Strategic Thinking
Competency Development Activities

Competency Definition

Formulates effective strategies consistent with the business and competitive strategy of the organization in a global economy. Examines policy issues and strategic planning with a long term perspective. Determines objectives and sets priorities; anticipates potential threats or opportunities.

Developmental Activity Levels

All (A)

Applies to all competency levels

Beginner-Basic Knowledge (B)

A person at the Beginner-Basic Knowledge level has limited experience applying the competency. He/she applies general knowledge in common situations but has limited practical experience in applying the competency in a work environment presenting more complex situations.

Mid-level (M)

A person with mid-level proficiency has applied the competency repeatedly and successfully in the performance of his/her job but still has much to learn about the advanced aspects or behaviors associated with the competency. A person at this level can usually apply the competency on his/her own.

High (H)

A person at the High level has extensive knowledge of and experience with this competency and can apply the competency exceptionally well on the job without assistance. At this level one is an expert and has enough experience to teach the competency to others.

Articles, Books, and Websites

M Roberto, Michael A. and Levesque, Lynne C., <u>The Art of Making Change Initiatives Stick</u>, MIT Sloan Management Review: Summer, 2005. MIT SMR: 46410

The authors use a detailed case study (a large clothing retailer disguised as "Apparelizm Corp.") to demonstrate what it takes to produce sustainable changes in processes, behavior or performance. The study uncovered four critical processes — chartering, learning, mobilizing and realigning — that pave the way for successful institutionalization of a strategic change initiative.

M Abrahamson, Eric, <u>Avoiding Repetitive Change Syndrome</u>, MIT Sloan Management Review, Winter, 2004. MIT SMR: 45215

In the change process, companies have often suffered from "more pain, less change." The author urges executives at such companies to continually monitor their organizations for symptoms of repetitive change syndrome: initiative overload, change-related chaos, employee cynicism and burnout.

M "Scenario Planning Reconsidered", Harvard Management Update, September, 2000. HMU U0009B

The future seems to get here a whole lot faster these days. The number of possible futures seems greater than ever, too. Scenario planning asks managers to imagine alternative futures that might exist 3, 10, even 25 years from now. The article includes the sidebar, "Where to Look for Trends" and a list of resources.

M Elizabeth O. Teisberg, "Strategic Response to Uncertainty", Harvard Business Note, April, 1993. HBN 9-391-192

Managers often ignore uncertainty and plan as if the world were certain. Frequently, strategy is formulated based on an extrapolation of current trends into the future, or the best guess scenario of the manager involved. This note discusses four approaches to shaping the firm's response to uncertainty.

M Harper, Stephen C., The Forward-Focused Organization: Visionary Thinking and Breakthrough Leadership to Create Your Company's Future, AMACOM, July, 2001.

This book advocates "ASAP management" over implementing change incrementally and stresses the role of leadership at all levels of the organization in "creating" the future. It identifies breakthrough leadership, anticipatory management, innovative systems, and a revolutionary culture as prerequisites of the "forward-focused organization."

M Ringland, Gill, "Scenario Planning: Managing for the Future", John Wiley & Sons, January, 1998.

In this book, readers learn all about powerful scenario planning tools that dramatically magnify a manager's ability to zero in on the most important emerging trends and develop sets of likely future scenarios from them.

M Bryson, John M., Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement, Jossey-Bass, September, 2004.

This new edition features the Strategy Change Cycle—a proven planning process used by a large number of organizations. It offers guidance, tools and techniques on implementing the planning process. The author introduces new material on creating public value, stakeholder analysis, strategy mapping, balanced scorecards, collaboration, and more. Information about the organizational designs that will encourage strategic thought and action throughout the entire organization is included.

H Michelman, Paul, Methodology: Overcoming Change Resistors, Harvard Management Update, October, 2004. HMU: U0410F

There are a few in every bunch: the naysayers, the predictors of disaster, the ones who dig in their heels and fight you at every turn. What would a change initiative be without them? No matter how well planned your effort, you can't avoid change resistors in the management ranks. The author explains that resistors are a fact of organizational life, and you'd be wise to accept them. For they often hold a value many firms never bother to mine. Learn to designate the areas of greatest resistance--and then begin an aggressive plan to understand it, make use of it, and overcome it.

H Wells, Stuart, Choosing the Future: The Power of Strategic Thinking, Butterworth-Heinemann, January, 1998.

This how-to book advances thinking skills and presents an approach to improve the quality of your strategic thinking. It shows readers how to discover their own ideas and strategic direction. Strategy requires an ability to conceive the future, see and create possibilities, and focus to choose a direction. Successful strategy is a mental discipline consisting of broad ranging, flexible, and creative thinking. This book will help you achieve this success by studying fundamentals such as effective group thinking, knowing when to delay a decision for more information, balancing contrasting modes of thought, and transforming thought into action.

H Dixit, Avinash K., Nalebuff, Barry (Contributor), Thinking Strategically: The Competitive Edge in Business, Politics, and Everyday Life, W.W. Norton & Company, April, 1993.

Thinking Strategically is a crash course in outmaneuvering any rival. This guide builds on scores of case studies taken from business, sports, the movies, politics, and gambling. It outlines the basic good strategy making and then shows how you can apply them in any area of your life.

Activities

M Write up and share case-studies following the debrief of critical situations that you or your team deals with; encourage your counterparts to do the same.

M Identify potential risks and how best to avoid them through reviewing past project/situation debriefs or case studies.

H Arrange opportunities to observe first hand the strategies, styles and skills of proven veterans in the organization and apply to your situations.

H Develop your office or region's "battle readiness" by proactively addressing your coworkers' as well as your own skill and knowledge development needs.

H Find out about and attend industry meetings (e.g., aircraft owners, other stakeholders) to find out how others are approaching equivalent challenges and processes.

H Find out who your counterparts are in other agencies and establish ongoing relationships to share best practices and gain new ideas to apply to within your organization.

H Include risk mitigation plans in progress reports (depending on the size of the airport).

H Participate in incident command system exercises (e.g., tabletop exercise).

H Participate on a committee to review and revise strategies for other areas of the organization.

H Participate in strategic initiatives (within the terminal/concourse, at the airport, or TSA-wide, as appropriate).

H Subscribe to weekly or monthly news services to keep current on the latest trends in the industry.

H Use critical event analysis to think through the implications of emerging issues for your organization.

H Work with project team to brainstorm different risk scenarios and factors, and develop mitigation plans for your greatest risk exposure.

Coaching Suggestions for Managers

M Debrief key actions or decisions made by staff members. Ask the person what went wrong or could have been done better. Ask what was overlooked or unanticipated. Encourage contingency planning by asking what will he/she do differently to prevent the same or similar problems the next time? Follow up.

M Have staff members make a list of the consequences that flow out of their decisions or solution strategies. Ask probing questions to get them to think about less obvious consequences (e.g., "What would the consequences be if you had less time? Fewer helping hands?") Get them to work through different scenarios. Suggest that they involve people with different functional and technical backgrounds in brainstorming potential positive and negative effects so that they can plan for the latter.

H Arrange for staff members to participate in special projects or task forces that focus on anticipating and planning for future security threats/scenarios, organizational changes, or security process/system improvements.

H Ask a staff member to identify the ten most significant future trends, events, or emerging technologies within the industry. Have them develop a plan for gathering information on these advances and determining/addressing their implications for your organization. Ask them how they plan to prepare themselves for the changes.

H Ask staff members how key people inside and outside the workgroup will react to a planned change. Ask how those peoples' concerns have been considered or will be addressed. Make

sure they have a plan for addressing them. Periodically ask people how they are dealing with or feeling about the change and give feedback to the staff member, if necessary.

H Ask staff members how they find out about upcoming opportunities or threats. If they have no network or process, recommend things to read, forums to attend, questions to ask. When reviewing their plans, ask what the long-term outlook is. Continue this process, making it clear that looking ahead is something they must do as part of the job.

H Ensure that staff members determine the consequences of their decisions by questioning them on how their decisions and actions have affected or will affect other parts of the organization. If they don't know, require them to find out.