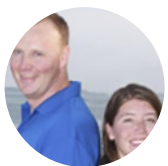


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Top 5 Tips for Strategic Planning in a Virtual Company



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With team members located all over the world, virtual organizations are challenged by the logistics of effective strategic planning. However, planning with a remote company can actually be a *benefit*. When you aren't mired down in the daily office grind, you and your team have the ability to bring a fresh, clear perspective to your strategic planning. Here are 5 tips to plan effectively and efficiently for the year ahead.

1. Stop, analyze and absorb.

Before you even think about planning for the future, you must first analyze the past. Sounds like a no-brainer, right? But the excitement of what lies ahead for a company can overshadow the need to critically evaluate what things went well the past year—and especially what things *did not*.

Virtual organizations have the added task of evaluating how the remote operations functioned that year. Ask yourself questions such as:

- Was the flow of communication sufficient?
- Did the virtual setup contribute to any serious problems? If yes, what changes will solve that problem?
- Did new team members assimilate well to the virtual environment?
- Does this still work for us as a company?

Take the time to evaluate how your company is performing as a virtual organization. Company structures sometimes change as the organization grows—confirm that your virtual status continues to be the right fit for the company.

Related: [Keep Virtual Workers Engaged From the Start With These 4 Simple Onboarding Practices](#)

2. Gather data and insights from your team.

You likely consult with your team leaders every day but many executives believe that strategic planning is an executive function only. If you aren't involving your leaders in the planning, you're missing out on your most valuable resources. Who better to share data, ideas and insight on the company's marketing efforts than your Marketing Director? Who has better insight on what organizational procedures may improve efficiency than your Operations Manager?

Your team leaders have unique perspectives that perhaps you don't hear in day-to-day conversations. In traditional offices, ideas are often discussed casually during breaks or 'water cooler chats'. Since your environment doesn't allow for that, you must make a concerted effort to gather their insights and evaluate how it aligns with your vision for the upcoming year.

3. Communicate your vision clearly.

It can be a struggle to figure out how to include all management team members in strategic planning without the traditional, in-person 'meeting of the minds'.

One way to solve this challenge is by making sure the company's vision is crystal clear—and that it's reinforced throughout the year. This allows the team to work in different locations yet still have the same end goal in mind. The result is a natural alignment that ensures everyone is moving in the same direction and understands how their role impacts the company's success from a high-level perspective. When planning time arrives, everyone is clear on the company's goals which ensures efficiency throughout the process.

Related: [Virtual Office Management Means Effective Communication](#)

4. Plan upfront but be open to change.

Planning is critical, but that doesn't mean you follow the plan blindly. Be flexible and keep a close eye on how the business is performing in relation to your goals. If results

aren't in alignment, why would you stick to the same plan?

If you are going to make changes (such as implementing new processes or systems), be sure to do that during the least disruptive time for your business. During your busy time, it's wise to stay away from making any big changes. That is when all hands should be on deck in order to stay focused on what your business needs at that time.

5. Make strategic planning a time-bound process.

Yearly planning for many companies involves a 'strategic sit-down' where executives spend days in a conference room, eventually emerging with a final plan. That's not the only (nor the best) way to do this. Owners of virtual organizations know you don't need to be in the same room to effectively communicate ideas and formulate a plan.

Make strategic planning a collaborative process (not a one-and-done, exhaustive session) but be sure it's time-bound. Clearly note the start date, end date and milestones that sit within those time frames. Ensure team members have enough time to really think things through but not so much time that they become paralyzed.

Related: [How to Build a Culture Across Your Virtual Workforce](#)

Great strategic planning sets your company up for success, improves your virtual team's structure and direction, strengthens your team's sense of belonging and creates effective strategies and actions for the year ahead. Happy planning!

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