

Management Article Strategic Planning the Big and Easy Way! (Part 2 of 2) April 2009

Last month we discussed how most small businesses just don't make the time to do strategic planning, so they don't grow as fast as they otherwise might, and they are always in a response mode, not ready for future conditions. Many big businesses have a systematic method for analyzing future initiatives, quantifying their value and choosing which ones to undertake.

I learned this method after I sold my business to Ford almost a decade ago, and I've seen it used successfully many times in my dealings with investment bankers and other stake holders in the businesses that I have managed or consulted for. Recently, I shared this method with a few small business owners. They were thrilled because this tool makes strategic planning much easier.

I'd like to share it with you. It's called "big and easy analysis," it's simple, and it works.

Take a white board or sheet of paper and divide it into four sections by drawing a cross on it. The cross will be labeled with two word pairs (*Small-Big*) and (*Easy-Difficult*) Label one end of the horizontal line *Small* and the other end *Big*. Label one end of the vertical line *Easy* and the other end *Difficult*.

Now number each initiative that you are considering as part of your strategic plan. As your planning group analyzes the value of the initiative, place its number in quadrant that corresponds to how difficult or easy it is and how big or small the value of the initiative is to your business.

At the completion of the exercise, you should have all of your initiatives mapped. The tool gives you a clear way to spot the initiatives that are easy and have a big impact on your results. You will likely want to start with those big and easy initiatives and then cherry pick from the others.

You can do this analysis alone, but you'll only get a fraction of the value. The help I offer business owners is to arrange for them to do the analysis with a small group of fellow business owners who are not competitors. The 5-6 member groups act as a brain trust and analyze initiatives for each member in succession.

It's powerful because you can tap the wisdom of five other business owners in creating your strategic plan. Perhaps one of the other members of your brain trust has tried something similar to an initiative you're evaluating. Tapping your team can greatly improve the chances of hitting on an initiative that makes money.

A brain trust is a success when each member leaves with a much better plan than they could have created alone. Tapping into the collective intelligence of a brain trust is a great way to make sure your view is objective and your priorities are dead on. The strategic planning sessions allow business owners to write a strategic plan in an environment where they are undisturbed and in the company of peers motivated to help promote mutual success. Contact me if you are interested in attending such a brain trust planning session or feel free to use the tool on your own.

We will be hosting an upcoming peer Benchmarking Group meeting for auto recyclers May 7th, in Ft. Worth, visit www.MrMissionPossible.com for more information and to sign up!

Don't forget to go the website for my new book, www.greenweenies.com, to learn all the backroom business terms. There are 1,200+ terms in over 300 pages, with hilarious illustrations by world famous Gahan Wilson. You can register there for your free weekly "green weenie." If you want to know what a three fingered booger is, or what's in a train wreck envelope, it's the only place to go!

Remember, only you can make BUSINESS GREAT! Next month, more from Chapter Six of *How to Salvage Millions from Your Small Business*.

Please email if you would like me to send previous articles.

AutoSalvageconsultant.com was formed in 2001 to help recyclers improve their businesses. With over fifty years of experience in three staff members, the group is THE definitive source for recyclers' management and training needs. The founder, Ron Sturgeon, is past owner of AAA Small Car World. You can review his resume, with skills and experience, at our website. In 2002, his book *How to Salvage Millions From Your Small Business* was published to help small business owners achieve significant success. It was recently reprinted in the U.S. and published in China, Korea and the Czech Republic. You can learn more about how to help your business at www.autosalvageconsultant.com. You can reach us at 5940 Eden, Haltom City, TX 76117, or by calling or emailing Mike Gibson or Tammy Sturgeon. Mike can be reached at 817-925-0061 or mikeg@autosalvageconsultant.com, and Tammy can be reached at 817-999-1224 or tammysturgeon@all-import.com