

Always Start With a Strategy



By: Sharon Reus

I'm not sure who said it first, but I'm fond of the phrase, "The way you do anything is the way you do everything." In business and in life, starting everything with a clearly defined strategy will greatly enhance your success.

What is a strategy? A strategy is simply a plan of action that enables you to reach a goal. A good strategy

functions as your guiding light, your reason for choosing one action over another. When you identify your strategy upfront, you make it easy to stay focused on the actions that will meet your goal.

I like to use a sandbox analogy. Let's say a group of us live in the same neighborhood and every afternoon we gather to play. My **goal** is to get more kids to come and play in my yard, because this will make me happier. How can I accomplish this?

I've looked over the other yards and talked with the kids on the block and found that a great sandbox is high on their list of priorities when choosing a yard to play in.

So I've decided my **strategy** will be to have the best sandbox on the block. This is how I'll get more kids to come to my yard. I'll differentiate my backyard from the others by having a fabulous sandbox.

I'll use a number of **tactics** to carry out my strategy, including providing

better sandbox tools, celebrity sandbox building competitions, drinks, snacks and so on – all tactics designed to make my sandbox the best in the neighborhood.

By focusing my strategy on the sandbox, I probably won't upgrade the swing set this year. Instead, I'll make as many improvements around the sandbox as my budget will allow. And

I'll promote the heck out of my sandbox, branding it as the best sandbox on the block.

Do you see how you can succeed by clearly understanding your goal and developing a strategy that supports it? A great strategy is the cornerstone of any winning venture. Create a solid strategy and watch your sandbox flourish!



Sharon Reus is a small business coach, consultant and speaker who believes in transforming insight into action. She's published her own magazine, worked for two syndicated talk shows and produced sales conventions for a Fortune 50 company. Today Sharon helps entrepreneurs figure out what to do next, through planning sessions and ongoing coaching, allowing them to create and sustain profitable businesses and fulfilling lives. **Contact her at Sharon@sharonreus.com or (314)570-8318.**

How Positive Thinking Can Affect Your Workplace



By: Elaine Seguer

Hopeful workers can move your company forward! Whether you call it optimism or positive thinking, if your people have it, your company is more likely to be successful.

Big organizations know these attributes can't actually be measured. Instead, they depend on

worker engagement scores gathered by consultants who interview staff members. They ask such questions as: Does your boss support you in getting your job done? Do you have a best friend at work? Then they analyze the results.

They find a direct link between employee engagement and the profit picture. According to Business Week, a 2 percent rise in employee engagement corresponded to a \$100,000 annual rise in sales at one major employer.

Making people more hopeful for the future is one key to engagement. The more optimistic people are, the better their problem solving ability and coping mechanisms will be.

At Campbell Soup, an assault on pessimism by new CEO Douglas Conant turned the company's fortunes around. Beginning in 2001, he gave every employee a manual that explained how he operated. He replaced various company leaders with people who agreed with him, and he became very serious about dealing with employee complaints.

Conant knew that in order to win in the marketplace, he had to first win in the workplace. Among other steps, he upgraded a recognition program that showed gifts and awards on high performers, and he sent handwritten thank-you notes to employees. Today, Campbell's employee engagement scores

are among the highest in the country and its earnings growth is high as well.

Providing a positive outlook helps to retain good workers. A survey by The Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that many employees in the United States are just biding their time at their present jobs while looking for something better, probably a place where they have faith in the company's future and where they think their work will be appreciated.

When the economy picks up, some people will move to new employers. If you can demonstrate a caring and positive outlook, your company won't be among them.