

## **If Planning Is Such a No Brainer, Then Why Don't You Do It?** **By: Hardy Smith**

I continue to be amazed at the results when I survey my audiences to find out how many organizations do strategic planning, have an annual action plan, or even make time to plan out the projects and activities that are critical for their success.

Not many do.

There are always plenty of excuses, and of course one of the most frequent is “everyone is just too busy.”

With all of the challenges nonprofits face, planning should be a top priority. After all, don't we all want to reduce pressure, alleviate stress, save money, get more done in less time with fewer people, and find solutions to a seemingly never ending list of other problems?

Planning affords huge benefits.

- It creates structure and focus.
- It helps identify potential problems. And needed solutions.
- It gives the opportunity to establish measurable goals, and specific strategies for achieving them.
- It sets performance levels that require evaluation and accountability.
- It saves time overall.

In short, planning creates the environment in which more and better work is accomplished.

This advice may appear to be a no-brainer, but while most recognize its importance, few organizations actually *plan to plan*. Hard to believe as it may be, there are organizations that own real estate, operate businesses, and provide services with substantial budgets, yet they operate without developed plans for what they are doing, where they are going, or the direction they should be headed.

If your organization is one of those that is pretty much winging it, on some level you know that your organization could and should be doing

better than it is. And you know that you must plan if you want to flourish.

If your organization is truly committed to success, I challenge you to walk your talk and make planning a regular exercise.

The good news is planning doesn't have to be difficult or overly time consuming.

- Commit to writing about who you are, what your purpose is, what you want to achieve.
- Set measurable goals.
- List specific strategies and timelines for realizing your goals.
- Identify the costs of implementation and where the needed funds will come from.
- Recognize any obstacles that may keep you from being successful and their needed solutions.
- Assign who is going to do what tasks.

Plans don't have to be perfect. In fact, they should be re-evaluated, revised, and updated on a regular basis.

Get others involved with planning development. The more ideas the better. And an added benefit from expanded participation is that you create buy-in for the plan.

If you are in a leadership role as either a professional staff member or as a volunteer, it is your responsibility to focus attention to this simple and effective tool. It is critical for realizing the success your organization says it wants to achieve.

**( Hardy Smith is a speaker & consultant who helps nonprofit organizations achieve high performance success. Contact him at [hardy@hardysmith.com](mailto:hardy@hardysmith.com) )**