

Strategic Planning and Decisions Tools to Enhance EM Mission Execution - 16552

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ABSTRACT

Maximizing the success of an organization depends on many things with a key one being the focus and quality of the management decisions made by the organization's senior leadership team. Successfully advancing an organization's agenda requires operational, tactical, and strategic decisions. These decisions involve both decisions on specific actions, as well as decisions about planning.

In addition to the day-to-day decisions of running the business, the leadership team should be allocating appropriate time toward developing organizational strategic objectives. Strategic planning is an organization's process of defining its direction and strategies, and plotting how to accomplish those strategies. Strategic planning is essential to the long term viability of the organization. The pathway to success with strategic planning is not nearly so obvious and straight forward as with operational decisions. Organizational leaders must resist the temptation to minimize the time allocated to strategic thinking and strategic planning.

Strategic thinking and strategic planning are centered around making sure that your organization is doing the right things, instead of just doing things right. Management guru Peter Drucker noted that "There is nothing more wasteful than becoming highly efficient at doing the wrong things." Strategic thinking is used in deciding what to do. Tactical thinking is used in deciding how to do it.

Decision tools can be utilized to improve the results of the strategic planning process. In certain situations, properly selected decision tools will provide a mechanism or a process for making better decisions, or for channeling strategic thought and strategic planning toward enlightened alternative approaches. Decision tools can also provide for assigning a quantitative measure of merit or goodness, or at least a semi-quantitative measure of merit to multiple decision options. Properly selected and utilized, decision tools provide the leadership team with additional insight into the consequences of their decisions.

Appropriately selected decision tools can be utilized to maximize the effectiveness of your strategic planning efforts. Decision tools can be used to quantify strategic decision options within a particular framework, providing insights into alternatives to improve an organization's most effective execution of the DOE EM clean up mission.

INTRODUCTION

A key component of maximizing organizational success is the optimal allocation of management time and attention between short term actions and long term objectives. Appropriately addressing the broad array of programmatic and technical issues facing EM necessitates analyzing how tactical and strategic actions are prioritized within the organization, and how alternative decision tools might be used to improve overall performance.

DESCRIPTION/DISCUSSION

Maximizing the success of an organization depends on many things with a key one being the focus and quality of the management decisions made by the organization's senior leadership team. Successfully advancing an organization's agenda requires operational, tactical, and strategic decisions. These decisions involve both decisions on specific actions, as well as decisions about planning.

The day-to-day issues addressed by the organization's management team involve routine and emerging items. They also involve reactions to firestorms and other organizational crises. Operational decisions are made relative to steady-state operations, incremental organizational advancements, and to actions that build the future for the organization.

The amount of management's time consumed by these different decisions depends on the pace and consistency of a particular business, the frequency of program crises, and the tendencies of an organization to focus on near term or at hand issues, versus forward projections and planning for the future. While the day to day activities of the leadership team set the foundation for their organization, it is very important to allocate management time and energy toward building for the future as well. Many times strategic focus falls victim to the day to day pressures of operational needs. Thus, there is an imperative to have as a guiding set of principles, strategic initiatives that are focused on the future objectives of an organization, in order to enable agile, insightful management decisions.

Successful program execution is of course at the core of any successful organization. Clearly without effective program execution, the organization cannot, and will not survive. Program execution, by its very nature is made up of time dependent actions that require the management team's attention. For many organizations, program execution represents the operational default.

Management's attention naturally gravitates to issues involving program execution. These can be in response to changing/expanding customer demands, or just actions to ensure that the organization is meeting the foundational expectations of the customer.

Program execution issues tend to be issues of relatively short duration, and require the accomplishment of a task, embodying a sense of urgency. They need your attention, and they need it now. These types of tasks will tend to make up the primary component of any given day, and can essentially consume all of the available bandwidth of the management team. Management decisions for program execution focus on doing things right, getting the correct/necessary results.

In addition to the day-to-day decisions of running the business, the leadership team should be allocating appropriate time toward developing organizational strategic objectives. Where does the organization want to go, how can it get there, and what are the future projections of where the organization is heading? Strategic planning is an organization's process of defining its direction and strategies, and plotting how to accomplish those strategies. Strategic planning generates a shared understanding of the mission, and the organizations plan to achieve it. Strategic planning is essential to the long term viability of the organization. This applies for all organizations, big or small, established or new, industry or government. However, developing strategic objectives for business requires a very different thought process or pattern, than that used for day-to-day operational decisions. The pathway to success with strategic planning is not nearly so obvious and straight forward as with operational decisions. This less intuitively obvious activity can be viewed as uncomfortable and unnecessary by some managers.

Organizational leaders must resist the temptation to minimize the time allocated to strategic thinking and strategic planning. Mapping your organization's pathway to its strategic future is clearly equally as important to the success of the organization as the operational day-to-day accomplishments. There is rarely a pressing sense of urgency for action with strategic planning – there is usually not a customer demanding such, and there are rarely routine business fluctuations that necessitate strategic planning. While you don't have to do it today, maximizing the success of your organization requires that you do not delay your strategic planning past tomorrow.

Strategic thinking and strategic planning are centered around making sure that your organization is doing the right things, instead of just doing things right. Are you working on the things that are most important to your organization, that have the most impact on the future of your organization? While it is obvious that the

organization must do things right every single day, maximizing the success of the organization also requires doing the right things. Management guru Peter Drucker noted that "There is nothing more wasteful than becoming highly efficient at doing the wrong things." Strategic thinking is used in deciding what to do. Tactical thinking is used in deciding how to do it.

Continuously reacting to events as they unfold can be very draining on the organization, its resources and its people. Strategic thinking and planning allow the organization to create and manage its future environment, and they are an essential component in ensuring your organization's future growth. It's about envisioning the organization's objective(s), and then developing the essential mechanisms to get them there.

Correctly addressing critical decisions within an organization requires the experienced management insight of its leadership team. This includes putting issues into their proper perspective. Referencing prior history is a key component of providing that management perspective. The objective is to build upon the organization's prior successes, and learn from its previous mistakes.

Organizations also rely on consultants to help with key decisions. Consultants can conduct additional analysis for an organization that their regular staff cannot do due to staff availability or the required competencies. Consultants also provide outside perspective, and a "green eyes" view of issues without the internal bias of the management of the organization. Consultants are also in a position to point out organizational and programmatic risks that the management staff can be unable to visualize.

Decision tools can be utilized to improve the results of the strategic planning process. In certain situations, properly selected decision tools will provide a mechanism or a process for making better decisions, or for channeling strategic thought and strategic planning toward enlightened alternative approaches. Decision tools can also provide for assigning a quantitative measure of merit or goodness, or at least a semi-quantitative measure of merit to multiple decision options. Properly selected and utilized, decision tools provide the leadership team with additional insight into the consequences of their decisions.

To be effective, decision tools must align with precept of the particular strategic thinking actions. Decision tools can be used to address classical decisions and Return-on-Investment decisions, while taking into account both regulatory and performance based considerations.

The utilization of the appropriate decision tool is of course critical. The decision modeling process selected must be applicable and relevant to the decision at hand. It must have the ability to characterize the inter-relational dynamics of the relevant issues being addressed in the strategic planning actions. The organization must be able to clearly understand the decision tool model, and they must also buy-in that the particular decision tool appropriately characterizes the primary elements of the business, and the cause and effect relationships of the variables being considered are valid. The model must map the problem set and allow for the input of positives and negatives from prior experiences.

The decision tool must be able to model the key individual components of the problem that you are trying to address. But the appropriate decision tool must also be able to meld those individual components into an integrated system and provide a system solution, not just a numerical addition of unscaled, assigned values and an uncorrelated answer or number. The objective of the decision model is to reduce uncertainty and confusion, by providing clarity and a system solution.

Many of the EM strategic issues involve decisions around identifying the most cost effective methodologies for addressing long standing environmental challenges. Several program and technology options are usually possible, each with different facilities and labor costs. Different regulatory considerations and environmental end-states result from those different alternatives. To address all these considerations, any appropriate EM decision tool or modeling approach will need to incorporate both cost components as well as value judgements.

Where the objective is organizational growth into uncharted territory, the classical management approaches can sometimes fall short. It is imperative that as the leaders of our respective organizations, that we look to find creative and innovative solutions to the challenges we face. The tools and techniques that we rely on must also be forward looking and embrace changes in classical approaches. As technology advances and the incoming workforce brings with them new skills, tools, and technologies, the leadership and management of the DOE EM complex should look for opportunities to adapt, in order to more effectively accomplish their cleanup mission. Decision tools can provide an additional mechanism to evaluate program alternatives and allow managers to successfully hand off to their successors an appreciation for the legacy and the passion to deliver excellence in the execution of the DOE EM clean up mission.

CONCLUSION

Strategic planning can maximize the effectiveness of an organization, ensuring that the organization is not only doing things right, but also doing the right things. Appropriately selected decision tools can be utilized to maximize the effectiveness of your strategic planning efforts. Decision tools can be used to quantify strategic decision alternatives within a particular framework, instead of caving to personal opinions and/or political correctness.

REFERENCES

None

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