



Finish the Action Plans – Alignment, Integration and Reality Check

A mistake frequently made by inexperienced consultants is to not align and integrate action plans with each other. Guidelines in this subsection help you ensure that your action plans are optimally aligned and integrated for maximum effect in your client’s organization.

Ensure Action Plans Are Complete and Integrated with Each Other

Once all of the various action plans have been drafted, then planners should carefully examine them to ensure that they are complete for each action and organized efficiently for the entire organization. Next, planners should align and integrate action plans with each other. The following guidelines will help you.

Ensure Each Action Plan Is Complete

For each action plan, one at a time, consider: Are there any objectives obviously missing from the plan? If someone suggests one, put it in the plan. Consider using a brainstorming technique to generate more ideas for objectives.

Ensure the Objectives in the Action Plans Are All Integrated with Each Other

Next, consider if the implementation of any of the action plans might cause problems, or help with, implementation of other action plans. Consider these questions:

1. Is there any duplication of objectives across different action plans?
2. Should any of the objectives across separate action plans be combined into one action plan?
3. Do any of the objectives conflict with each other – accomplishment of one objective would make it almost impossible to accomplish an objective in another action plan?
4. If one or more of the objectives is accomplished, might it contribute to accomplishing one or more objectives in another action plan?
5. Should any of the objectives be divided into one or more other objectives?
6. Finally, what is the potential or real impact that achievement of a particular objective will have on other parts of the organization?

Ensure All of the Action Plans Are Aligned with Each Other

Now it is often handy to consider the order in which the action plans affect each other. Certain action plans provide outputs that are used by other systems in the organization. For example:

- Action plans for Board development might influence action plans for strategic planning because the success of that planning often depends on how well the Board is developed.
- Action plans for strategic and business planning might influence resource development (obtaining and developing resources) for products and services and for employees.

- Action plans for strategic and business planning might influence action plans for advertising and promotions.

Conduct Reality and Compatibility Checks of All Action Plans

Once the action plans have been well integrated, then planners should carefully examine each of them to ensure that they are realistic. Plans should be realistic if they are to sustain the type of motivation and momentum necessary for successful change. Consider the following for all of the action plans together:

1. **Are there enough people in the organization to attend to all of the objectives?**
For example, the action plans might specify that eight people are needed to work toward accomplishing certain objectives in March through June. However, the organization only has five people in the organization at that time and only 20% of their time can be allocated to working on the action plans. Thus, the objectives for that time might need to be changed.
2. **Is there enough money to support implementation of the action plans?**
For example, if the action plans specify budgets that total \$25,000 to support activities to work toward objectives from March through June, can the organization provide that much money for that period?
3. **Are there enough resources to support the implementation of the action plans?**
Are there enough materials, equipment and facilities? For example, across all of the action plans, if four equipment rooms need to be available at the same time in March, can the organization provide those facilities then?
4. **Are the action plans acceptable to the organization's culture?**
For example, the culture of some organizations is not conducive to detailed specification of actions, or objectives. If that is the case with your client's organization, work with your client to accomplish a description of what is expected of others and by when. Rather than referring to "action plans" or "objectives," refer to the intent of those terms, for example, you might refer to "contributions."
5. **Will implementation of action plans have an adverse effect on products and services?**
It is critically important that the organizational change effort does not hurt current or future products and services to customers – those services are the most important type of performance that the organization must give. Employees should be highly involved in answering this question.
6. **Will the implementation of the action plans be sustainable?**
Actions plans produce sustainable change by being integrated throughout the structures of the organization and by enjoying the strong, ongoing support of Board and executives in the organization.
7. **Might there be any unexpected side effects or risks with the action plans?**
Invite planners to play "devil's advocate" – to imagine the worst that can happen and then to identify strategies to prevent that worst situation from happening. While that exercise can be frustrating, it often provokes useful insights and helps planners avoid "group think" – the situation where everyone goes along with the group for the sake avoiding disagreements.

8. **Are there any other “red flags”?**

Even if planners just feel like the action plans together are a lot for the organization to do, planners should talk about their impressions and, for example, try identify what they are seeing or reading that leads them to be concerned.