



ORGANIZATIONAL CHECK-UP

By: Gala Jackson

Organizational Check-up: Are you still following your Strategic Plan?

Strategic plans are reminiscent of New Year's resolutions. You start off with a detailed plan of action and the best of intentions, but fall just short of actually starting to accomplish your goals. It is a common condition in organizations. We run into the same situation year after year, and when asked about the success of our strategic plan we reply with frustration, "I was on top of things the first two weeks, but then I had "little fires" that had to be put out immediately." We often ask ourselves, how can plan for the future when I am consumed by what's on my desk today?

While those fires do need to be put out, I would propose that those little fires are a result of not following through with a strategic plan in previous years. I am not suggesting that a strategic plan is a "fix all" for every situation, but over time, developing, committing to, and following through with a strategic plan helps a leader become a visionary with foresight that can address potential fires before they start burning. More importantly, that leader develops a reputation as visionary that protects the organization and produces results.

I heard that "good" is "best" worst enemy. I believe that statement to be true. It is our good intentions minus steadfast commitment that prevents us from our best. Since we are successful with good intentions, here are some quick and practical ways to develop steadfast commitment to your strategic plan:

- **Combat the Out of Sight, Out of Mind Syndrome** – it is proven fact that if we repeatedly see something we will remember it. Place your department's strategic plan in a high traffic area for you and your staff.
- **End on a Good Note** - at the end of every staff meeting discuss and celebrate accomplished tasks that help your department achieve the overall goals of the strategic plan. Recognize that every little bit counts; it will motivate your team.
- **Question of the Quarter** – at the beginning of each quarter, select a goal or portion of a goal that is a priority for that quarter. E-mail your staff and post in the office a question relevant to the goal that can serve as motivation. An example goal would be "Improve customer service satisfaction from 30% to 50% by Fall 2009". An sample question would be "What have I done today to improve customer service satisfaction? Did I record my achievement?"
- **Make an Appointment**- make an unbreakable appointment with yourself each month. Take time clear your desk, which often helps to clear your mind, and evaluate the progress of your strategic plan. Work on practical "next steps" to help you achieve your action plans or overall goal. Making an appointment for yourself each month is critical to maintaining your focus and reducing stress.

