

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS OF PLANNING

We are constantly amazed but never surprised at the extremes in planning: some organizations go forward into the market place battle without a plan; others plan themselves right into the ground. Here are some ideas that may help you plan or lead a planning process.

1.

Thou shalt not plan in vain.

Create a plan that's meaningful for you, your people, your boss, and your boss's boss. Do not create plans solely to feed a bureaucracy; your time is too precious. Go for BEHAGs: Big Hairy Audacious Goals.

2.

Thou shalt consult heavily.

Planning is really an opportunity to dialogue with your clients and colleagues: "cast your bread upon the waters" to get bigger and better ideas.

3.

Thou shalt not consider the plan as Gospel.

Unavoidable changes come along, including changes of government, stock exchange ups and downs and market variations. Change your plan as and when you must to reflect changes in circumstance.

4.

Thou shalt deal in measurable outputs.

Goals should be measurable. Resource burn should be measurable. Standards should be measurable. Wherever you can measure, do so. However, some quality outputs are not measurable. Deal with them accordingly.

5.

Thou shalt not lose sleep over Scientific Wild-Ass Guesses (SWAG's)

In some cases, they are all you have and in the absence of hard information, go with it. Nobody said you couldn't adjust along the way. In fact, you probably should.

6.**Thou shalt try and limit thyself.**

Keep the numbers of top priorities down to a manageable number, like three to five, so you have a chance of getting them done. And remember that organizations plan 160% of what they can do, and accomplish 60% of that. So, do the numbers...

7.**Thou shalt separate change from ongoing activity.**

This is not to judge one as better than the other, but simply to be able to set one off against the other and decide which is more important to you and the organization.

8.**Thou shalt not accept to be piled upon.**

Negotiation and consensus work wonders when confronted with conflicting priorities. Multi-tasking can only be carried so far before it – literally – kills.

9.**Thou shalt keep it simple.**

Simple words which explain what you want to do work best in planning. Beware of warm, fuzzy and vague objectives and goals.

10.**Thou shalt model planning behaviour.**

In your daily activity, work from your plan, using your common sense as a guidance system. Remember that you too will plan 160% of what you can do in a day. So be real and enjoy the process of figuring out what is the most important and most fruitful.

And remember: "If you want to make God laugh, write a plan..."

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