

STRATEGIC PLANNING TIP SHEET

- Block out time on your calendar for strategic thinking. If you find yourself getting overly caught up in tactical considerations, you might overlook the big picture. Giving yourself time to focus on the greater needs of the business enables you to keep things in perspective and ensure you keep the top priorities in mind.
- Keep up to date with industry changes, technology innovations, and the general landscape of your business. How do these changes affect your business?
- Sometimes benchmarking can lead to innovation. Attend conferences and stay abreast of developments in your industry (and others) to determine if others' ideas would benefit your organization.
- What are your organization's competitive advantages? Make sure you are intentional about leveraging these appropriately.
- Try to think like your competitors. What are their strengths and weaknesses? If you were them, what might you be doing?
- Think about your key customers. Consider their needs and what it is that draws them to you. How can you use this information for future business strategy?
- Communicate regularly with employees at all levels to get their ideas, suggestions, and feedback. Gather opinions through surveys, face-to-face meetings, and other methods.
- Put your strategies in the context of the larger organization's vision. Consider the organization's current vision and strategic goals. How can your area support it?
- Focus on the big picture and how a long-term perspective can benefit you. While a focus on immediate issues might get you quick wins, they may not properly position you for the future.
- Speak with others in the business who are more strategic and innovative. This can help you to learn from the way they approach issues, as well as assist you in generating new ideas.

- When immediate issues arise, consider the core causes underlying them. Are there changes in process or structure that would help to avoid them in the future?
- In addition to a strategic plan, develop a quarterly summary of future actions. Recognize that plans may need to be adjusted periodically; however, having clear priorities can help you in making decisions about what to focus on in the present.