

Planning Possibilities

News & views brought to you by Michelle Coussens

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December 2013

Welcome to my December 2013 Issue!



While you might want to settle down for a long winter's rest, January brings a new year of promise and activities. As you savor the holiday season, celebrating with friends and family, take some time to consider your personal and professional goals for 2014. Write them down. Share them with those close to you. Ask them for support and feedback. Remember that while your goals may be yours, you certainly do not have to achieve them alone.

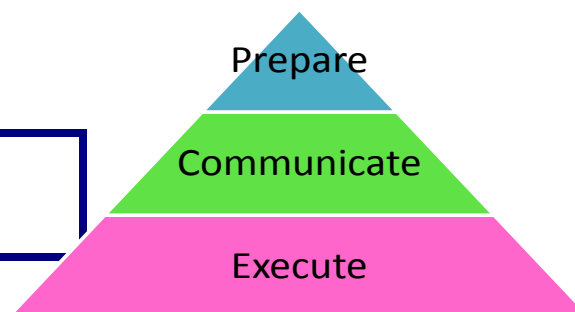
Best wishes for a safe and prosperous holiday season,

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Michelle

**Planning for Good
Decisions**



PLAN B CONSULTING MISSION STATEMENT

To assist nonprofit organizations and small businesses become more effective and more efficient through practical business planning, resulting in meaningful and measurable impact on both the organization and its community.

It's that time for new year's resolutions both for business and otherwise. There are many different ways to record, communicate and track them. Check out this article for some specifics:

<http://upstart.bizjournals.com/resources/advice/2013/12/13/tools-to-map-out-company-goals>

As you make your wish list for 2014, also check out my holiday business "gifts" of advice on page 2!

Holiday business “gifts” of advice to help you ring in the new year-A “Cookie Recipe”

As part of my year-end purging activities, I have been reviewing my electronic files. I keep notes from books so I can periodically return to their highlights. In reviewing my notes from Simple Prosperity: Finding Real Wealth in a Sustainable Lifestyle, by David Wann (2007), I was reminded that the definition of “prosperity” may be different for different people. As you consider your planning endeavors for 2014, Wann’s advice can provide an excellent foundation for defining what prosperity means for you and your business.

Cookie Ingredients: flexibility, foresight, instinct for happiness, self-knowledge, vitality, sensuality, natural abundance, useful skills, durability, purposeful work, passionate play, exploration, adventure, experience, delight, efficiency, precision, sufficiency, appropriate scale, information, knowledge, ingenuity, curiosity, design, compassion, respect, grace, gratitude, hindsight, cooperation, community, generosity, aesthetic brilliance, democracy, courage, vision, tradition, moderation, trust, loyalty, wisdom, spirituality, grace, humility, mutuality, and contentment

Before you mix and bake, what other “ingredients” matter to you? Which ingredients are most important? What ingredients matter to those you work with and serve? How can you create your own unique “cookie recipe”?

Planning Predicaments: Business lessons learned from some holiday book classics

*Where
planning
concepts
meet
reality*

- ◆ ‘Twas the Night Before Christmas: Put a little magic, joy, and imagination into the hearts of your clients and stakeholders.
- ◆ The Grinch Who Stole Christmas: Serve your customers well, and your heart will also burst.
- ◆ Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer: Dare to be different and encourage individuality in others with whom you work.
- ◆ Frosty the Snowman: Show your staff and customers that you are willing to make sacrifices, and they’ll definitely “be back someday”.
- ◆ Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus: Don’t ever lose faith (in yourself, in others, and in your business).

What holiday classics would you recommend for business lessons?



Online Plug of the Month

Do you read the news and blogs on Upstart Business Journal’s web site? If not, you’re missing out on some great info, such as articles, trends, and surveys on a variety of business topics.

The company’s official purpose is to focus on “the people, innovations, and ideas behind today’s most dynamic and entrepreneurial companies. Upstart offers original reporting, thoughtful analysis, smart curation, and first-person insights from the nation’s top business risk takers. Upstart’s mission is simple: to cover and connect the entrepreneurs and emerging companies shaping the next phase of the global economy. Anyone can be an upstart. All it takes is vision, determination, gumption, attitude, drive, and a healthy dose of good humor.”

What are you waiting for? Go to

<http://upstart.bizjournals.com/>

Communication Corner

Altimeter hosts an annual Social Business survey to learn how social media is evolving within enterprise organizations. Its 2013 survey has recently been published in a report titled, “The Evolution of Social Business: Six Stages of Social Business Transformation.” As you communicate with others via social media, here are some findings to consider:

- ◆ Only 17% of organizations describe themselves as “strategic” in executing their social strategies.
- ◆ 78% of companies have a dedicated social media team, at the division, corporate or both levels.
- ◆ Companies of all sizes are committing more personnel to social media activities. The biggest jump is for companies with more than 100,000 employees, which have an average of 49 full-time employees supporting social media (versus 20 in 2010).
- ◆ 85% of companies have a social media policy, yet only 18% of companies feel their employees follow it or understand how to use it.

Be My Guest! Stop Thinking and Talking and Just Do It! By Marylene Blondell

The New Year is upon us. 2014. We have all heard, not only this year, but most certainly throughout much of our lives, suggestions of how we can make things: shorter, better, fresher, simpler, healthier, friendlier, calmer, stronger, easier, cleaner, worthier, faster, smarter. At no other time in history are these messages more prevalent. Between blogs, webcasts, conference calls, newsletters, webinars, meetings, You Tube videos, organizational computer platforms, Facebook posts, email spam, financial category products, daily planners, weekly planners, goal setting, marketing upgrade techniques, work place wellness, time management assessment plans, strategic long-term development projections, RSS feeds, self-help books, business best practices seminars, retreats, etc. no one is getting much done. Is your head spinning yet? It should be. Notice the model below. It was chosen from literally thousands of examples because it represents a circle of mindless, never-ending planning and strategizing. It just keeps spinning around and around with no apparent end and no meaningful action or quantifiable productivity. There's too much analysis! There is too much thinking, strategizing, reading, planning, discussing and formulating. Way too many tools to teach people how to do/act.



With the proliferation of information and tools available today most people can't even get started because they don't know which 'system' is the best. Once they have finally chosen the system, person or creed they are going to follow to help them do something, they become paralyzed by first having to learn that particular system and then having to analyze it in comparison to their own goal. The second block comes from having to 'run it by' someone or two or ten people before even *thinking* about making a move-let alone actually making one.

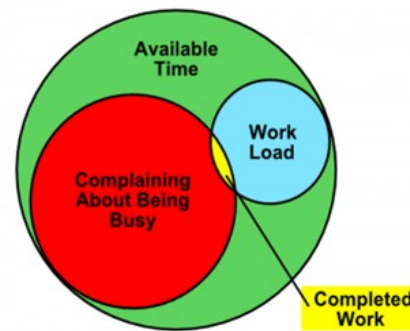
There is an expression for this condition and it is called Paralysis of Analysis. Thinking is NOT doing. Planning is NOT doing. Talking is NOT doing. Writing things down is NOT doing. Complaining about how busy you are so that you can't accomplish anything is NOT doing. Is the message getting across? DOING is doing.

“Talking is not doing. It is a kind of good deed to say well; and yet words are not deeds.” —William Shakespeare

Here is another interesting chart. The chart below, from Ann Smarty, Community & Brand Manager for Internet Marketing Ninjas, clearly illustrates how dramatically talking/complaining impedes action. Take a close look at the “completed work” section. Percentage wise it is negligible. It's virtually undetectable!

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One consistent pattern is that people who complain the most bitterly about how busy they are always have the most free time to share that complaint with everyone.



Be My Guest! Blondell continued...

There is a time and a place for smart planning, having a conversation or two (no more) about what your plan is and how you plan on accomplishing it. Writing things down in order to keep track of your thoughts, ideas and conversations is also a very, very good and wise thing to do. This can be easily and very effectively accomplished with a €99 spiral notebook. But make no mistake about it; there is no room for complaining or negativity. Instead, peacefully and positively, not hysterically or with an immobilizing sense of urgency, put your dream/goal out to the universe. Doing this engenders a certain sense of accountability to your dream/goal.

Most decisions we make are not that drastic or potentially life threatening. Quite the contrary, most decisions we think about making for a long time, but don't act on, are usually quite beneficial. Across the board, whether it's health, business, spiritual, relational, financial, spending a *reasonable* amount of time planning is acceptable, but then ACT! If you are mired in paradigms or planning or any of the aforementioned neurologists report that your mind has tricked you into believing you are actually doing something, when in fact you aren't, nor have you been. You have been *thinking* about doing what you really want to do. If the goal seems too big- start small. Take one small action first. Then take another small action. Wash, rinse, repeat. Before you know it, you'll be where you want to be.

Ironically, and rather absurdly, there are shelves lined with hundreds of books explaining and outlining how to do reach your goal or dream. Throw them all out. Don't read them. If you must, talk to someone like Michelle who will help you identify the 1, 2 or 3 (no more than that) things you need or would like to do. Pay her, say thank you and then jump off the cliff and do it yourself.

“Start by doing what is necessary; then do what is possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.” —St. Francis of Assisi

The most successful people you know are the doers. Their actions are often times not even that grand in scope. Maybe they just organized their files, cleaned out their in-box, ran a mile, or made the call they thought they could not make. But they DID it and that is the point. JUST DO IT!

“We don't change by thinking. We change by doing and being.”—Baron Baptiste

Nike's JUST DO IT campaign officially ran from 1988-1998. Unsurprisingly, in the ten years it ran Nike increased its share of the domestic sport shoe business from 18% to 43%. It is considered one of the top two taglines of the 20th century. Why? Because it resonated with people of all ethnicities, socio-economic levels and gender. People inherently understood, and very often answered the call of, the JUST DO IT exhortation. Nike's slogan did not say, “Strategize and Hypothesize. Nor did it say STOP AND THINK.”

The ones who move ahead in any arena in life are the ones who get things done. The ones who just do *it*....whatever *it* might be. They do *it* even if they are not corporately, publicly or relationally recognized for their action(s). They don't care about accolades. They care about getting there. The doing provides all the kudos they need. Doers don't need pats on the back and rarely crave grand public gestures of affirmation and recognition. It's meaningless to the end game. A strong sense of personal satisfaction, confidence and excitement is acquired from the doing itself.

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Be My Guest! Blondell continued...

“Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it!”—Goethe

Here is an abbreviated version of some of Forbes Magazine (Alice G. Walton, Forbes 2011) Top 11 Confidence Boosting Actions with some of my own successful wisdom (italics) peppered in:

- ◆ Don't sit around and wait to be asked. *SAY what you want: the job promotion, to go out to lunch with the boss, to go to the meeting, to get some help. Just say it.*
- ◆ DO something outside of your comfort zone. *Who cares what it is. Just do something different. It's good for your brain and contributes to your internal belief system that you can, in fact, do it.*
- ◆ Don't assume everyone's ideas and actions are better. *They're not. Act on your own ideas and plans.*
- ◆ Practice the new behavior over and over again. *You're brain learns from practicing new behaviors.*
- ◆ Make sure you're environment is healthy. *Psychologists say that negative energy is twice as powerful as positive energy. Stay away from people whose words stifle, harm or discourage. RUN AWAY and don't look back!*
- ◆ DO be positive. *It gives you a greater sense of power, which translates into more action, less thinking.*
- ◆ Don't crumble from rejection or a misstep. *This is part of life. Dust yourself off and move on to the next **action** step.*

“What is best for people is what they do for themselves.”—Benjamin Franklin

No one can tell you what is best for you, nor should they. Only you know what you want and you must start believing that you can do more than just planning and thinking about it. In closing, I leave you with a gift. A gift from me to you for the New Year. I hereby give you a “get out of planning, strategizing jail” free pass followed by the gift of GUSTO attached with a permission slip that says, “Go for it! Just do it!”

Maryilene Blondell is the Director of Development for The ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease) Greater Chicago Chapter. Since she was a young girl her mother (Pre, pre Nike) said her headstone is going to read, “Here lies Maryilene. JUST DO IT!” For an extra shot of gusto to get you going, she can be reached at Maryilene@alsachicago.org.





Book Banter Talent Leadership: A proven method for identifying and developing high-potential employees, by John Mattone, Dr. Jac Fitz-Enz, and Luiz Xavier, AMACOM, 2013

I am developing a Human Capital Management course for college MBA students and recently read this book on talent leadership. I thought I would share some items that are particularly important in relation to business planning:

- ◆ For talent management, use his 4 D's: "Deployment—selecting and promoting talent; Diagnosis—continuously assessing leader, individual contributor, and team capability; Development—continuously developing leader, individual contributor, and team capability; Demarcation—differentiating and rewarding performance" (p.2).
- ◆ "According to McKinsey's War for Talent Research... percentages of senior leaders who strongly agreed their own organization did the following: Attracts talented people- 19%, Develops talent- 3%, Retains talent- 8%, Removes poor performers—3%, Knows the A, B, and C players- 16%" (p.5).
- ◆ "A competency model is a description of the knowledge, skills, capabilities, and behaviors required to perform a job or function. More specifically, competencies are related groups of knowledge and behaviors that produce performance excellence within a particular environment/culture and business context. Emphasis is placed on the things that excellent performers do more often, more persistently, and more effectively than do average performers" (p.17).
- ◆ There are ten key elements of Positive Performance Management: employee involvement; valid performance criteria; year-round process; proper preparation; avoid stereotypical thinking; input from others; consistency; rating integrity; dialogue; and employee ownership (p. 77).
- ◆ "Simulation assessments are powerful predictors of leadership success because the individual is placed in contrived situations that approximate the types of leadership situations they are likely to encounter (i.e., not unlike a pilot being placed in a flight simulator), and they have to demonstrate they are capable of executing the requirements of the role" (p. 121).

Personally Yours



A Column on Personal Planning

Resolve to Keep Your New Year's Resolutions

It's that time of year when we make new year's resolutions. How do you make yours? For instance, one noble resolution might be "I want to spend more time with my family". However, if you just leave it at that vague level, that goal is less than likely to be met. What if you translated that goal into some SMART (Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, and Timebound) objectives, such as:

*We will have a family game night every other Thursday night from 7-9 pm for the first three months of the year and then decide whether to continue for the rest of the year.

*We will take two family vacations of 5-7 days each before 12/31/14.

*I will schedule phone calls with each of my college kids for an hour once a week for the next six months.

These are just some examples, but the more you drill down to specifics, the better. And, share your resolutions with your family or other stakeholders so they can help, too!

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

Coming in January...

- * **A brand new shiny year of news, tips, and information to help you plan efficiently and effectively for your business!**



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

Look for this regularly featured column to introduce you to people and their planning stories. 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

- * **02/10/14-02/12/14: Strategic Planning seminar, San Francisco, register at amanet.org**
- * **02/24/14-02/26/14: Strategic Planning seminar, Chicago, register at amanet.org.**
- * **02/27/14-02/28/14: Moving from an Operational Manager to a Strategic Leader seminar, Chicago, register at amanet.org.**

Email me for details!