

Planning Possibilities

News & views brought to you by Michelle Coussens

Welcome to my February 2019 Issue!

How tired of winter are you? While I hunker down for yet another winter storm, I am grateful to have understanding clients who allow for weather-related flexibility. I have chosen to make use of these closed-in days to get ahead on future projects, work on ideas that otherwise would stay shelved, and get caught up on various organizational tasks. I refuse to be a victim of snow, sleet, and cold and instead am enjoying working in snugly, comfortable clothes!



*Stay safe and stay warm,
Michelle*

Inside this issue:

Planning for the right type of management	2
Planning Predicaments	2
Communication Corner	2
Online Plug of the Month	2
Book Banter	3
Personally Yours	3
Contact Information	4

Planning for Good Decisions

PLAN B CONSULTING MISSION STATEMENT

To assist organizations in becoming more effective and efficient through practical business planning, resulting in meaningful and measurable outputs, outcomes, and impact.

Prepare
Communicate
Execute

While managers may have functional titles and responsibilities (operations manager, marketing manager, etc.), it is increasing common for employees to serve as project-based managers, either exclusively, or in addition to their existing functional responsibilities. For instance, a Small Project Manager has sole responsibility for a project; a Project Manager is typically responsible for large projects; and a Program Manager is usually responsible for multiyear projects and major bundles of projects. Learn more about planning for the right type of management on page 2.

Planning for the right type of management

- Strategic plans lead to business plans, and the goals and objectives articulated in business plans lead to projects.
- In determining who should be responsible for the associated projects, consider the uniqueness and duration of projects relative to ongoing longer-term organizational activities and whether there is a multidisciplinary and cross-functional nature of projects that creates authority and responsibility dilemmas. A good system balances the needs of a given project with the broader operational and extended needs of the organization. And, be sure to also consider the interplay between assigned project managers and existing functional ones.

Project Manager

What has to be done?

When should the task be done?

How much money is available to do the task?

How well has the total project been done?

Negotiated Issues

Who will do the task?

Where will the task be done?

Why will the task be done?

Is the task satisfactorily completed?

Functional Manager

How will it be done?

How will the project involvement impact normal functional activities?

How well has the functional input been integrated?

Planning Predicaments: Working around the weather

*Where
planning
concepts
meet
reality*

How do you plan in advance for the possibility of bad weather? Depending on your organization, you may have clients with unique weather-related needs or even increased needs during such times. In addition, you may be reliant on vendors adversely affected, and/or your employees may have difficulties getting to your site.

It is important to map out strategies for handling such situations well before they occur. Do you have flexibility in your processes? Back-ups? Redundancy? Slack time built in? Work-arounds? Regardless of what you call them, having procedures in place that have been well-derived and well-communicated can make an otherwise stressful situation not only more manageable but can potentially help you actually score points with your customers and other stakeholders.

Online Plug of the Month



Have you ratiocinated lately? No, I am not asking an inappropriate question. In fact, I am referring to reasoning—thinking. Synonyms could include examine, ruminate, ponder, deliberate, analyze, evaluate, and consider. I mention this for two “reasons”: 1) taking time to actually sit and think is important and increasingly difficult as we task-switch our days away, and 2) because there is an online emailer you can subscribe to that will introduce you to words you may not otherwise be aware of.

Dictionary.com not only has a signup feature to receive a word of the day and its definition but also videos and articles about words and word usage. For instance, a recent issue discussed when you shouldn’t say you are sorry and also provided acronyms that can make your life easier.

Communication Corner

In one of the courses I teach, I remind participants of business “buzz” words and phrases to avoid— wording that has been so overused that it has become cliché. Here are just a few of these words and phrases that you may want to avoid (and feel free to send me any you think I should add!):

- Synergy
- Ground-breaking
- Maker
- On the same page
- Outside the box
- Call it a day
- Needless to say
- Incentivize
- Touch-base
- Win-win
- Pull out all the stops
- At the end of the day
- Customer-centric
- Run it up the flagpole
- Blue-sky
- Paradigm shift
- Bandwidth
- Low-hanging fruit
- Ballpark
- game plan
- **What are yours?**



Book Banter

The Energy Bus: 10 Rules to Fuel Your Life, Work, and Team with Positive Energy, by Jon Gordon, 2007, Wiley.

This was a slim but powerful read—one that I was able to get through, and actually, wanted to continue reading, in one day and one sitting. The book was recommended to me by one of my business contacts as a business book standby. While it occasionally felt a bit cliché, and I often could see where it was next headed, the parable's lessons, albeit put forth in 2007, are still extremely relevant (in fact, perhaps more needed than ever before).

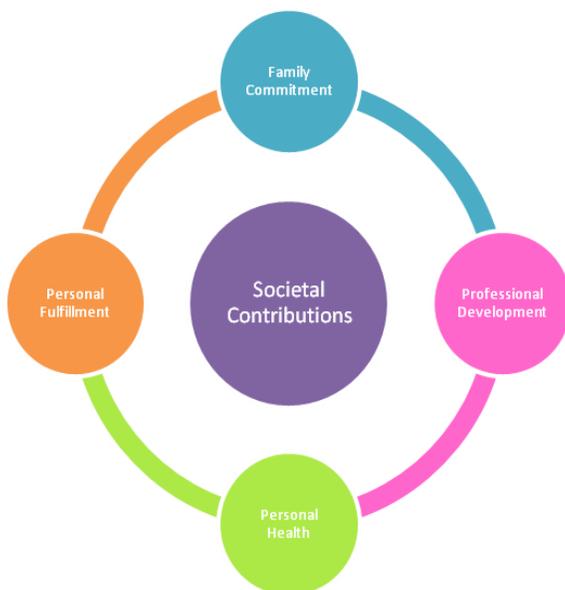
Through story-telling and associated imagery and experience, ten rules are conveyed to help be more effective and more satisfied, particularly in working (and living) with others. I won't go through each of the book's ten rules here, as that is best saved as encouragement to read the book. I will say that in various sections, I found myself taking notes within the rules' discussions. For instance, the discussions of "Dimmers" (zombies who sleep walk through the day) and "Energy Vampires" (those who suck the energy out of others while living as the dead, depriving themselves and others of life) were titles and definitions I hadn't seen framed exactly that way. It reminded me of lectures on related topics I have given that reference difficult and dangerous employees that may be passive, aggressive, or passive-aggressive.

I loved the reminder that "... it's physically impossible to be stressed and thankful at the same moment" (p. 52), in that we can essentially trick ourselves into avoiding distracting or unnecessary stress by focusing on what we are grateful for. While we may simultaneously be aware of the self-trickery, in trying this deliberate measure, I found that it works.

As a strategic and business planner, I flagged the following questions to support organizational discussions around mission and vision: "How will our vision benefit the growth of the individuals who make up the team? How will our vision benefit others? What greatness can we strive for? What do we stand for? How can we make a difference?" (p. 160).

If you are looking for a quick, yet inspiring read, you will have found it.

Personally Yours



Life after Corporate America

I recently read an excellent Inc. [article](#) that highlighted some positive realizations that its author, Scott Mautz found after having made the move from working as a corporate employee to working as an entrepreneur. I have to say, I also found it relatable. I took my part-time business that I started in 2005 to full-time almost six years ago and have never looked back, so to speak. Here are some of the things that I have learned and experienced:

- True expertise and passion for your work will motivate you to leverage your talents in many forms and will drive you to constantly think of how to do more. The flip side is that such drive is also hard to shut off, especially when you have a home office.
- You don't have to work a strict or solid 9-5 when you work for yourself; however, you sometimes have to work whatever hours it takes to deliver on your commitments.
- Your performance reviews are more varied and frequent— as every gig and client represents its own evaluative opportunity.
- Opportunities may present themselves that may be easy but not a good fit for your mission and vision. Don't allow the pressure or attraction of extra money distract you from the work that matters.

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Services include:

- Speaking and training in planning and business management
- Personal coaching sessions on business performance and management
- Assistance in strategic/business plan development, update, review, and/or revision
- Customized market research and competitive intelligence analysis
- Strategic facilitation of the planning process
- Board retreat facilitation

This newsletter is intended to provide useful information but should not be construed as legal or financial fact, advice, or opinion.

Coming in March...

- * Planning for the Right Project Managers
- * Book discussion of Applied Empathy: The New Language of Leadership, by Michael Ventura
- * And more!



Have an idea or comment to share? Have a topic suggestion or planning question? Send it in! I would love to hear from you!

Be My Guest/Reader Feature

Have a planning success or horror story? Have some tips for others? I would love to feature you. If you are interested in being included in a future newsletter, let me know if you would like to write a guest column or be interviewed.

UPCOMING TRAINING & SPEAKING EVENTS

- * 03/19/19-05/07/19: Leadership (hybrid, Tuesday night class), College of DuPage, register at www.cod.edu.
- * 04/18/19-04/19/19: Critical Thinking, American Management Association, Chicago, IL, register at <http://www.amanet.org>.
- * 05/09/19-05/10/19: Strategic thinking, American Management Association, Chicago, IL, register at amanet.org.
- * 05/20/19-05/22/19: Strategy Execution, American Management Association, Chicago, IL, register at amanet.org.
- * 06/10/19-06/11/19: Critical Thinking, American Management Association, Chicago, IL, register at amanet.org.
- * 08/21/19: Operational Strategies for Organizational Success, New Orleans, LA, register at <http://www.neighborworks.org/training-services/training-professional-development>

Email me for details!