

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

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ABOUT THE TQL Office

The mission of the Total Quality Leadership (TQL) Office, Office of the Under Secretary of the Navy, is to assist the Department of Navy (DON) leaders in their quality-focused improvement efforts. The TQL Office provides products and services in six key areas:

CONSULTANT SERVICES

TQL Office members provide technical advice to the Under Secretary of the Navy and other senior Navy and Marine Corps leaders on the application of TQL principles and methods within the DON, strategic planning, and strategic management. Advice may include recommendations on implementing new policy and procedures or the use of facilitators/coaches for DON and/or federal government initiatives.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

The TQL Office communicates TQL policies and initiatives through the *TQLeader* newsletter, articles, reports, and presentations at conferences and meetings. The Office is developing a computer-based quality information network to facilitate communication with DON, Department of Defense, and Joint Service organizations.

NETWORKING AND LIAISON

The TQL Office has expertise to share with other organizations, both government and private, and much to learn from them. Staff members participate in TQL-related networks and professional organizations.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The TQL Office is responsible for ensuring the technical accuracy of the DON TQL curriculum. Having overseen the design and development of the TQL courses, the TQL Office staff now advises on the integration of TQL material into the DON training pipeline. The TQL Office continues to design new courses and publishes handbooks and other publications on all aspects of organizational change.

ASSESSMENT

The TQL Office designs and develops new approaches to improving overall organizational effectiveness and feedback mechanisms to support mission accomplishment. These systems assess and enhance the implementation of total quality in DON organizations.

NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Technology provides critical support to DON quality improvement efforts. The TQL Office assesses new technologies related to organizational change and process improvement and translates them into applications for the DON.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1994, the Department of the Navy (DON) Total Quality Leadership Office (TQLO) published *A Handbook for Strategic Planning* and almost immediately began planning its companion, *Strategic Management for Senior Leaders: A Handbook for Implementation*. Typically, consultation and facilitation of strategic planning efforts, at least within the Department, were “over” with the conclusion of the strategic planning off-site. The leadership was left with a number of suggestions for how to continue their efforts; how to deploy and implement their plans; how to form implementation teams; and the need to develop strategic measures. Specific tools and techniques for successfully following those suggestions were often left to the leader’s imagination.

Many of these leaders, and just as often their facilitators, Total Quality Leadership Coordinators (TQLCs), or team leaders brought questions about how to continue the planning efforts to the DON TQLO. It was the abundance of these questions, which were becoming increasingly more sophisticated and complex, that confirmed the need for *Strategic Management for Senior Leaders: A Handbook for Implementation*. At the same time, the variety of the questions indicated some organizations were experimenting with some innovative tools and techniques while others had experienced some failure, but had learned valuable lessons.

Consequently, it was decided to interview some of these leaders and their staffs in order to learn which tools and techniques they found most successful, and which one they found least successful. For this reason, most of the interview questions start with “How did you . . .”

Strategic Management for Senior Leaders: A Handbook for Implementation attempts to identify and clarify the “unknowns” that were discovered in the process.

METHODology

More than 50 top leaders and Total Quality Coordinators of organizations that have completed the development of at least one strategic plan were interviewed. Nearly 300 pages of ideas, suggestions, and comments were amassed. The opinions and conclusions expressed by the interviewees do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of the Navy. They do, however, provide some assessment and insight based upon real experiences with strategic planning and strategic management. It is these experiences, coupled with the experiences of the project team, that serve as the basis for the strategic planning and strategic management methodologies outlined in *A Handbook for Strategic Planning* and its companion, *Strategic Management for Senior Leaders: A Handbook for Implementation*.

Personnel from 27 separate government organizations were interviewed. The organizations ranged from relatively small—less than 200 personnel—to very large—more than 20,000 personnel. Most were Department of the Navy organizations; however, to ensure balance, seven non-DON organizations were also interviewed. The interviews were conducted either in person or via telephone. Interviews were recorded, and these recordings were later transcribed for use in the analysis. A listing of participating organizations and interviewees is provided in the *Participating Organizations* section of this report.

Personnel interviewed were grouped into two types: leadership, which included commanding officers, directors, executive officers, and chiefs of staff; and TQLCs, which included not only TQLCs but also other personnel who were directly responsible for monitoring and managing strategic planning efforts in a staff role.

In an attempt to capture a balanced view of the organization's strategic planning efforts, two types of personnel were interviewed. Each of these personnel types were asked a separate set of questions, which are provided in the *Participating Organizations* section of this report. Additionally, the rapid turnover of personnel at many organizations forced the interviewing of the two types. By interviewing both, input was obtained from at least one person who had been a part of the original planning process.

This report provides an Executive Summary of the interviewees responses. Special care has been devoted to providing actual responses that illustrate key points made by the interviewees without violating the anonymity promised to them. There were many organizations identified which could have provided additional input to this project. Unfortunately, time constraints did not permit expanding the project to a larger base. Nor was there an attempt to apply rigid use of statistical tools in the analysis of the data since the purpose was to identify *successful* rather than *common* strategic management strategies.

The format of the Executive Summary follows the order of the interview questions. It provides not only the conclusions of the project team but also the voice of the customer (the interviewees) "in their own words."



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What were the general findings?

There were many areas that stood out during the review of the interview data. The role of leadership and the impact on the organizations were mentioned most often throughout the interviews.

Leadership

“To make the strategic plan and TQL work, the senior leaders have to make it evident that they believe this is not just an optional way to do business, but they have to support it, they have to embrace enthusiastically and sincerely.”

Leadership and commitment are keys to successful strategic planning. When asked what contributes to a successful implementation, nearly all responded that committed leadership was key. This leadership needs to be active. Some of the leaders commented on the fact that the amount of active participation and intervention on their part exceeded their original estimations, indicating that senior leaders need to provide guidance to assist in the strategic planning team’s consensus process.

Impact on organizations

“It was incredible, the impact of the strategic plan: how much the team jelled as a team, how much they began to work together better, and how much that continued through the whole year.”

An almost universal outcome of a strategic planning session was the development of functioning teams. Additionally, nearly half of the organizations stated that there was an improvement in performance, stated in terms like “improved readiness” and “productivity.”

Why did some leaders decide to do strategic planning?

"If TQL is a journey, then we need to figure out what our destination is."

Top leadership was asked to respond to the following question: "Why did you think it was necessary to do strategic planning in this organization?" The responses to that question can be divided into four broad categories. Most of the responses centered on the first two categories:

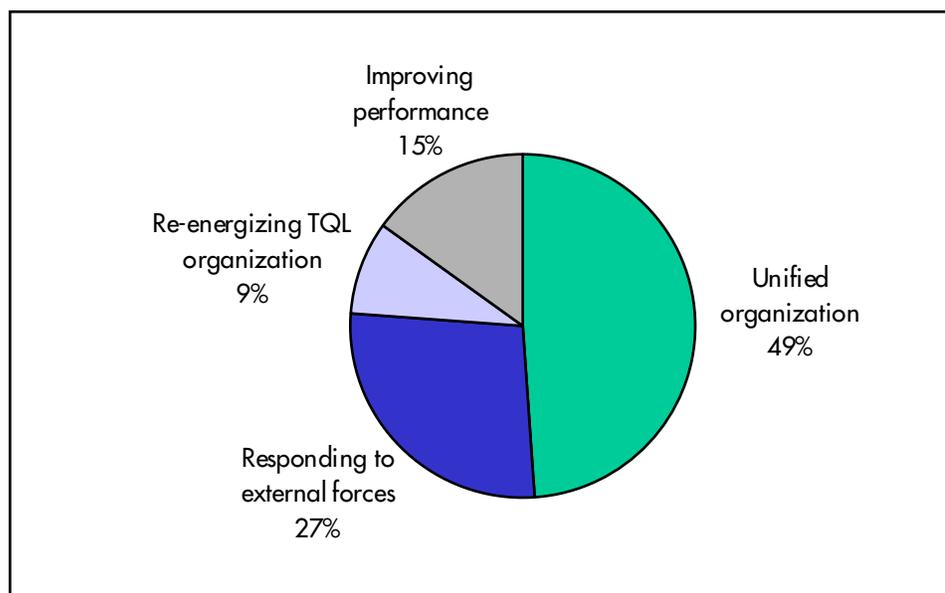
Establishing a unified, focused organization

"A group of people or an organization has got to be, in a strategic sense, vectored to where they want to get to in the long-term."

The leaders suggested that the establishment of the unified, focused organization was the principle reason for planning strategically. The leaders expressed the need to unify the whole organization behind a defined direction with clear goals and objectives (12 responses). Leaders also stated that strategic planning was valuable in refocusing on the organization's purpose (three responses) and establishing a longer range perspective (two responses).

Responding to external forces including change

"Given the changes that we are going to face, we needed both a short- and long-term road map to follow into the future."



The second most frequently received response was that strategic planning was a viable tool in responding to external forces, particularly change and modified missions (six responses). Part of the external forces was the requirement to integrate the organization's strategic plan with one of a higher headquarters (three responses).

Improving performance

"We had islands of excellence, but nothing tying them together."

Five of the leaders stated that strategic planning was a necessary precursor to improved performance.

Re-energizing the TQL organization

"We embarked on strategic planning because it was clear to us that, on our TQL transformation journey, we had reached a roadblock."

Three of the leaders stated that strategic planning was necessary to reestablish the momentum of their TQL efforts. The central idea behind these statements appears to be that the initial efforts in establishing TQL were accomplished, including the development of a supporting infrastructure, but further accomplishments had stagnated.

How were
the plans
developed?

"[The DON planning process] was a good process. We didn't go through it painlessly. We went through it with courage and dedication to very hard work. The three days spent at the off-site were absolutely mind-numbing."

Strategic plan development must be based on the organization's unique needs. The diversity of the organizations that were interviewed is reflected in the varying responses to the question. Most of the organizations used the Department of the Navy's Strategic Planning Model. Four of the organizations, however, limited the life of the plan to less than five years or incorporated an element from another source, such as using the Commanding Officer's "vision." Six of the organizations used a different model entirely. Two of these used a "bottom-up" approach. Key points provided in the interview data are:

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Off-site location is important

“The off-site part of it helped. We did it down at the base here and sequestered ourselves in a back room that was fairly comfortable. If I had the time and assets, I’d even do something a bit more special to support that, not in terms of a retreat, but maybe away from a military base all together. The setting can be important.”

Most of the organizations (16) specifically stated that they conducted the strategic planning session away from the normal work place. All of the responses suggested that this was a correct decision.

Initial strategic plans are likely to be more time consuming

“We met again off-site in September for two days, and at that time, we continued to work to identify and develop our strategic goals. We still were not able to complete them to our satisfaction.”

The DON Strategic Planning Model outlines a three-day strategic planning off-site. Most of the organizations conformed to this guidance. However, four of the DON organizations developing their initial strategic plans required additional off-sites. One DON organization developing a modification to an original plan used an additional off-site to redesign a critical process.

Post off-site efforts are needed

“A team that flushed out the broad framework derived at the off-site wrote specifics on each one of the objectives, associated them with activities and deliverables (outputs), the resources and the FTEs (inputs), and prepared a written plan summarizing all of those elements.”

Most of the organizations only partially completed their efforts to completely construct all of the component parts of the strategic plan—vision, mission, guiding principles, goals, strategies, and objectives. This required the strategic planning group to continue their efforts after the off-site in the completion of the plan.

Ten organizations had developed more than one strategic plan. These organizations appeared to be more successful in completing the plans and were more satisfied with the results of the follow-on efforts. While these elements are generally left to post off-site activities, at least three of these organizations had specific requirements for developing implementation plans, strategic measurement plans, and establishment of priorities during their strategic planning off-site.

Facilitators are needed

"We absolutely needed a facilitator who could spend the time to keep things going."

Facilitators from outside the organization were very often used. Of the 27 organizations interviewed, 19 stated that they had received outside facilitation. Most of the time a two-person facilitation team was used.

Organizational assessment is a key element

"We knew we had to make it a viable plan, had to have a good self analysis/self assessment of where we are so we can get a good plan to bridge the gap."

The conduct of an organizational assessment prior to the strategic planning session is recommended in the DON model. This assessment includes the conduct of interviews with members of the command and its customers. Other methods used included the use of focus groups with command members and the use of a Federal Quality Institute instrument.

"We have all the senior leadership involved in the strategic planning, including middle management."

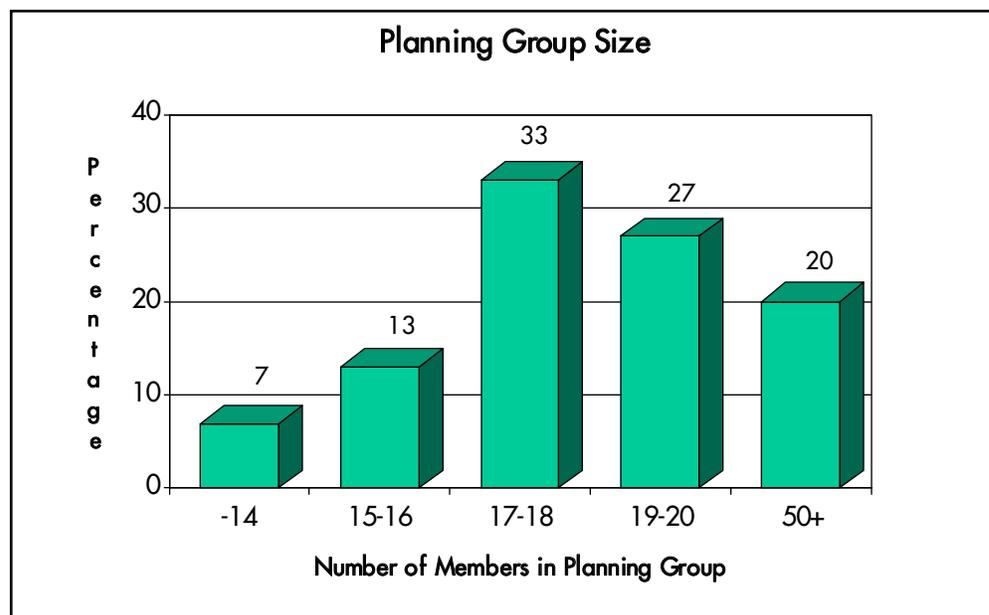
Strategic planning has three distinct phases—the pre-planning phase, the planning off-site phase, and the post off-site phase. The interview data showed the majority only considered the off-site phase when answering the question. When taken in this context, the participation in the organizations appears to be limited. However, a review of the interview data

regarding deploying the plan indicates that large portions of the employees who were excluded from the off-site were included in the review of the strategic plans prior to publication.

Pre-planning phase

“Currently, we’re surveying our customers as to what their needs and concerns are. We’re going to take that information and focus more on our external customers, which we’ve neglected to do in the past.”

Twelve of the organizations identified a data gathering/assessment effort prior to the actual off-site. This data gathering included interviews of the planning group, other employees, and customers. Of these organizations, most stated that the planning group was interviewed. Only four organizations specifically stated that the customers had been interviewed.



Planning off-site phase

“We had a good cross representation of the base population—a good representation of the resources and leadership of the organization.”

Key components of the strategic planning off-site are the numbers and type of personnel who participate in the effort. For most of the Department of the Navy organizations, the core personnel are members of the

Executive Steering Group (ESG). The ESG generally consists of the Commanding Officer, Executive Officer, and leaders of the next organizational level below the Commanding Officer. Of the organizations that provided an indication of the ESG size, the membership ranged from six to fifteen persons. For the purposes of strategic planning, the ESG was often supplemented with additional personnel. The strategic planning groups ranged from 12 to nearly 400 for one effort, which used a task force method. Generally, it appears that the non-DON organizations tended to have larger numbers—the State of Utah had 400, the Center for Veterinary Medicine had 50, and the Department of Agriculture had 100. Excluding these three organizations, most organizations interviewed tended to use between 15 and 20 people for strategic planning. Some organizations invited external personnel to the strategic planning session.

Post off-site phase

“I think the majority of [the planning team members] in the end felt like they were able to contribute, that they were heard, and the benefits far outweighed the cost.”

Ten of the organizations specifically mentioned incorporation of non-strategic planning group personnel’s comments into the draft strategic plan. Many of these ten organizations provided nearly all personnel with an opportunity to comment prior to final publication.

The Strategic Planning Model provides for deployment and implementation planning. In the minds of many interviewees, they blurred the distinction between completing the development of the strategic plan and the deployment of the plan. Gathering additional input from the organization was seen as part of the deployment process.

How were the contents of the strategic plan communicated?

Internal communications

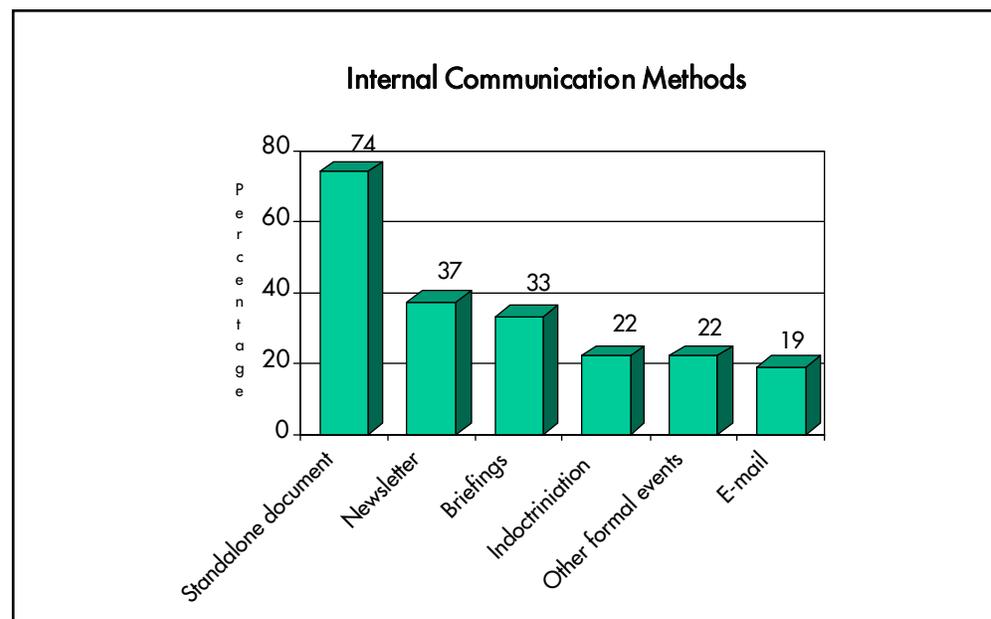
"[Internally,] I think we've done everything possible to make sure that every person has a copy, has the information they need, and understands it."

There were many methods the interviewees cited for communicating the contents of the strategic plan. Generally, communications inside the organizations tended to have a mix of both formal and informal means. External communications to higher headquarters and customers were more informal in nature. Terms such as "discussed with" and "briefed" are common during the discussions on communicating outside the organization.

Informal internal communications

"Our individuals, through their departments' work centers, are selling this strategic plan. I think it is fair to say that we did not have an aggressive enough marketing program at the onset."

Internal informal communications relied heavily on three means. Word of mouth communications of the plan was frequently cited (9 responses). Placing posters in key locations with elements of the strategic plan was used by four organizations. Four organizations used e-mail or other methods to solicit comments from all members in an organizational wide review.



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Formal internal communications

"We don't rely on any one [method] as being the sole method. We continue to promote [the plan] regularly."

Formal communication methods tended to be more multidimensional than the informal methods. Nearly all of the organizations have or are planning to formally publish the strategic plan as a standalone document (20 organizations) and/or in newsletter format (10). Formal briefings e.g., "all hands" were widely used (9). Incorporation of the strategic plan into locally developed training and indoctrination courses was also used (6). Other formal settings are used to reiterate the strategic plan such as "Captain's Call" and staff meetings (6). The rapid growth of the e-mail system was evident, with five organizations using e-mail as one means of distributing strategic planning information.

External communications

"We do not share all of the plan without careful scrutiny "

Options for external communications of the strategic plan appear to be much more restricted than for the internal communication. Nearly all of the organizations informed the chain of command (17). Eleven organizations ensured that key customers received their strategic plan.

Informal external communications

"I talked to [the boss] about it briefly and then sent him a copy of it and sent him a note on the e-mail."

It is difficult to determine the level of formality used for communicating the strategic plan externally. This is particularly true for communications up the chain of command. Statements like, "we briefed my boss," do not provide a firm indication of any degree of formality (12 responses).

Formal external communications

"We also have an external customer's newsletter that is really focused on our products and services. In it, we allude to how certain things fit within our strategic plan. But we don't send out, en masse, our strategic plan."

How was the plan implemented?

Three organizations made a point of the fact that much of the external communication of the strategic plan was couched in such a manner that the term “strategic plan” is not used.

Other methods used include: conferences, focus groups or other large meetings (5), newspapers and journals (3), local newsletters (3), direct mail (2), and video conferences (1).

“We’ve got a lot of people that can get the ball down in the red zone, but we don’t have anybody who can score.”

The interview data shows that after the plan is developed, a clear path to implementing the plan is not always evident. Seven of the organizations could or would not state who was accountable for the implementation of the plan.

Organizations are attempting to implement their strategic plans in many different ways. Implementation strategies include the development of an infrastructure to manage the accomplishment of the goals, strategies and objectives, assigning accountability for completion of action items, establishment of a monitoring system, and determining when and how resources will be applied.

Implementation structure

“We have the QMBs brief the ESG on progress. The management of implementation plans is left up to the QMBs with oversight by the ESG.”

There were two basic implementation infrastructures evident in the interview data. These infrastructures may be a result of the types of goals developed in the strategic plan.

The first infrastructure reflects a process driven goal which falls into a major function of the organization. This structure is typified by an executive board that charters quality management boards. These boards are generally chartered around organizational functions such as data pro-

cessing or personnel. These boards have a natural linkage to certain processes. The process owners, in turn, report to the quality management boards. Six organizations had adopted this infrastructure.

The second structure uses a goal group chartered around the completion of a strategic goal. The goal group is generally lead by one or more members of the executive board. It is these members who report directly to the executive board. Nine organizations identified active goal groups.

The remaining organizations used a different method, such as objective leaders, who report directly to the senior leader or had not developed firm plans for implementing the strategic plan.

Accountability

"It is interesting just trying to develop a mechanism that will measure and show you some accountability. The whole process has been in place or trying to operate for 5 or 6 years and we are still developing some of it."

Determining who is responsible for the completion of any element of the strategic plan is a difficult task. A single individual was responsible for the completion of a strategy in twelve of the organizations. Group accountability was assigned in six organizations. Two organizations were developing an implementation strategy and were not prepared to respond.

Individuals

"[It is] the line managers who are ultimately responsible."

Twelve organizations have specifically tasked individuals who are accountable for the completion of strategies. The titles vary according to the organizations. Some of the organizations insisted that the responsible agent be "line" versus staff (2). The other titles used in the interviews such as "goaltender," "action officer," and "project officer" are inadequate to determine whether the responsible and accountable agent was line or staff.

Groups

"[Groups] encompassed more areas than one person would be responsible for. So you had more groups contributing to the goal. Now we have QMBs chartered to handle the strategic goals."

Group accountability was mentioned by six organizations. The accountable agents being cited were the ESG, QMB, and the goal groups. Two organizations are using a hybrid system where individuals and groups are held accountable based on the scope of the strategy. One organization stated that accountability was not assigned other than to the sub-organizations.

Establishment of a monitoring system

"One goal a week is briefed at Staff Call. It keeps the progress toward those goals visible."

The development of an accountability scheme does not ensure that the plan's implementation will progress. A monitoring system must be established to ensure that the accountable agents are meeting their responsibilities.

ESG

"The ESG is the central point of contact for the plan. They actually manage it."

Eighteen of the organizations specified that the ESG or equivalent would be responsible for tracking the implementation of the plan. With the linking pin assigned to the QMBs and/or the goal groups, communication with the ESG is improved.

Individuals

"There's a goaltender and a co-goaltender who have the responsibility to see that the goal gets accomplished, and they, ideally, would delegate to appropriate people or teams to accomplish specific strategies or specific objectives."

Those organizations that did not select the ESG as the tracking agent relied on individuals (3) or had not progressed in implementation to this level.

How were resources applied?

"What is the real link between strategic planning and performance measurement systems and initiatives that are going on?"

Almost all organizations readily admitted that there is competition for the resources. How the organizations chose to approach this competition, in part, formed a basis for their responses.

Direct Linkage

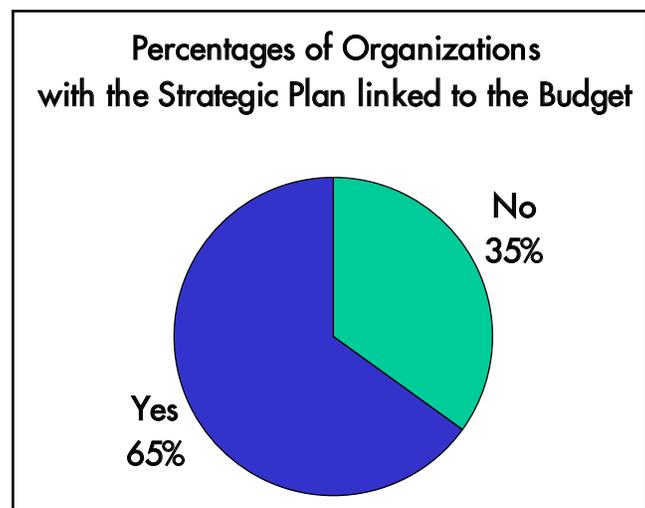
"[Resources were] a key element of our strategic plan. There was an entire goal dedicated to resources and one of the key areas or key outcomes of the strategic plan was to structure and prioritize our resources to support our strategic plan."

Thirteen organizations stated that there was or would be a direct linkage between the budget and the strategic plan. Some of the interviewees stated that the linkage would become firmer as requirements become better identified. Resource management and use were common themes throughout many interviews

No Linkage

"We did consider the cost and the manpower estimates of accomplishing the things in the strategic plan, but although those were considered, I never let that affect what we were going to do."

Seven organizations had no linkage between the strategic plan and the budget. Some organizations did not have a Program Objectives Memorandum (POM) based budget. Resources necessary to accomplish improvements were requested from a higher headquarters or negotiated



with customers. Other organizations stated that there was no anticipated linkage because the budget levels would not impact implementation. The remainder of the organizations did not respond to the question.

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How was progress measured?

"If you can't measure it, you don't know where you're going."

The need to measure progress is almost universally accepted. Only one organization had not planned for the development of a measurement system. The disparity comes in determining at what point the measurement should be derived.

Eighteen of the organizations developed a measurement system. Of those eighteen, thirteen were evaluating progress at the overall organizational level. The remaining five organizations measured at the strategic goal level or below.

Three of the interviewees referred to the fact that the measures selected may not prove to be the best measures. This is in keeping with generally recognized measurement theory.

There were 35 pages of transcript data on determining the success of the strategic plan. Unfortunately, only a few interviewees provided any substantive information on how the measurements were developed, how they determined success, and what indicators of success were used. This indicates the measurement systems were not mature or there is general lack of understanding regarding measuring strategic plan attainment.

Three organizations cited singular sources (e.g., survey) for their measurement system, indicating that the measurements might not attempt to measure the whole organization from various performance aspects.

What outcomes were achieved?

"I would summarize by saying that [strategic planning] has allowed us to proactively manage change. The bottom line is we proactively manage change."

The specific outcomes from strategic planning that are solely the result of strategic planning are difficult to determine. Many organizations cited factors such as their overall approach to quality, leadership style, and other management aspects that contributed to positive outcomes. Outcomes cited included a more cohesive organization, better communications, a more focused approach, and improved performance. The first three outcomes are closely aligned with guiding principles. The last

outcome, improved performance, more closely points to strategic performance.

Cohesive organization

"Teamwork is the biggest output."

Six of the organizations cited a more cohesive organization with better team skills. This response was made not only about the strategic planning group but the whole organization.

Better communications

"What we had not anticipated was the tremendous strengthening and improvement of communications among the management teams. There are now people, who are working together on a daily basis, who hardly ever talked to each other before . . ."

Better communications is related to the more cohesive organization. Six organizations found that the strategic planning process opened channels of communications. This improved communications was generally centered between management groups.

More focused approach

"People are looking at reaching whatever our product is and providing that, rather than focusing on their own day-to-day activities."

Sixteen of the organizations responded by saying that there was now a more focused approach in conducting their business. Four stated that the focus had shifted more to the future.

"This is the only place that I have ever seen that I actually start thinking five to ten years out."

For at least two organizations, there was a perception that their future focus was a broader focus, a less confined view of the organization.

"We do a lot of other things during the week that enhance the overall productivity . . ."

What were the lessons learned?

Five organizations were focused more on attainment of defined elements in the plan.

"I think the strategic plan, in the larger sense, has given us a better focus on mission."

Improved performance

"I think the organization is far more competent."

Eleven of the organizations have determined that there is an improvement in performance. This improvement is stated in terms like readiness and productivity.

Strategic planning process

"This is tough stuff. Change always involves pain. People generally resist change and want to avoid pain. So you have to pound your head against the wall and just keep doing it."

The interviewees were asked to provide lessons learned about their strategic planning processes and what parts of the process they would change. The responses have been categorized into seven areas. These areas are:

Leadership

"I underestimated my role as the Commanding Officer in influencing the process."

Fourteen organizations cited leadership as a possible key improvement. Most often (eight responses), leadership needed to be more proactive in the planning process. Related comments were made, such as the need for a better definition of leadership roles and ensuring leadership's commitment.

Earlier and stronger efforts to secure buy-in

"You can't underestimate the value of large amounts of constant and recurring publicity."

There are two key elements in securing buy-in. One element is gaining the wide participation during the development of the plan, which assists in the deployment of the plan. Seven organizations stated that participation and buy-in were key. The other element is communications of the plan, which was cited by five of the respondents.

Measurement

"The hard part is getting that plan, or process, to the point where you're doing very significant measuring."

While the majority of the organizations indicated that there was an ongoing measurement effort, six organizations indicated that measurement development would be an area for improvement. The need for training in this area was cited by two organizations.

Momentum

"You have to keep the momentum going. You can't walk away from it for a month, then come back and do it some more. You've got to keep going until it's done."

The need to keep the process moving from development to deployment was stated by six interviewees. Two organizations offered that the ESG would meet more often.

Realistic approach

"We were a little bit too ambitious . . . in order to have a plan that really takes us to our goals, it's going to require more strategic thinking than we have put into it."

Five interviewees stated that the plan was too ambitious or that priorities for the accomplishment of parts of the plan had to be developed.

Training and facilitators

"People don't just wake up and say, 'Boy, let's do some strategic planning—sounds great!' They need to be trained."

There were ten comments regarding facilitators and training. These two improvements were placed together because the facilitator can provide

training on the strategic planning process. This need was cited four times. Generally, the comments were supportive of the facilitators. However, two comments were made that the facilitators drove the participants to a false consensus.

Pre-work and assessment

"You have to assess what your organization is and be clear about the plan."

Three of the interviewees did not feel well prepared prior to going into the strategic planning session. Two other interviewees felt that more assessment work was required.

Implementation

"I have found that implementing a strategic plan comes up against so many existing paradigms that you must have time, emotion, and energy to work through these things."

In contrast to the development of the strategic plan, keys to success for plan implementation are more limited. The keys to success the interviewees cited were leadership commitment, visibility, communications, and a successful deployment.

Leadership commitment

"The top leader has to set the tone and the standard and has to provide the time and resources to those responsible for implementing the plan."

Leadership has to set the example. Many of the interviewee comments revolved around using the strategic plan on a daily basis, making the plan integral to the organization. Responses such as discipline, persistence, and patience were given. The general thought is that the strategic plan is a long-lived document which requires constant attention.

Visibility and communications

"Communications is absolutely necessary—absolutely essential to successful implementation."

Five organizations found that a successful implementation depended on communicating the plan almost continually. Advertising successes was mentioned by one organization as a viable means of communications.

Successful deployment

“Successful deployment depends on convincing people that what you have is worth the time and the effort to implement it.”

Successful implementation depends upon a successful deployment. Six organizations found that buy-in, an outcome of a successful deployment, was key to the implementation of the strategic plan.

In keeping with the responses to earlier questions, issues such as resources did not receive much direct attention. It is possible that resourcing is an attribute of and demonstrated by a committed leadership.



CONCLUSIONS

The responses to the interview questions between the two groups (leaders and TQLCs) about actions and process steps were similar. The two groups differed with respect to perceptions of success. The leaders were more global in nature and tended to find success much more easily than the TQLCs did. The TQLCs tended to focus on details that focused them on anticipated difficulties. Personnel who were actively engaged in the strategic planning process were more positive about the suitability of the strategic plan and its benefits.

There appears to be adequate evidence that the DON strategic planning process has been sufficiently defined to permit organizations to produce a strategic plan. The majority of the organizations interviewed, including some non-DON organizations, used the DON process. However, until publication of the *Strategic Management for Senior Leaders: A Handbook for Implementation*, there was not a well-defined post-planning process. The need for this handbook has been validated by the fact that as the interview questions began to explore aspects of the management process beyond development of the strategic plan, the interview data became more abstract. This could have been the result of a lack of clear guidance on how to best approach issues such as implementation and measurement. The publication of *Strategic Management for Senior Leaders: A Handbook for Implementation* should fill this gap and assist leaders with their strategic management efforts.



PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

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INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS FOR THE SENIOR LEADER

1. Why did you think it was necessary to do strategic planning in this organization?
2. How did you develop your strategic plan? (i.e. What process was used? Who was involved and how?)
3. How did you translate broad goal areas into doable actions? (i.e. action plan development, time-phasing/prioritization of implementation actions, resource estimation, etc.)
4. How did you communicate your strategic plan to the workforce both formally and informally? How did that strategy work out?
5. How did you communicate your strategic plan outside your organization? With whom and why?
6. How did you and your planning team establish oversight and accountability for implementation actions? (i.e. How is implementation progress monitored? How are implementation issues or concerns communicated? Is there a central point of contact for the strategic plan? Who is managing implementation actions and how are they being managed?)
7. Was there any special effort to make resources (i.e., manpower and/or money) available to help implement your strategic plan? (i.e., Was strategic planning linked to your budgeting process? If so, how?)
8. How do you know if you are making progress toward the accomplishment of your strategic plan? How are you measuring effectiveness? (i.e., How has senior leadership, management, and workforce behavior changed? What evidence is there that the guiding principles have been adopted?)
9. What has changed as a result of your strategic planning effort? (i.e., What results have you achieved?)
10. What do you think contributes to successful implementation?
11. What did you learn from your strategic planning efforts? (i.e., What would you do differently next time?)

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QUESTIONS FOR THE COORDINATOR

1. How did your organization develop its strategic plan? What process was used? Who was involved and how?
2. How were broad goal areas translated into doable actions? (i.e. action plan development, time-phasing/prioritization of implementation actions, resource estimation, etc.)
3. How was the strategic plan communicated to the workforce both formally and informally? How did that strategy work out?
4. How was the strategic plan communicated externally? With whom and why?
5. How did the planning team establish oversight and accountability for implementation actions? (i.e., How is implementation progress monitored? How are implementation issues or concerns communicated? Is there a central point of contact for the strategic plan? Who is managing implementation actions and how are they managing them?)
6. Was there any special effort to make resources (i.e., manpower and/or money) available to help implement your strategic plan? (i.e., Was strategic planning linked to your budgeting process? If so how?)
7. What has changed as a result of the strategic planning effort? What results have been achieved?
8. How do you know if you are making progress toward the accomplishment of your strategic plan? How are you measuring effectiveness? (i.e., How has senior leadership, management, and workforce behavior changed? What evidence is there that the guiding principles have been adopted?)
9. How has your organization's strategic plan guided management decisions?
10. What do you think contributes to successful implementation?
11. What did you learn from your strategic planning efforts? (i.e., What would you do differently?)

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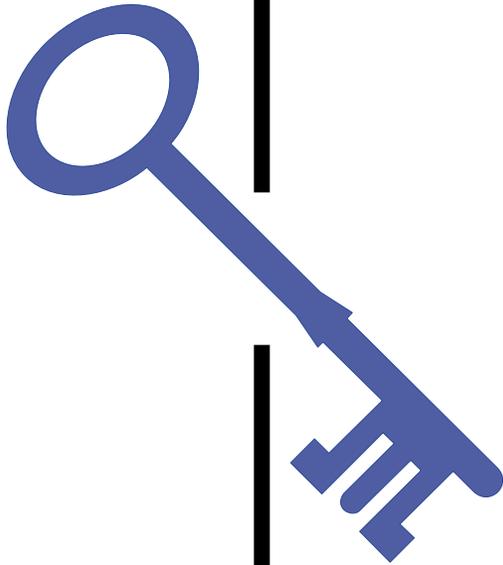
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