

15 Questions to ask your team before participating in a strategic planning session:

Off site meetings can be extremely useful to: realign, reenergize, and refocus the management team of a business or non-profit.

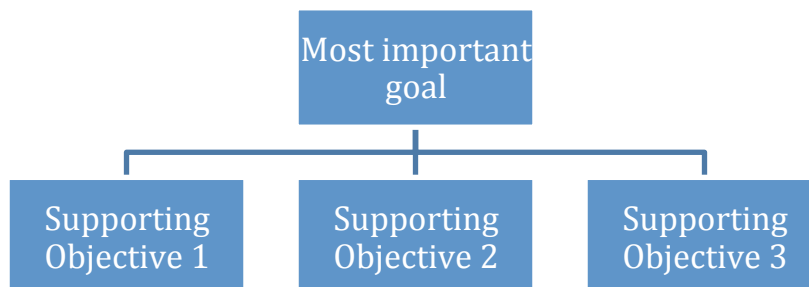
Ideally you and your team can walk into an offsite planning session with specific objectives and walk out with clear action plans.

A good offsite planning session can uncover key insights into the organization's current and future challenges, as well as determining the priorities and accompanying boundaries that will move your organization forward.

Here are some questions to ask you and your team as you prepare for your strategic plan offsite.

1. Who will be attending?
 - Will you have just members of the executive team, or will you include different levels of the organization to get a wide range of perspectives?
2. What is the level of commitment we can expect for strategic work?
 - Some organizations plan once a year, once a quarter or once every three years. Others meet for a short time every day and every week to focus on the implementation of the plan. How much time are you willing to dedicate to your strategy implementation?
3. What did you do well as part of your last strategic plan?
 - Don't forget what got you to this point. This will build on the strengths of your organization and give you some successes to celebrate.
4. What is the culture of your organization?
 - If you want any significant change to happen in your organization, culture needs to lead the charge. What are the attitudes of your people, and are your organizational values understood and shared by everyone?
5. What are the success drivers of your organization?
 - What in your organization create the biggest impact towards moving the needle on your mission and vision (including revenue, if applicable)
6. What does the future look like outside of your business and what global trends are emerging over the next year, 5 years and 10 years?

- Your organization might not have long term planning cycles, but looking in the horizon to anticipate trends on a global scale will help your group think of different scenarios that could impact the future of your organization that you'll then have to react to.
7. Who is your core customer and what do you do for them?
 - If you could allocate more resources to one specific group who would it be? This should give you more insights into what really drives the success of your organization, and give you a better an idea of where to place your bets in the future.
 8. Why does your organization exist? What is its purpose?
 - This is a spin on the traditional mission statement that ties in more closely with organizational culture.
 9. What is the vision for the future of your organization in the next 3-5 years?
 - Don't think of a statement but instead a vivid picture (like a blueprint) of all the aspects of your organization: the people, the clients, the processes, geographic locations, offices etc....
 10. If you could choose *one* measure that would have the most impact on the achievement of that vision, what would it be?
 - Think of that measure in the terms of going from X to Y by a certain date.
 - Can everyone in the organization contribute to this measure?
 11. What other measures would contribute to that larger goal?
 - If you could think of three (not more) objectives that would move the needle on that one most important goal, what would they be?



12. What obstacles and uncertainty stand in the way of that future outlined in question 9?
 - What challenges internally and externally will get in your way of creating that vision of the future? What changes will you have to make? Do you need to update your business model, hire new management, input new systems, etc?
13. Where do you want your organization to be in 1 year's time?
 - How can you measure that success? If success was a place, how would you know if you got there?
14. What activities will move the supporting initiatives forward?
 - What do your people need to do from an activity perspective to move those initiatives forward? Is it above and beyond what they are doing now or just a slight change?
15. Who in your organization is responsible for measuring and reporting out the progress of functional areas in regards to your most important goal? Think in terms of a person, and not as a group or division.

Strategic planning is about making choices about where your organization should play, and where it can win. It's as much about choosing what to do as it is choosing what not to do.

These are just some questions that will lead your team into your strategic planning process.

If you're looking to have someone from outside your organization facilitate your strategic planning session, contact our team to learn how we can help.

Call us at 1-855-895-5446 or visit: www.smestrategy.net/contact and have us call you.

Thanks for reading and happy planning!