

## How to Modernize Your Strategic Planning Meetings Part 1 of 2

How many executives actually anticipate their next strategic planning meeting? Is this the year to modernize or shake the staleness out of your strategic planning process?

In Part One of our recommendations, we offer some action steps to:

- Generate new energy in your planning process
- Increase enthusiastic organizational participation and
- Boost the efficacy (or energy) of your strategic planning process (SPP) results

Most SPP's are similar in format. For example, participants perform an internal/external scan, GAP or SWOT analysis and set goals and accountabilities. Also, an in-house person often is appointed to facilitate the SPP meetings. Unfortunately, this can create roadblocks. Bias can influence the SPP due to the personal views of the in-house facilitator, or possibly his/her relationship with the SPP participants.

### What value could a professional facilitator bring to your strategic planning meetings?

Consider this. Besides eliminating the bias described above, the best professional facilitators are skilled in generating a high and highly productive energy level (using targeted group dynamics). They are also skilled listeners and have the ability to direct and sustain a laser, strategic focus on your unique organizational issues.

### What if you utilized a facilitator who is also a group coach? How would someone with both of these skill sets improve the odds of successful strategic plan implementation?

The rise of professional group coaching/facilitation in corporate planning began about five years ago after a McKinsey & Company study estimated that approximately 80% of strategic plans were written, but **never** implemented.

Even with the best professional facilitation there can be occasions when critical, results-altering information does not come-out during SPP meetings. Also, there is usually the challenge with follow-through after the SPP is completed. This is where a **professional facilitator who is also a group coach (group coach/facilitator)** can help the SPP group identify “sins of omission” by using sophisticated and proven questioning tools (developed through research, training and practice) to create a more comprehensive, substantive SPP meeting environment. For example, a group coach/facilitator knows when, how and why to use a specific type of question to obtain an on-target response and active discussion.

Additionally, after the new strategic plan actions and accountabilities are documented by the SPP group, the group coach/facilitator is in an excellent position to deliver coaching support to the individuals or the group charged with implementing the new strategic plan.

In part two, we will look at an example of a SPP meeting and describe in more detail how group coaching tools, such as questioning tools, are used by a professional SPP group coach/facilitator to benefit any organization — including yours.

#### About the author . . .

Darren has over 18 years experience in professional services, distribution and manufacturing and he has started and sold two companies. His industry experience includes professional associations, architecture/engineering/construction, industrial and healthcare.

He speaks regularly on the subjects of strategy, coaching, leadership, international business, and business development. Darren's audiences have ranged from the Business School at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana to the local chapter of the Associated General Contractors in Austin, Texas.



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**Darren Smith helps executives develop edges to make winning easier.  
Darren achieves this through consulting on strategy & business  
development and through coaching & speaking.**