

# Strategic Planning: There's No Silver Bullet

## Twelve Tips for Value and Results

According to the legend, David McCanles called Wild Bill Hickok out to duel. Hickok walked out into the street and fired one shot – at a distance of 75 yards – killing McCanles instantly. Shoot now aim later worked well for Wild Bill in his situation. It doesn't work so well for leaders who need to define and execute significant changes for business growth and success.

### Creating a new strategic plan is a big deal

Here are some essential considerations if you expect to build a viable strategic plan that gets executed.

- 1. Accept that you aren't Wild Bill and there is no silver bullet.** To do this well takes a comprehensive effort and commitment to a solid process, including the time and resources necessary for success.
- 2. Include the right players.** That includes those with ultimate accountability for leading execution. Subject matter experts when and as needed. Consider also including a high potential leader from a lower level for whom this would be a great development opportunity. Depending on your organization there may also be an opinion leader whose involvement can eliminate barriers to execution.
- 3. Get participants ready to contribute.** It is common for executive teams to not be used to working together in the way that is essential to creating a great strategic plan. In a good process, discussions are dynamic and sometimes contentious. Legacy and personal styles can get in the way. Turf protection can be a barrier. There are varying levels of communication and ego involvement. A solid process sets individuals and the team up to succeed.
- 4. Trust the process.** There will be parts of a robust strategic planning process that you may not enjoy. Do it anyway. There also should be some fun in the process. Remember, however, that this is hard work. You are defining the future of your business. Employees and shareholders are depending on you to do it well.
- 5. Challenge assumptions.** The volume and velocity of change can make what was true yesterday untrue tomorrow. Identify your assumptions and check validity.
- 6. Take a guided tour through the external environment.** Opportunities to take and risks to be mitigated exist in the realities of the world over which we have no control. It takes a robust process to make sure nothing is missed. Be ready to think beyond.
- 7. Know what you are and dream of what you can be.** This applies to both your leadership team and the business. Both may need to be something different to achieve your vision. Be ready to let go of status-quo.

- 8. This is about “what” not “how.”** Discussions about how an initiative will be done come after clearly defining what the initiative is. Avoid being pulled into the weeds of “how” – that’s for tactical execution. It’s too easy to talk yourselves out of committing to the right future defining initiative if the challenge of “how” gets in the way.
- 9. Resist the temptation to vote.** Creating a strategic plan should be a collaborative process. It includes dynamic, high energy and even heated discussions. Resist the urge to settle an impasse with a vote. The history books are full of examples where the majority was flat wrong. Take the time to understand both what people think and why they think it. Someone ultimately has the authority to make and accept accountability for that decision. If you are that person do not do so too soon.
- 10. Accept the price of admission.** Energy, enthusiasm and an eye to the future are expected of all players. Self-appointed persistent devil’s advocate is not good, yet diverse opinion is essential. Argue your point with passion and reason. It is ok to disagree with the direction that is ultimately taken. Then you must switch gears. Support the direction chosen. Otherwise you can no longer be a leader in the business. Passive-aggressive saboteurs do not belong on a professional leadership team.
- 11. Belly up-to-the-bar individually and hold each other accountable.** Being a leader in an aligned team of smart, competent colleagues committed to each other and the business is fun and satisfying hard work. It is essential to making the good stuff happen that creates the future of the business.
- 12. Celebrate progress and recognize personal and team contribution.** Recognizing and rewarding small successes helps create bigger successes. Celebrate and get creative in doing so. Include the individual leader accountabilities in your performance management program. Lead and manage the process of plan implementation.

Being a professional business leader should be hard, yet satisfying work. Too often it is harder than need be and much less satisfying. Both characteristics are enhanced when a committed team with a clear route to the future is working together to make it happen. Make it so.

## About Randy Boek

Randy is a Professional Outsider. He sees, says and does what insiders can’t or won’t to improve leader performance and business results. He has built a history of success and a unique client list including well known Fortune 500 companies and mid market privately held businesses in many industries.

Born into an entrepreneurial family he delivered groceries in a red Radio Flyer wagon while in elementary school and ran his own janitorial crew as soon as he could drive a green Ford Econoline van. From brewery start-up to chemical manufacturing, health care to hi-tech his stories are real, entertaining and provide clients with learning, insight and entertainment. He is a veteran leader who has worked with leaders of leaders from over ten different countries in the past year alone, from the shop floor to the top floor. Randy is a pragmatic guy who is committed to helping professional leaders get better business results and greater personal satisfaction.

Randy is co-author of “Undo Before You Become Undone.” He also publishes a monthly Leaders Letter to his readers. His speaking topics include Leadership, Change, and People at Work.

To reach Randy email [RandyB@routetworesults.com](mailto:RandyB@routetworesults.com) or call 425.242.5039  
Get on our blog ‘Outside the Turn’ at [www.routetworesults.com/blog](http://www.routetworesults.com/blog)



## Randy Boek

Professional Outsider  
SPEAKER - LEADER - CONSULTANT

425.242.5039 • [RouteTwoResults.com](http://RouteTwoResults.com)  
5400 Carillon Point, Bldg. 5000 4th floor, Kirkland, WA 98033