

Strategic Planning as Learning

Planning ahead in today's economic environment has to include building organizational capacity that can embrace the unexpected. Strategic planning needs to both think about the future in ways that not only create the future but also in ways that adapt to incoming changing factors. To do this, organizations need to build learning and planning capabilities because building planning capability without learning capability typically leads to out-dated plans that no longer fit changing reality.

Fundamentally, strategic planning asks three questions: 1) What is our current state? 2) Where do we need to/want to go?, and 3) How are we going to organize ourselves to get there

Three questions capture the learning core of strategic planning and shift the future-oriented work to optimizing reality. This "Optimizing Reality" mindset drives a process rooted in facts AND in creativity and hope. They create a forward-moving mind-set.

1. What are the real performance drivers in our industry that we need to focus on? What can we learn from them and how do we measure them?
2. What is the best of what we do in our organization? What can we learn from our success and how can we enhance that?
3. How can we get everyone in the organization from the senior executive team to the front line engaged in the planning learning? How can we establish processes that engage our workforce to build capacity for strategic inquiry, innovation and inspiration to achieve our results?

The illiterate of the future
will not be the person who
cannot read.

It will be the person who does
not know how to learn.

Alvin Toffler

Embedded in these questions is not only strategic *competitive* advantage but strategic *collaborative advantage* – the advantage that results when organizations tap talent and build networks of committed partners. Establishing a foundation of learning mindsets enhances people's curiosity and ability to look at old facts in new ways, to listen deeply to the ideas of outliers, and to create possibilities that could not have been created without the curiosity and the boundary-less quest that learning mindsets create.