

The Strategic Alliance Process

- 1) **Receipt of Mission:** The key to this step is to not *command direct* the mission, but to ask. The following approach will allow people to *choose* to engage in the mission as opposed to being *told* to engage.

Use SurveyMonkey to ask these two questions:

- a. Do you think [insert potential mission] is an issue?
- b. Would you like to get together to discuss [insert potential mission]?

Using a company or industry *After Action Review* will help prioritize missions, if that's an issue in your organization. If you ask members what they would like to improve, then you can focus on one or two improvements that are important to others. A Start, Stop, Continue is a great way to do this. The Power of Intention – creating focus on a goal - is very powerful. However, it takes some experience, patience and understanding on how to make that happen for a group of people that have seemingly different goals. An in-depth process is from Cujo Tescher and is called Debrief to Win.

- 2) **Mission Analysis:** At the meeting that people agreed to attend, do these steps in order:
 - a. **Identify and introduce the Executive Officer or XO.** This is the “protector of the process”. If you don't have this person, don't even bother moving forward! If you are trying to solve a problem and don't have a process, you just have a complaint session.
 - b. **Have the XO clarify and gain consensus on the mission statement.** This does not have to be written as a SMART goal as the Problem Statement is what really drives action and unity of effort.
 - c. **Have the XO clarify and gain consensus on the Problem Statement.** This is statement (not a question) is the answer to “What is holding us back from achieving the mission?” The answer to this question should be Yes. “If we achieve the Problem Statement, will we have achieved the mission?”
 - d. **Be prepared to schedule another Problem Statement meeting.** This is a good thing. You will probably realize that you don't have everyone you need in the meeting. Or that some people need to be swapped. It's ok to gain a consensus with the current group on the Problem Statement, but you'll want to be ok with the fact that more people will need to be included. That could change the Problem Statement. That is the true power of this step. Understanding that will help with patience as most people want to jump to the solutions step. This jump is what breaks down the Unity of Effort and is why many problem-solving initiatives fail. Slow is smooth. Smooth is fast!
 - e. When you have everyone involved that needs to be involved, **move to Solutions Development.**

- 3) **Solutions Development:** Finally, this is where your team can start coming up with ideas. At this point, the team should have laid down their egos and their preconceived solutions and be united on solving the problem statement as opposed to more of a niche fix.
 - a. **Assess your resources:** List all resources available that might be able to help you achieve your mission.
 - b. **Generate Options:** This is the brainstorming session. You'll find that there are going to be a few areas of focus and I recommend identifying the Decisive Operation. What needs to happen to address the Problem Statement and achieve the current mission?
 - c. **Assign Responsibilities:** Based on the Decisive and Supporting Operations, work will need to be done. Assign people to each area, decide on the next meeting day and agree on the deliverables at that meeting. This will all be facilitated by the XO.
 - d. **Sketch your Plan, if possible:** Adding a visual component to your plan will help drive engagement, understanding and buy in.
 - e. Continue to schedule meetings to hold each other accountable until the mission is accomplished!

- 4) **Orders Production:** Capture this plan on paper so it can be read by others. This brings legitimacy and clarity to the initiative. Use this template:
 - a. **Situation:** In the military, the two sections are "enemy and friendly forces". For these purposes, you can use a SWOT analysis approach.
 - b. **Mission:** State the mission statement and problem statement. That's it.
 - c. **Execution:** This is the concept of the operation. State the Decisive Operation and Supporting Efforts. This can be as detailed as you would like – or as high level as you would like. Supporting documents can be in the form of meeting notes for any working groups that are sub to the main group.
 - d. **Supporting Organizations:** This is generally the list that you created in the Assess Resources Step during Solutions Development.
 - e. **Command Structure:** Make it clear who has decision authority, who is the XO and who is in any of the working groups. This also helps people "stay in their lane" when it comes to the areas of effort.

Two Great Quotes on Improvement

"If you define the problem correctly, you almost have the solution." ~Steve Jobs

"If you can't describe what you are doing as a process, you don't know what you are doing." – W. Edwards Deming