources could be human, financial or process, amongst others.
- Review the patterns of success of competent teams, versus those that will create cracks in the planning execution process.

*VBN Consultants has recently achieved excellent business planning successes using the A.T.H.E.N.A. model, created by Bourdos Nichas. The Intercare Healthcare Group's business planning was facilitated by VBN over three consecutive years. Recently VBN Consultants has also developed business planning templates for divisions that support any group plan. In addition VBN, has been instrumental in making a significant impact on planning processes with clients such as Design Partnership, Doppio Zero Group (Doppio Zero & Pizza Vino), Agrinet and Gold Brands.*

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