




Greetings: My name is [Ron Hequet](#) ; Consultant and Speaker; **Contributing Author – American Management Association, ‘Leading & Learning Ezine’, ‘Affluent Magazine’, ‘The Advisor’ and Presenter for ExecSense Webinars.**

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DON'T SURVIVE, BUT 'THRIVE' ©

by

Ron Hequet

Life is hard and it is supposed to be hard. Almost all greatness was born from adversity. Last October, when the economic crisis became obvious, even to those not paying close attention, did business leadership act? Did they appropriately adjust business plans to accommodate various scenarios going forward, and without effecting core strategy?

I have heard the term Strategic Planning, used mostly by those who don't truly know what it is or how to produce such. Strategy is the “what” or the end game of the future, and Planning and Tactics the “how” or design of today forward, which will obtain the strategy.

Too often leadership takes an accounting tactic in response to an economic downturn, i.e. cut costs. They use an axe instead of a surgical knife to selectively reduce line item expenditures. This places huge obstacles in the way of existing business strategy, and allows for only one type of strategy, ‘survival’.

All business leaders should be focused on creating a written ‘design /plan’ resulting in the development and implementation of tactics to ‘market and sell’ your way out of a slump, and not placing the businesses focus on ‘survival’. You can't take the

marketing and sales talent of a company, whose very expertise is increasing market share and growth and then make them become some sort of calamity specialist?

Why a documented plan? A plan that is not properly written down is not a plan, it is a wish. After all you say, ‘I the owner or the management team know what to do, know what the company goals are, can't we just explain that to the staff and have them deliver?

In a word, No!

You'll roll your eyes as I state an obvious anecdote, but what are the chances of your successfully driving to and arriving at Diamond Springs, California from Chicago without a map? Even if you happen to know where Diamond Springs is, without a map you will more than likely make many wrong turns, take the wrong roads or even be going the wrong way.

So, back to the why question.

First, a proper business plan has as its inherent value the process itself. The planning process (best in concert with unbiased outside expertise), is the teacher to management and also to key staff.

If it were my client or my company, here are strategic orientations for 2009 I would employ.

1. Forget the future; plan around what you can predict.
2. Stop Listening and start looking.
3. Mistrust research; it rarely reveals what your customers really like or want.
4. Mistrust confidence; if you feel certain or someone else does, question it.
5. Avoid perfection; good beats perfect.
6. Beware of common sense; breakthroughs require real imagination.

For more information and real world examples, contact...

Ron Hequet,
Principal
800.350.5700

Ron@ActumConsulting.com

Web: www.ActumConsulting.com

Blog: www.ActumConsulting.com/blog