



Do YOU Have a Plan?

I have been involved with MAGCS and the superintendent profession in general for more than eight years now. One of the recurring themes that I have heard from the senior, experienced superintendents is the goal to transition themselves, their peers and future superintendents from the building located on the back of the property to the gateway entering the property. They want the superintendent to be someone who is before the eyes of the decision-makers rather than someone who arrives before anyone is there and leaves before anyone realizes they are gone.

We plan for vacations, parties, our children's education, retirement. A career at which we spend more than half our waking hours should be receiving the same attention.

Stereotypes are a hard obstacle to surmount. The MAGCS is doing an outstanding job of nurturing and educating superintendents to change these predetermined and preconceived stereotypes and position superintendents differently in the eyes of members, owners, city officials and golfers. Superintendents are degreed, certified experts in the management and maintenance of golf course operations. Additionally, they are experts at managing budgets, employees and expectations.

Over and over, I have heard that the mission is to transition the superintendent from the stereotype of someone cutting grass and raking traps to the reality, a manager of million-dollar profit centers, supervisor of employees, manager of six- to seven-figure budgets, someone answering to a board of directors, etc.: in other words, a true business professional.

The key to positioning yourself as a true business professional and industry expert is by redirecting your focus from the day-to-day operations (delegate these activities to others, e.g., your assistant) and rechanneling your knowledge and expertise to the big picture: one year, five years, 10 years into the future. The key to doing this is to create a plan, a "business plan." I don't mean just budgeting! I mean looking at the big picture—a real business plan. Remember! You are running a multimillion-dollar business (believe it or not)!

We plan for vacations! We plan for parties! We plan for our children's education! We plan for retirement! A career at which we spend more than half our waking hours should be receiving the same attention. This is not a job! We are professionals. Professionals need to plan.

Hopefully superintendents, entrepreneurs and business owners alike will find this information useful. If you are running a sole proprietorship or a

(continued on page 16)

multimillion-dollar operation, you must plan, set goals, review and assess your performance. If you fail to do this, you never have any direction on where you are, where you want to be and how to get there.

The purpose of a business plan is to help you accomplish the following:

- **Plan.** Assess your current situation and identify all available resources.
- **Organize.** Establish goals for what you intend to accomplish and a plan for doing so.
- **Activate.** Establish a game plan for implementing the objectives established.
- **Control.** Set up a system to effectively measure your results against your goals.

Elements of a Good Business Plan

A good business plan is comprised of the following sections:

1.) Personal Mission Statement. (Plan.)

This statement will clearly communicate the essential nature of your work. It should be a reminder of the driving force behind your career. Make it unique to you, your career and your position. For instance: "To provide the golfers with the opportunity to have a unique golf experience at a fair price. Allow the municipality to showcase the grounds and provide a profit center to fund other municipality services. Afford myself the opportunity to gain long-term personal financial stability and growth potential." Understand your market. Understand your capabilities.

2.) Self-Assessment. (Organize.)

A.) Personal. Review your own traits and characteristics. What are you good at? What needs improvement? Evaluate whether or not you are developing and expanding your abilities to accomplish goals. Who are you? Where are you in your career? This is often referred to as the "whole person concept." If you know who you are, you are better able to:

- 1.) Live your life in balance.
- 2.) Build a healthy self-image.
- 3.) Define and pursue a set of specific and realistically challenging goals.
- 4.) Develop self-discipline and self-management skills.

5.) **KEEP YOUR LIFE**—business/financial, family/social, health, spiritual—**IN BALANCE.**

B.) Business. How are you at running/managing your workplace? Rate yourself! Use this to determine your strengths and weaknesses. What are you good at (managing people, managing budgets, working with the members, working on the grounds, etc.)? What needs improvement (administration, knowledge and expertise, vendor relationships, etc.)? Prioritize your business assets. Make a timetable for improvement!

C.) Balance Sheet. Analyze your personal assets and liabilities. Can you effectively and efficiently perform your business responsibilities based on your current balance sheet? Does anything need to be changed or adjusted?

D.) Planned Income. Identify and plan your income! Where I am /where do I want to be in a given time horizon (one year, five years, 10 years, etc.)?

3.) Establish Goals. (Organize.)

Goal-setting is the initial cause of which success is the final effect. Goals are defined as dreams with deadlines. Goals provide the "why" to what you do and can instill a sense of purpose. They must be definite and quantifiable with time limits for accomplishment. The goals you set should be constantly on your mind as a reminder of the "purpose" that drives your efforts. They must be practical, achievable and believable. They must be measurable and have a timeframe for completion (short-term or one year, mid-term or five years, long-term or 10 years). They must be well-defined, not open-ended.

There are five keys to goal-setting.

- A.) Change is scary unless it is goal-directed.
- B.) Find your area of excellence.
- C.) Look for the opportunities. Opportunities often come disguised as hard work, a fact that can mislead us into looking elsewhere for opportunities. There is an old adage that says, "The harder you work, the luckier you get."
- D.) Be aware of the importance of balancing your goals. It is important to maintain balance in the five key areas of your life.

E.) You must have a major definite purpose. That is, you must have one goal that keeps your efforts focused and gives you purpose.

Compensation is directly correlated with identifying and achieving goals. Where do you fall on the compensation/goal ladder? Are you running the day-to-day operations or delegating these to other people and dreaming of the future?

4.) Market Planning. (Organize.)

As a manager of golf course operations, you may feel that marketing does not have a direct correlation to your business plan, but it directly affects the owners, members and municipal officials. Golf course owners, club members and city officials are continually marketing their business. Golf course operations grow through new members, more golfers, more leagues, more outings, etc. The amount of activity (number of golfers or members/rounds) has a DIRECT correlation on your compensation, budgets and future. Marketing the business is extremely important to you, your staff and the entire golf course operation.

In looking at the big picture, how can you help the business grow?

A market plan will help you define the "activity" necessary for you to achieve your goals. Implementation is the key. Developing a market plan requires careful thought and consideration. Ask questions!

- A.) Start thinking in terms of market planning.
 - 1.) Create, orchestrate, implement and measure success.
 - 2.) Stress simplicity, clarity, direction and action.
- B.) What are your marketing approaches?
 - 1.) Market-driven approach, i.e., access to group of people due to reputation and relationships.
 - 2.) Product-driven approach, i.e., the golf course and play is driven by strength of company, services and ability to convince people to play.
- C.) What are the components of a market plan? There is no one best technique to approach all of your potential clients. A market can be segmented into four basic market segments. Are you helping your

facility grow through these types of markets:

- 1.) Natural market—building on the strength of previous affiliations and relationships (family, friends, business contacts, etc.).
- 2.) Niche market—leveraging your personal interests and existing interests into any variety of civic, charitable or professional organizations, etc.
- 3.) Target market—focusing on common needs, demographics or network of communication.
- 4.) Mass market—reaching a large number of loosely related individuals.

5. Action Plan/Time Management and Your Ideal Schedule. (Activate.)

This area will assist you in your efforts to identify, categorize and prioritize the important activities necessary to achieve your goals. Organize each day so there is some level of routine and consistency to it.

Plan your work! Work your plan!

6. Reporting. (Control.)

Reporting is an effective requirement for monitoring your results, tracking your activities and posting your results. The goal of the business plan is to assist you in developing a plan based on your goals and desires. The success of any plan is not based on how well it is written, the good ideas it contains, or how well it is presented. The ultimate success of a plan must be based on the decisions you make and the actions you take as a result of the plan. Plans are measured by results and how they impact upon your goals for growth.

A business plan is a “living document.” It is not an exercise that you undertake at the beginning of each year and then forget until next year. It must be continually monitored and measured to gauge how effective it is in helping you attain your goals.

Your business plan will assist you in becoming a true professional outside of your current expertise

levels. The features and guidelines outlined above may cover areas that are not relevant to your personal and business goals. But much of the information and procedures are relevant to everyone. A true business professional, whatever his or her industry, has a mission statement, performs personal, business and financial assessment, adequately balances career, family, spiritual and social needs, identifies goals (short- and long-term), sets goal parameters, evaluates performance against goals, and makes adjustments where necessary.

Business plans can be simple or extensive. You yourself must determine whether a business plan will benefit you and if so, the level of detail your plan should involve. Ultimately, the people you work with and associate with—peers, boards of directors, city officials, members, subordinates, etc.—will see a distinct difference in the way you present yourself and your knowledge of the BIG PICTURE . . .



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