

The Paralysis of Over-Planning

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Plans are important for success. Businesses need plans, just as teachers, the military, farmers and communities need plans. I even have a plan for how I lay out my garden so the right plants are next to each other and each type gets the sunlight, shade, water, or drainage it needs. We plan for our retirement, plan for our vacations, plan for our kids' education, and plan parties. Plans are important, and plans are everywhere we turn. Those plans, however, can become paralyzing to an organization if those plans never become action.

For many organizations, whether a business, not-for-profit, or community, there are so many plans that it can be hard for people to know where to start. Having so many plans can have a paralyzing effect because no one knows where to actually start with action. In fact, many plans written by many organizations paint brilliant pictures of what the organization WILL BE, and what it WILL BE doing, but they fail to specify where the first brush stroke of action will take place. As a result, members of the organization all move ahead in different, sometimes contradictory paths based on the objectives and goals in one part of one plan, because the action remains uncoordinated and definitely unplanned.

I witnessed a meeting once that had three people arguing vigorously with each other for different courses of action on an issue. Each was very passionate, each held up a different plan of the organization, and each asserted the approved plan they were holding supported their argument for a particular direction. There was a plan for environmental issues, one to secure the financial plan of the organization, and the third was a new organizational structure being implemented. Three plans that, after I did some analysis, were in perfect contradiction with each other in almost every way you could imagine. Each plan was exceptional, each was developed in an inclusive manner, each was adopted with near universal appeal, and yet each one was in direct conflict with at least one other plan on every single goal and objective.

There is truth in the saying, "No one plans to fail; they simply fail to plan." Yet we have succumbed to a thought that we need a plan for everything, and everything must be in the plan. You simply cannot plan for everything, and not all great courses of action require a plan. Plans are important, but what is needed is a strong unified team whose members all understand the plans, or perhaps they all understand the master plan, and they know the first steps in a course of action to realizing the objectives of the plan. Let me say that one more time for emphasis. Plans are good and important, but they don't get you anywhere unless you have a unified team that all buys into the master plan and knows what actions are needed to get the results desired.

Everyone has a plan. We all have dozens of plans in our lives. Are those plans paralyzing you and your organization? Don't think the next step you need is another plan. What you need is a team that is unified. What you need is action, not another plan that sits on a shelf.

This syndicated content is provided by Doug Griffiths, best-selling author and chief community builder at 13 Ways, a company with a mission to push communities to face their challenges to find their unique path to success. For more information visit www.13ways.ca, or we can start the conversation at info@13ways.ca.