

# How to use project management to achieve your strategic goals

**Steve Wood of Success Enterprises Consulting Pty Ltd** looks at how you can use easy to use project management tools to deliver the goals set out in your strategic business plan



“Strategic Management Consulting to Achieve the Art of the Possible”™

Project Management is a very powerful tool – and with these few simple tips you can easily use it to your advantage.

We have used these methods before and we know they work. For example we have used project management tools to convert marketing wish lists into real televisions; we managed the design and development of new high volume and low volume production facilities for car components and even used the same techniques to manage the due diligence process when the company we worked for decided to spend the equivalent of A\$280m on buying another company.

## What are the main stages to think about when using project management tools?

Directors and senior managers need to be clear about the stages that they will lead their teams through. We suggest you break them down into three steps.

1. Defining the project.
2. Planning the work.
3. Working and managing the plan.

## What does planning the project really mean?

As a director you need to be clear about what results you expect. So this phase is all about definition.

### 1 Define the Project

What is the desired output or result? Define it in terms of completed actions and real deliverables that can be measured.

- a. Good examples might be new product launched and on sale with 100 units sold in the first month; or a marketing brochure complete, printed, and in use,

generating 25% extra leads; or a website

complete and being used generating over 5,000 hits /day

- b. Then write a clear specification. This should be written in terms of the outputs required.

## What does planning the work involve?

You need to get to the point where you can tell the story of how the work for the project will play out; who will do what, in which order and by when?

### 2 Work out which blocks of work are required. Make initial estimates.

- a. In no particular order, draw on a piece of paper or any project management software the work that needs to be done
- b. Establish who long it will take
- c. Establish who will do it
- d. Establish an estimate of the cost
- e. Establish the linkages between each activity

### 3 Draw the Gantt Chart

- a. Put onto paper or into any project management software package the list of activities. Collect similar activities in phases of work.
- b. Connect the linkages between the individual activities – they are called dependencies.
- c. Check the overall project duration against the required delivery window.
- d. Make sure you understand how a following activity depends on a previous activity; e.g. testing a printed circuit

board can only start when the board has been fully assembled.

- 4 Check with the individuals responsible. Confirm estimates.
  - a. For each activity formally check with those responsible how long it will take, and how much it will cost. Do this with internal company colleagues as well as external suppliers.
  - b. For commercially important projects ask for, receive and review competitive bids.
  - c. When you are happy with the specification of work as well as the commercial terms, then formally start the supplier off.
  - d. Assign a PROJECT MANAGER, whose job it is to manage the whole project. Without this person, it is very likely that the project will be late.

### How do I manage the work properly so that everything stays on track?

- 5 Follow-Up and check on the progress
  - a. Agree how the project will be documented.
  - b. Agree a plan for regular follow up meeting(s) for dates, times and locations.
  - c. Set expectations for how these meetings will be handled and documented.
  - d. By clearly setting expectations you will ensure that suppliers know what they should be doing, by when, and how they should share progress with you.
  - e. By following a structured consistent method you will find that internal and external suppliers will deliver the outputs that are expected of them.
- 6 What happens if they start to run late?
  - a. They will be running late because: they started late; they underestimated the amount of effort required; or despite estimating correctly, they did not put enough resources in place at the right time.

- b. Insist that the supplier provides a recovery plan to get back on track. Do not change the plan. Insist that they get back on track. Provide whatever help is required.

“Nobody can guarantee the future. The best we can do is size up the chances, calculate the risks involved, estimate our ability to deal with them and make our plans with confidence” Henry Ford II

- 7 What is the best way of making sure that everything runs on time?
  - a. Create a full specification that covers ALL the work required.
  - b. Build a PROJECT PLAN.
  - c. Nominate a PROJECT MANAGER whose job it is to manage the project, and is MEASURED and REWARDED for a successfully completed project.
  - d. Ensure that you have individuals responsible for EACH line.
  - e. Ensure that you have AGREEMENT that the individuals responsible KNOW and AGREE that they are responsible.
  - f. WRITE it down and get SIGNATURES.
  - g. Build in FOLLOW UP PROJECT MEETINGS which track progress.
  - h. Build you Payment schedule so that there is an incentive to complete on time.

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