



Strategic Business Development

White Paper / Issue 4

A nice sounding phrase, but at the end of the day, what does it really mean? And why should you care? Those are fair questions. We believe quite strongly that “strategic business development” is the most effective vehicle to assure ongoing success and growth of your business enterprise. This is particularly true for service businesses, for many reasons, not the least of which is that you and your professional team ARE the product. This creates a wrinkle in the process that manufacturers, distributors and the like need not worry about. The term strategic business development it is meant to convey a marriage between strategic planning and business development. Let’s address them separately, with strategic planning first.

Strategic Planning

No doubt, most of you have been exposed to, and have participated in, strategic planning exercises. Many of these exercises, although interesting and challenging, do not translate into action. As we see it, there are two principal reasons for going through such an exercise:

First, a strategic plan addresses where the business is now, where it wishes to go, and how it plans to get there. As they say, if you don’t know where you are going, any road will do.

Done effectively, this process should:

- Clarify your key current issues
- Develop a vision of the near term future
- Develop specific one year objectives

What is frequently overlooked in this process is the adoption and implementation of a “management by objectives” format for managing the enterprise come Monday morning. In one form or another, every Fortune 500 company utilizes this management system. Simply stated, it is a process whereby the priority objectives identified in the strategic planning effort become the true drivers of the business moving forward.



Our approach calls for the following:

Let’s assume there are four one-year objectives that have been developed. In that case, we would create four small (3-5 people) planning teams, one for each objective. Their charge is to create 90-day action plans that address the steps required to achieve the one-year objective. It is simply a list of who will do what, by when and in what sequence. Each quarter, the results are reviewed, and a new 90-day action plan developed. In this manner, you have created what is, in effect, a “rolling” strategic planning process. In addition, on a monthly basis, at management meetings, progress against these action plans can and should be tracked. Such a process clearly delineates responsibility and accountability for performance.

When properly managed, the process works—and works well.

...continued on back

Business Development Planning

The other half of the phrase “strategic business development” (as we use the term) refers to the overall business development process for the firm. We addressed this subject in more detail in a prior white paper.

For most firms, the strategic planning process will yield one priority objective tied to revenue/profit growth, and the business development efforts necessary to achieve that desired growth.

Among the questions one needs to ask are the following:

- 1) Are we structured in a way that prioritizes business development? Does our organizational chart reflect this prioritization?
- 2) Do we value business development efforts, or does the drive towards maximizing billable hours trump such activity?
- 3) Are specific responsibilities and accountability in place by individual, and by client/prospect/referral source, for business development activities and results?
- 4) Do internal compensation formulas reflect true value for successful business development efforts?
- 5) Do you have a marketing plan?
- 6) If so, does that marketing plan emphasize and prioritize “event marketing,” meaning activities that cause direct, face-to-face interaction with the market place?

(We strongly believe the game is won face-to-face).

- 7) Are you using an effective CRM (customer relationship management) system to track client/prospect/referral source contact, follow up, etc?
- 8) Are the employees in charge of outreach responsibility trained/coached in the sales and relationship development process?
- 9) To what extent are you aware of the strategic direction and longer term plans of your key clients?
- 10) To what extent are your key people a part of the “trusted outside advisor” role with your clients?

Strategic Business Development Is Your Blueprint For Success

Truelson Associates has served over 200 clients in its 20+ years of existence. Of those clients, fully 80% of them have been professional and other service providers operating in a business to business mode. Law, public accounting, engineering, architecture, banking, and other financial service providers are heavily represented in that mix.

We offer services in these key areas:

- Strategic planning
- Business development planning
- Management of sales and marketing implementation efforts
- Management/leadership coaching

Unlike most consulting firms, we take a hands on approach to our efforts, functioning as part of our clients senior management team to achieve stated objectives.

We are proud of the results we have achieved for and with our many clients, and are happy to provide impeccable references to substantiate those results.



We are associate members of The Oregon Bankers Association.

Walt Truelson
wt@truelsonassociates.com