

December 2012 - Issue #82

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Hit the Ground Running in 2013

How do we get ahead of our competition in today's new normal? What used to work will lead to disaster in these new times. Instead, we must stand out from the crowd with our customers in mind. One way to accomplish this is to be ahead of the curve and get a running start for 2013. If nothing else, leading the pack can be a psychological boost. It's surprising the results this alone can achieve! So, how do we hit the ground running for 2013? Here's what I've seen to be effective: 1) Think strategy. 2) Start with your customers. 3) Prioritize innovation. 3) Pick a few priorities. 4) Execute.

1. **Think Strategy:** As I've been thinking about what my most successful clients and client projects have in common, I've realized we've focused on strategy. When we've started by assessing and developing a strategy, we've returned a much higher ROI (return on investment). Of course, it seems like common sense. So, why haven't I been suggesting this approach every time? Probably for the same reason as my clients - we were thinking of results yesterday and jumped into execution too quickly.

Take the time to take a step back from the day-to-day to consider strategy. How does how we spend our time align with our strategy and goals? Are we working too hard to accomplish too little in terms of what will move us forward?

2. **Start with your customers:** If there is a truth in the new normal, it is that customers expect more for less - and QUICK. Those executives who find a way to create a customer service edge will thrive. Do you understand what is important to your customers? How about their priorities? No matter how well you are doing, I'd bet there is more to learn. I am constantly amazed at what I didn't know last week! Of course, it now seems obvious.
3. **Prioritize Innovation:** I wanted to make sure this made the top 5 list. I see it becoming more and more important every day. It is much more than developing new products and services. The key question is, "Do you have an innovative culture?" Very few companies do. If it was easy, everyone would be the next Apple, Google etc. Yet, if you have an innovative culture, people will surprise you. The least likely innovators will develop new processes, products, services, intellectual property etc. It is worth taking a look if you want to succeed in the new normal.
4. **Pick a few priorities:** Interested in a secret to success? Learn to tackle fewer priorities. If everything is a priority, nothing is a priority. I've been under this bus more times than I'd like to admit, and my clients are no exception. What better time to take a step back to think about what is most important to your business in 2013? It's been proven that people remember in 3's. So why do we try to tackle 18 priorities simultaneously?
5. **Execute:** As I've seen hundreds of times throughout my career, plans rarely fail in formulation (especially if we take the time to develop them); however, they frequently fail in execution. For example, typically 80% of large-scale projects such as ERP implementations and mergers & acquisitions fail to achieve the full benefits planned. That's a huge percentage. How can you beat the odds? I find it boils down to leadership and performance management.

Why not start off 2013 ahead of your competition? If you'd like to see them in your tailwind, take the time to strategize how to get off to a running start - and then make it happen.

Lisa's Tips: Preparing for a new system

I've seen a steady increase in ERP selection, implementation and utilization projects as executives want to fully leverage the tools available to drive business results. However, a new system can be a significant undertaking. Only those who prepare will succeed.

- **Document business processes** - Start by documenting what occurs on a day-to-day basis. One of the top failure points is to assume that people can make the leap from current processes to "best practices" according to the new system on day 1 with no roadmap.
- **Review/ revise with cross-functional teams** - It's amazing what can be learned as you review documented business processes with cross-functional teams. Different perceptions likely exist. It helps to start with clarity.
- **Identify critical requirements** - I've seen countless hours wasted on typical business requirements (which all systems generally cover); instead, focus 80% of your attention on the requirements unique to your business, industry, company etc. Think about your strategic advantage.
- **Communicate early & frequently** - You cannot over-communicate when preparing for a new system. I've found that most people will not raise their hand until you've gained their trust. How will you know the key requirements if you aren't frequently communicating? Ask questions.
- **Dedicate resources early** - It's rare that a company addresses resources early enough to support a smooth and successful plan and transition of the day-to-day workload, system preparation workload (data cleanup alone can be a HUGE project), implementation workload etc. yet it is essential to success.

Recommended Reading

"[The New Supply Chain Agenda](#)" by Reuben Slone, J. Paul Dittmann and John Mentzer- a quick read on how to gain value from your supply chain. It's good to see the supply chain gaining relevance in the new normal.

Connections

Connections and relationships are the 80/20 of success! Please see this month's requests:

- My APICS (Association of Operations Management) chapter is offering CSCP certification classes (Certified Supply Chain Professional) starting in early 2013. Value-packed education for a low cost - [check it out on our website](#).
- My Ontario ProVisors group (a community of professionals who serve their clients as trusted advisors and collaborate for success) is looking for top notch Inland Empire attorneys. [E-mail me](#).

NOTE: To submit an item for this section, please send me an email with a short description of your needs and an email address. Please note that NOT all requests will be published as it must fit the guidelines and align with the Profit through People brand.

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