QUESTION-BASED PLANNING

Clarity and leadership without vision statements, strategies, or retreats

Seriously frustrating problem

Most people prefer root canal over writing a mission statement. This is why as many as 63% of businesses now do no planning at all—which is bad for everyone. Every CEO we interviewed said the exact same things when asked what they didn't like about traditional "strategic" planning:

- Confusing terminology: strategy vs. tactic, vision vs. goal, objective vs. task, etc.
- Getting planning tangled up with analysis
- Poor use of time: neither the 2-day retreat nor 4-month process works
- The idea that there needs to be complete consensus before moving ahead

Focus, efficiency and financing

But they knew perfectly well planning is essential to their business and personal success:

- Getting their managers heading in the same direction, not at cross-purposes
- Using money and time efficiently
- Motivating managers with an exciting career path
- Being able to say yes or no to new ideas
- Allowing directors or the family council to focus on the right things
- Securing and maintaining bank and investor financing

Elegantly effective solution

The point the CEO's made most often about planning was about the facilitator: "We don't want them to tell us what to do; we just want them to ask us good questions." This was the seed of a big new idea.

Question-Based Planning (QBP) asks good questions in plain English in a systematic way. It's completed in five 2-hour meetings over five weeks and ends in a 1-page plan. It includes monthly progress reviews and updates. It transforms planning from a frustrating, contentious exercise into a productive and positive—and economical—act of leadership. It's based in common sense:

- We all know that asking questions is the best way to get a group onto the same page
- Time has to be managed more carefully today than ever before
- Unless the plan fits on one page, no one's going to remember it
- Unless there's regular review, the plan gets forgotten right away

QBP provides effective focus fast: the overall time commitment is 12 to 15 hours:

- 1. Outline all the big questions using www.3GoodQuestions.com as the tool (diagram)
- 2. Ask each department about their accomplishments, challenges and tasks
- 3. Ask the keystone leadership questions about competitiveness, the future, and purpose
- 4. Brainstorm a long list of possible goals and tasks
- 5. Distill the year's goals and tasks onto a 1-page plan.
- Review progress every month and adjust as you go.

Traditional strategic planning works for perhaps 10% of businesses—which means it's a failure. Question-Based Planning gets people doing what they love: working together on something important. *It's time to try something that works*.

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GOOD QUESTIONS

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