



January 2012 - Issue #71

In this issue:

- Top Strategies to Ensure Success in the New Year
- Lisa's tips - January's topic - Lessons Learned from Failure
- Recommended Reading

Top Strategies to Ensure Success in the New Year

As we start the New Year, I thought it was worthwhile to discuss critical yet often overlooked blocking and tackling maneuvers that ensure success. As most are debating New Year's resolutions and how to reengage after the holidays, why not get a leg up on the competition by excelling at what most know but do not use? Execution discipline.

Can you imagine your favorite football team going to the Super Bowl without practicing? Preposterous? Then, why do we think we can skip foundational elements of success? Instead, I find that those people and organizations that excel at the basics succeed every time. What are those top strategies that ensure success? 1) Organize. 2) Prioritize. 3) Plan & Execute.

1. **Organize** - There is no way to succeed if you don't know what's on your plate. You must organize! How will you find what you need when you need it? Have you categorized? For example, if my client has 1,000 customers, 200 suppliers, and 10,000 parts, how likely is it that something will be needed every day? Quite likely. And how likely is it that my client will be able to quickly understand how to find or where to look up information and/or whether it's important to address quickly? It depends....how organized are they?

For example, are customers segregated by size, type, geography etc.? Does everyone know where to find notes on previous supplier meetings? Are part numbers segregated by product family, machine, customer, etc.? Organization doesn't require rocket science but it does require thought.

2. **Prioritize** - Frequently, I'm finding that my clients could accelerate results simply by prioritizing. Not surprisingly, firefighting is common. After all, if an executive sees a fire break out (such as an angry, top customer or a demanding Board member), he or she will jump to put it out. The problem arises when we stay busy on a daily basis solely fighting fires.

Instead, we need to prioritize. I've been amazed as to how much progress I can help my clients achieve by assessing their situation and recommending priorities based upon what's most critical to achieving the top company objectives.

For example, I helped a company who was struggling with a recently implemented ERP system to assess where to focus attention in order to rapidly restore service levels. Since there were thousands of issues to address (which can be common with system implementations), it became a real challenge for those fighting daily fires to climb out. In another example, I helped a company who struggled with lead times assess their supply chain network to determine which of the many potential process improvements to begin with in order to have the most significant and quickest impact.

3. **Plan & Execute** - Although vital to success, I find that my clients who do an effective job of organizing and prioritizing are twice as likely to have a playbook and are successful in achieving the touchdown when they need it. Yet the reminder is always welcome: Plan the work. Work the plan. As easy as these sounds, it is not often done. You can stand out in the crowd simply by developing a plan and executing the plan. Follow up and follow through.

I've consistently seen these top strategies "work". They don't require a degree from Harvard or vast resources and capital to implement. What's holding you back from "blocking and tackling" in order to ensure success in the New Year?

Lisa's Tips: Lessons Learned from Failure

Why do failures generate so much interest? Perhaps as students, we had it pounded into our heads that mistakes are bad - avoid failure at all costs. What can we learn from failure?

1. **First, failure isn't fatal** - not only is failure not fatal but it also is critical to success. What?!? Yes, the only way to innovate is to try new things, which ensures failure somewhere down-the-line.
2. **Leverage failure** - If you're going to fail, don't hide under a bush! Instead, find out what happened so that you can leverage those lessons in your next attempt.
3. **Ask questions** - One of the best ways to discover the "small things" which are the difference between success and failure is to ask questions. Leverage the talent of your team, peers, and experts.
4. **Leverage strengths** - It might sound odd to look for strengths in failure but typically something went well, even if the task, project or experiment failed. See if there's a way to better leverage your strengths.
5. **Look for trends** - As Edison failed countless times before his significant success, it is important to look for trends. Is there a trend of what's working or what's not working? Anything different or unique from one attempt to the next? Trends can be enlightening.

Recommended Reading

Holiday Cards - although I usually read while enjoying lunch as often as possible (which comes in handy for this section of my newsletter), I don't think I read more than 10 lines in December. Instead, I ate my favorite holiday-specific meal (pumpkin pancakes from Mimi's) while writing Christmas cards. I could have used an old book for this section but I especially enjoyed catching up with family and old friends this season, and so I included it here. Thanks to you for your cards, emails and calls!

LMA Consulting Group

2058 N. Mills Ave, PMB 532

Claremont, CA 91711

Main: 909-630-3943

Fax: 909-625-5603

www.lma-consultinggroup.com

landerson@lma-consultinggroup.com