

A word from our CEO



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Strategic planning helps all organizations

"Hope is not a strategy," said Vince Lombardi. "Failing to plan is planning to fail," said Benjamin Franklin.

Running a business is hard. From the moment you open until the end of the day, the organization focuses on activities that make money or will lead to making money. There are customers to attract and support, bills to pay, the need for adequate supplies to ensure everything that needs to get done will, and more. If you are a boss you may have employees that you oversee as well. Are these activities driven by strategic organizational goals? Or are they simply the product of sales goals that are updated each year?

As a long-time Chamber executive, I have known many wonderful businesses that appeared poised for success, only to fail. They had passionate owners and staff, a strong product or service, and the drive to be successful. They worked hard every day, often late into the night just to make sure everything was done. What they often lacked, however, was a set of strategic goals to guide their decision-making.

There can be friction with the process of setting strategic goals. On one side, the organization needs a consistent approach that leads to success each day. On the other side, the desire for growth and longevity demand the business be nimble and able to evolve. While being consistent is a good goal, over time things change. What worked in the past is no longer guaranteed to work again in the future. It might be technology, or competition, or something else. But when it happens, the organization needs to evolve. Is it prepared?

This is where planning comes in. Strategic planning establishes the organization's direction and focus by assessing both where you are and where you are going. The plan includes mission, vision and value statements; a set of long-term goals; and action plans to achieve the goals. This document provides a universal approach by all employees to the various opportunities and challenges presented to the organization. It's more than just reacting to new opportunities, it's being prepared for them.

It also constrains. The essence of strategy is choosing what not to do. You cannot be everything to all people. You must choose a focus. Doing so creates a clear delineation of company priorities for all members of the organization.

Yogi Berra once said, "If you don't know where you are going, you might wind up someplace else." As we prepare to turn the calendar to a new year, the Chamber encourages all organizations to consider spending some time building your own strategic plan. Don't just work and hope you get there. Plan for the future and know where you want to go.