

Management Article – The Strategic Planning Advantage (Part 1 of 2) March 2009

How Much Time Did You Use Last Week on Strategic Planning for Your Business?

Two things I have learned in all my experience working with large businesses over the last decade: Those big guys that we often dismiss as too big and too slow are very focused on doing the things they do best, and they set aside lots of time for strategic planning.

I know that most small businesses owners prize their ability to move quickly and improvise, but there are good reasons large companies invest so much in strategic planning. Before we dig into those, ask yourself these questions:

- Do you have a detailed written plan of the initiatives that you plan to undertake this year?
- Do have three new ways to attract customers that you are planning to try this year?
- Have you set aside time to evaluate where you could make changes to lower costs over the next 12 months?
- Do you have a written plan to improve your operations so that you can find and hire excellent employees?

“But, Ron, I can’t do all that strategic planning and run my business, too!” No doubt, entrepreneurs are the busiest people on the planet, but failing to make time for strategic thinking costs more in lost time and lost profits in the end.

In the absence of sound written strategic planning, owners and managers have the course of their business days dictated to them. They drift when they could be doing the few things that would be most crucial in the long haul. Of course, events play a role in the course of everyone’s day, but the entrepreneur that has done sound strategic planning can see how to position the business to take advantage of them. This operator is working on the important initiatives, and he or she is ready to ask, “How can I use this circumstance to reach my goals sooner?”

The non-planners can only respond to events and hope for the best.

Here’s one more thing to consider as you decide whether to invest time in strategic planning: Most of the small businesses you compete against won’t make a written strategic plan this year. The point: You will be surprised at how little time you have to invest in strategic to get past competitors who don’t do any. Make the time, make the plan, put it in writing and measure the results.

Because most small businesses do not have a written strategic plan they do a little of this and a little of that. Their initiatives don’t work because they’re poorly prepared and executed. Often a business that has no strategic plan does not know which initiatives to undertake so they try too many.

Maybe skipping the strategic planning worked a decade ago, but it won’t work in today’s global marketplace. Next month I will share an outstanding tool that I use to simplify my clients’ strategic planning!

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