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BUSINESS STRATEGIES FOR THE DESIGN INDUSTRY

Strategic Planning or Tactical Mediocrity

“Strategic planning or tactical mediocrity? Each firm has the choice.” This was the eye-catching headline of an article by Scott Clark, a sales consultant from Iowa. Now, think fast. Which one of these options describes your company best?

- a) A company with management that is strategically focused, constantly thinking in a strategic mode, watching for changes and opportunities in the world around you
- b) A company with a management team that spends their time putting out fires and dealing with the tactical, day-to-day, operational issues of the business.

If your response was 'b', dealing with the operational tactics that just keep the business going, odds are no one is strategically focused on the future of the business. No one devoting all of his time focused internally, dealing with inventory levels, equipment malfunctions, supplier and distribution issues, and human resources issues will be unable to focus strategically. Chances of completely missing opportunities or threats to your company are highly likely. The same goes for chances of not seeing the big picture so necessary for a successful and profitable future. Who is watching for opportunities on which to capitalize?



Many firms *think* that they are strategically focused. After all, they schedule a planning session every year. Doesn't that make them strategically managed? Not by a long shot. Spending a day or two at a retreat and coming away with something passing for a strategic plan does not guarantee success or change the way a firm operates.

If no one routinely analyzes the strengths that led you to the level of success you hold today, or the weaknesses that held you back from becoming more than an 'OK' company, why would anything change? Why should you be more successful than you already are... assuming

you are successful in the first place? Do your core competencies poise you to merely maintain your position against competition, or to jump ahead when an opportunity arises? Will they help or hinder you in finding new markets, developing and introducing new products or services?

A management team focused day in and day out on the status quo, giving attention only to immediate, short-term issues, will doom a company to stagnating at that level indefinitely. Or worse yet, they will doom the company to failure due to their inability to see or understand what is happening around them in terms of competition, or customer needs and preferences. This does not even include awareness of constant changes in the environmental, political, economic, technological and sociological spheres that make up that big world in which we strive for success.

It is imperative for the firm that dreams of success to move their management team toward strategic thinking. Strategic thinking is the first step to becoming truly strategically planned and managed. Of course, your company must deal with the day-to-day issues that keep it operating smoothly. That kind of action is essential for any company. Be sure that is not all that is getting done. Make sure that too much attention is not being paid to the internal, tactical focus of the company. That kind of day-to-day operation does not let anyone to pay attention to external issues like challenges, opportunities and the big picture trends in your industry. These are the types of focus that are the basis of any successful strategic planning and management commitment critical for success.

Maurer Consulting Group is a strategies firm helping clients evaluate and formulate strategies for success. For a conversation with Terri L Maurer about how we can get you focused on growth and success, call **330.666.0802** or send an email to Terri at: tmaurer@maurerconsultinggroup.com