Yellow Daisy Consulting

Achieving Strategic Success with Projects

Mission-led organisations establish to make a difference, helping individuals to thrive, educating young minds for the future or advancing scientific discoveries to improve living. The mission provides the change the organisation is endeavouring to create whilst the strategy translates that into key goals and objectives to achieve within a set timeframe.

Significant investment is made in developing strategy documents by analysing and understanding:

- the external environment,
- the capabilities and resources of the organisation, and
- the differing perspectives of key stakeholders.

Yet, too often, the day-to-day activity of managing the present stops similar investments being made in planning and developing the projects (or initiatives) needed to achieve the strategy.

Without projects, strategy simply lays idle and the expected results fail to materialise. Strategy is achieved through good project management.

Strategy is a series of projects

Before adopting or formalising any strategy, some sense of the organisation's capacity to dedicate the necessary resources needs to be considered. Often unexpected events occur, such as changing compliance requirements, new reporting obligations or unforeseen departures of key people. Addressing these events become a priority and those strategic projects get put to one side. Viewing the strategy as a series of projects provides structure to restore direction and regain momentum once the unexpected events are addressed.

Adopting a project management mindset to strategy implementation enables the time, cost and quality needs of each project to be identified and considered. These form the 'Iron Triangle' with changes in one factor impacting at least one of the other two. Understanding this is key to fostering the structure and plans needed to maintain progress regardless of what the day-to-day operations throw up.

Conducting a Strategy Health Check

Most organisations generally have a strategy in place and underway. Incorporating a project structure doesn't need to wait for a new strategy to be developed. Undertaking a strategy health check using the following simple steps will restore direction quickly as well as manage the unexpected.

Review

Review the strategy's initiatives/projects and assess:

- their status (e.g. completed, in-progress, yet to commence),
- their timeframes/schedules, and
- the resources already committed to each (e.g. finances, people, infrastructure).

Also consider those unexpected projects and initiatives that have arisen through external changes.

Connect

Map the connections between projects and identify which are reliant on the outcomes of others. Simply doing this will

- identify bottlenecks,
- prompt timeframes and resourcing to be reconsidered, and
- identify synergies to support collaboration across projects.

Post-It notes and a whiteboard make this an easy exercise to do.

Prioritise

Now better informed, all the planned and unplanned projects can

- be reprioritised,
- have appropriate resourcing allocated, and
- regain momentum to make progress.

Agreeing on priorities will restore the direction needed after periods of disruption.

This approach can be easily undertaken as part of a management team meeting, though it does need to be the focus with sufficient time being allocated and distractions avoided.

Many organisations find value in the support external consultants provide in facilitating these discussions along with the independent perspective those external to the organisation bring. They also undertake the planning vital for productive discussions as well as translating agreed actions into the practical plans and tools needed to achieve progress.

Yellow Daisy Consulting works with leaders to review existing business strategy and determine the initiatives that need to be prioritised. An obligation-free conversation can be arranged by emailing info@yellow-daisy.com.au so that we can better understand your needs and where we may be able to help.