



are many examples easily found in Internet searches. In this activity, which is very appropriate during a quarterly leadership conference, the leadership team continually adds what they consider to be influential factors for success. I suggest this become a living document that is continually added to and edited.

To add a little more analytical oomph, translate the SWOT into a TOWS analysis (SWOT in reverse). In this exercise, the SWOT is broken into different combinations which generate another level of strategies (samples can easily be found using internet searches). These combinations include Strength-Opportunity, Weakness-Opportunity, Strength-Threat, and Weakness-Threat. You simply look at your SWOT in these combinations and look for potential strategies. For example, when you look at your Strength and Opportunity combination – you will look for what we are already good at which can be levered into new market opportunities. This additional level of analysis almost always presents new strategies you wouldn't have noticed in the SWOT alone.

Once you have all your SWOT and TOWS data, the information should funnel into a large Goal Bank. This large bucket of strategic action can be further broken into 1-3-year goals, 3-5-year goals, and 5+ year goals. Now that you have a nice break-down of strategic planning options – identify the thematic goals your entire leadership team can focus on for a time period of no longer than 1-year. Not only are there obvious benefits from clarity in your organizations strategic work, maybe the most significant beneficial effects come from Leadership teams working as 1 TEAM, not several siloed departments. Finally, defining objectives and business measures are incorporated to help drive results home.

In my opinion, aside from the obvious economic benefits that comes from strategic planning, tremendous benefit also comes from leadership teams learning how to work cohesively as 1 TEAM. Author Lencioni (2006) has noted that all too often departments are working against each other, when in fact they need to be working together. This results in what he refers to as a silo effect – several entities fighting for self-preservation, attention, and funding. To better understand what 1 TEAM looks like, Lencioni and his colleagues explored examples of work entities working together as one unit, including emergency rooms, firefighters, and rescue missions. Teams will come together during a crisis and exercise a clear sense of priority. At these times, no one would ever imagine putting their own ego ahead of the mission. The beauty of strategic planning and identifying a

single thematic goal, a rallying cry of sorts, aligns the entire organization around one single and aligned focus. It reminds everyone that they work for one company, with one mission. If leadership teams can't function cohesively, everyone pays the price.

**Strategic Step Summary:** (1) SWOT analysis, (2) TOWS analysis, (3) Goal Action Bank, (4) Break goals into 1-3, 3-5, and 5+ year actions, (5) identify major temporary qualitative thematic goals for the leadership team and organization to get behind, (6) create multiple strategic defining objectives to give clarity to the thematic goal, and (7) create business measurements to create accountability and visibility.

Keeping a watchful eye on revenue growth, cost control, and other traditional focus points is not strategy, it is basic management and maintenance of resources. Effective strategic planning is realizing that *when everything is important, nothing is important*. Companies don't have the capacity to give attention and resources to everything. More important, doing so only creates the siloing effect where everyone is fighting with one another. But a continuous practice of identifying a single rallying cry brings clarity and alignment to the organization.

I can't tell you how often people comment on this process of finding major thematic goals as overly simplistic and would prefer to incorporate complex solutions from expensive consultants. But the proof is in the pudding—when teams can rally behind a cause, they are building the foundation for alignment, cohesion, and most of all, 1 TEAM.

*Lencioni, P. (2006). Silos, Politics, and Turf Wars. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass*

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